

Bradley University Strategic Plan: A Drive Toward Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic plan serves as the foundation for Bradley's drive toward achieving a national recognition for the excellence of its faculty, students, and academic programs. Strategies are designed to achieve: (1) a responsive learning culture; (2) the development and application of emerging knowledge; and (3) effective global and regional partnerships.

RESPONSIVE LEARNING CULTURE

To create a responsive learning culture, the University focuses on academic programs, on student needs, and on a culture that values excellence. We will accomplish this goal through three initiatives:

Promote excellence of academic programs – enhance our array of excellent academic programs with new programmatic initiatives having recognizable opportunities; revitalize cross-curricular academic programs; support and enhance diversity; bolster globalization; and renovate selected campus-wide facilities.

Enhance academic engagement and well-being of students – improve students' academic engagement; and support students' well-being, including improvement of selected facilities to promote this goal.

Create a culture for excellence – encourage a collaborative culture; support cultural change; foster relationships among key campus constituencies; and enhance our human resources and support services.

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF EMERGING KNOWLEDGE

Bradley University is rooted in the development and application of basic scholarship. While many universities focus on basic research, Bradley University's unique identity lies in its ability to both develop and apply knowledge that emerges from basic scholarship. We focus on three strategic initiatives to provide leadership in the development and application of emerging knowledge:

Develop Centers of Excellence – support initiatives consistent with our goals for national prominence, potential for collaboration, impact on student engagement and long range sustainability.

Create post-baccalaureate and certificate programs in emerging areas – respond strategically to educational and market needs.

Expand applied experiences for students – increase opportunities for experiences such as internships, practica, cocurricular activities and study abroad.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Bradley University will create the culture and mechanisms of collaboration both on campus and with key strategic academic, corporate, government, and global and community partners. We will nurture vital, synergistic exchanges of wisdom and experience with these partners, to benefit both students and faculty.

Our plan relies on three critical components to ensure effective implementation: **leadership** (engagement and commitment), **collaboration** (intra- and inter-institutional) and **continuous improvement** (strategic and programmatic). We will deploy a robust aggressive capital campaign to provide the resources for our strategic initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Bradley University's historic rise from its founding in 1897 as a polytechnic institute to a prominent independent private comprehensive institution of higher learning has been rapid and strategic. In 1920, Bradley became a four-year college. In 1946, Bradley's array of technical, liberal arts, and professional programs transformed it into a university. Major capital campaigns built on bold strategic plans in the 1980s and the 1990s raised Bradley's profile to regional prominence as one of the top five Midwest, private, comprehensive universities. The \$32 million campaign begun in 1985 transformed the campus with new buildings, strengthened programs in the arts, installed innovative networked computer technology, and provided the resources to recruit more academically advanced students than ever before. The \$127 million Centennial Campaign that reached completion in 1998 enabled the fulfillment of a strategy to;

- strengthen the endowment, which now exceeds \$200 million;
- reward excellence in teaching, scholarship, service, departmental achievements, and interdisciplinary initiatives as definitive attributes of our mission and vision;
- successfully recruit and retain distinguished faculty, administrators, and staff;
- strengthen and create new highly enrolled programs in Business Administration, Communication, Health Sciences, Multimedia and Physical Therapy;
- endow and name the Foster College of Business Administration and the Slane College of Communications and Fine Arts;
- renovate existing structures and build new facilities to house these programs, including Baker Hall, the Caterpillar Global Communications Center, and Olin Hall;
- internationalize our profile with globalized curricula, exchange programs for faculty, and the development of robust study-abroad opportunities for students;
- expand student support services; and
- deploy digital technology (including Internet2) in the service of learning and scholarship comparable to and often exceeding that of major research universities.

Since the completion of the Centennial Campaign, Bradley's commitment to strategic action enabled the total renovation of Bradley Hall and Constance Hall; the endowment of programs in Family and Consumer Sciences; the development of award-winning interdisciplinary programs in Biochemistry and in Music Business; the deployment of new professional graduate programs including the professional Doctorate in Physical Therapy and the Executive MBA; and the creation of national and international collaborations with major academic, corporate, and governmental partners.

Taken together, these achievements are testament to a proud record of campaigns and plans of strategic action yielding a reputation for regional prominence among our Midwest peers. As in 1897, 1920, 1946, 1985, and 1998, we are poised to embark on another major strategic initiative.

VISION

Bradley University is committed to excellence. Already one of the best private comprehensive universities in the Midwest, Bradley will be one of the finest institutions of its type in the nation.

MISSION

Bradley University is committed to nurturing the multifaceted development of students to enable them to become leaders, innovators, and productive members of society. Our graduates are prepared for life and professions in a changing world and they are able to cross academic, geographic, and cultural boundaries. A Bradley education is characterized by small classes, active learning, mentoring by highly qualified faculty, challenging academic programs, opportunities for study abroad, and numerous co-curricular activities.

We recruit, develop, and support faculty who are passionate educators and outstanding scholars whose research and creative contributions benefit society. We expect and reward pedagogy and scholarship of exceptional quality and influence.

A distinctive feature of Bradley University is our cohesive sense of community that unites faculty, students, staff, and alumni. Our tradition of collective responsibility is founded on a commitment to the values of academic freedom, civility, diversity, and respect for the individual. Our exemplary system of shared governance both represents and sustains our sense of community and fundamental values.

We promote and facilitate collaboration among all members of the University community. Students learn teamwork and leadership through group projects and collaborate with faculty on research and creative production. Likewise, faculty collaborate with colleagues across departmental, college, and institutional boundaries to elevate the quality and impact of their work. The University's strategic partnerships with business, cultural, and governmental institutions provide benefits to the community and society and create additional learning opportunities for students.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Bradley University is dedicated to providing distinguished academic programs for our students. We are committed to continuous improvement and collaboration with key strategic partners to provide leadership in the development and application of new and emerging knowledge and technology. To support our strategic growth, we will selectively invest in new facilities and programs, and provide leadership for key strategic initiatives in our communities.

Unlike our vision and mission statements, our statement of strategic direction does not comment on every program within the institution. Instead, it refers to specific strategies needed to propel the University to greater levels of excellence within the next five to ten years, given our present opportunities, markets, and influences. It is neither a comprehensive analysis of every excellent program at Bradley, nor a complete list of every goal or value we wish to achieve during that time.

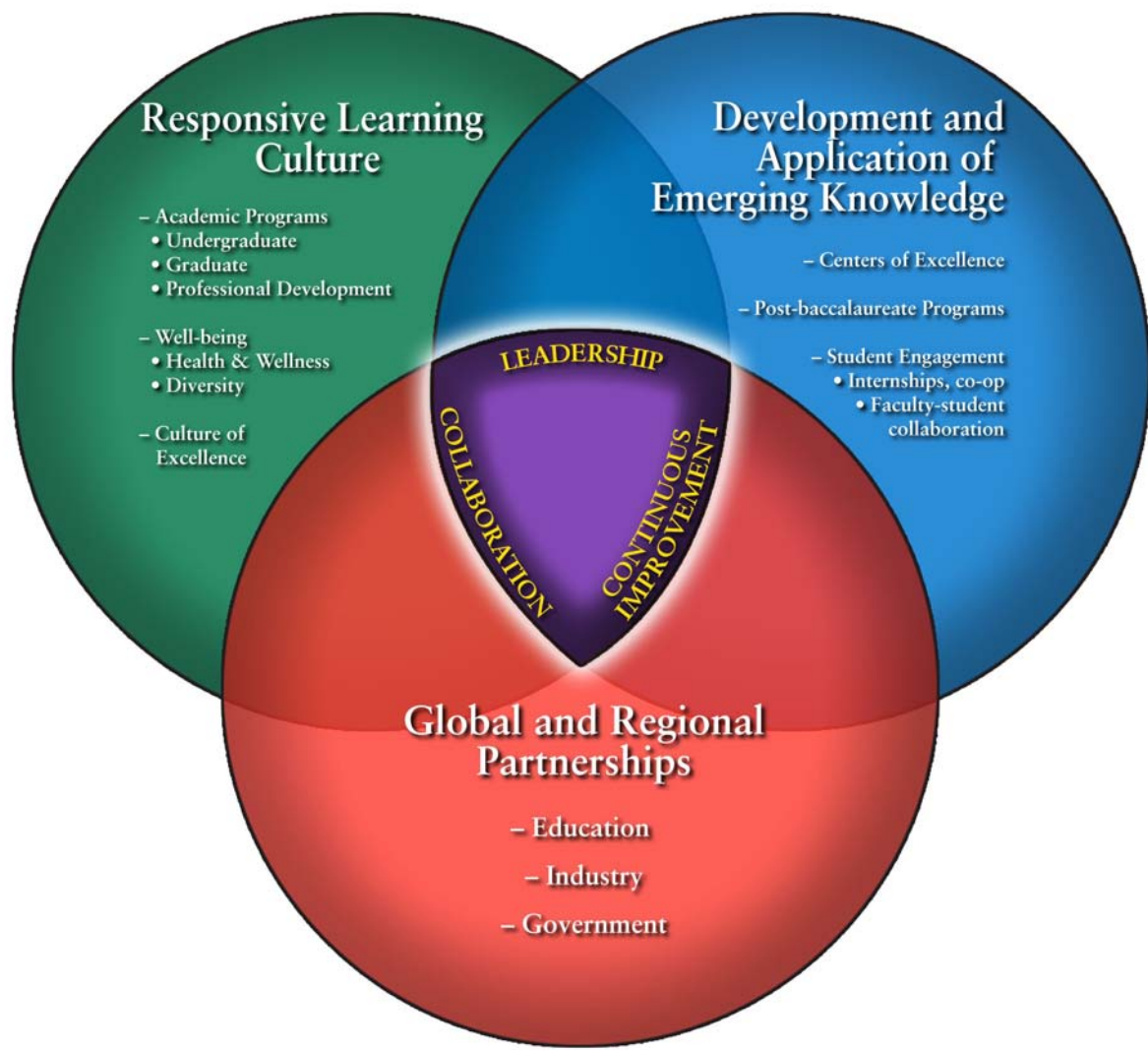
Rather, this strategic direction statement *is* intended to create a shared, coherent focus and identity for Bradley for the near future. It identifies initiatives that have notable potential to move Bradley from the category of a good comprehensive university to one of a comprehensive university of *distinction*. These special opportunities are not necessarily identified at the cost of other programs. Indeed, all programs will benefit from increased excellence and an enhanced institutional reputation. This statement articulates priorities for programs and for growth. It is designed to leverage specific opportunities identified during the strategic planning process. It does not change the mission of the University, but rather complements it.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In the spring of 2003, leaders in the Bradley community, including administrators, department chairs, program leaders, and the University Strategic Planning Committee, were invited to participate in three strategic planning retreats. They completed exercises in identifying opportunities for providing distinguished academic programs, taking inventory of the Bradley community and identifying key strategic goals. In all, approximately 80 persons at Bradley participated in developing the foundation of this strategic plan.

From these efforts, we identified three central issues: creating a responsive learning culture; emphasizing the development and application of emerging knowledge; and cultivating strategic partnerships. The methods used to address these issues include effective collaboration, leadership and continuous improvement (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Bradley University Strategic Plan



BRADLEY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS

I. Responsive Learning Culture

A. *Enhance the excellence of academic programs*

1. *Strengthen and focus academic programs*
 - a. *Implement an action-oriented review of undergraduate and graduate academic programs*
 - b. *Develop focused graduate curricula*

Academic excellence depends upon a learning culture that is responsive to internal and external environmental trends, to student needs, and to the strategic direction of the institution. To create a responsive learning culture, the University will focus on academic programs, on student needs, and on a culture that values excellence.

Currently, Bradley evaluates academic programs through the process of program review. To build upon these efforts, we will adopt a proactive, continuous evaluation process by which programs are evaluated concurrently on several indicators relative to their peer benchmarks.

To enhance the dynamics of Bradley's learning culture and to advance programs with the potential to be regionally or nationally recognized, we will focus our academic identity, engage our students, and create a culture of excellence.

2. *Support strategic program excellence in areas having recognizable opportunities including(but not limited to)*
 - a. *Engineering*
 - b. *Graduate business education*
 - c. *STEM (Science, technology, engineering, math) education in K-12*
 - d. *Health sciences*
 - e. *Multimedia*

Academic programs tied to the areas of technology and industry play a rich and robust role in Bradley's history. The central Illinois region presently has a number of defining characteristics, including its focus on industry, technology, and science. To distinguish itself within an array of higher educational institutions, Bradley will focus program development in disciplines where external collaborative efforts can enrich and enhance on-campus excellence. Areas with recognizable distinguishing characteristics leverage these opportunities.

3. *Revitalize cross-curricular academic programs*
 - a. *Consider role/outcomes of general education*
 - b. *Evaluate current honors program*
4. *Support diversity efforts*
5. *Bolster globalization opportunities*
6. *Renovate selected campus-wide facilities to improve student learning*
 - a. *Westlake*
 - b. *Business and Engineering*
 - c. *Outreach facilities*

Another of Bradley's educational strengths is its strong foundation in the liberal and fine arts. As part of this foundation, we build the intellectual tools required to participate fully in a global and diverse society. Our students learn to consider thoughtful, creative, and ethical solutions to problems through a variety of critical, analytical, aesthetic and theoretical approaches. We must attend to the quality of this foundation, supported by renovation of selected facilities to improve student learning.

B. Enhance academic engagement and well-being of students

1. *Improve academic engagement of students*
 - a. *Identify and target specific dimensions of student engagement*
 - b. *Increase student-faculty collaborative learning experiences*
2. *Support student well-being*
 - a. *Consider development of student “learning communities” involving academic, extracurricular, and living domains.*
 - b. *Identify and target specific dimensions of well-being*
3. *Upgrade selected facilities to promote student well-being, including (but not limited to):*
 - a. *Recreation and Health Center*
 - b. *Intercollegiate athletics space*
 - c. *Residential facilities*

Bradley’s students are its greatest strength. We must harness their potential and motivate them to engage fully in their collegiate experience. Bradley’s size, mission, and program configuration allow and encourage engagement of students and attention to their well-being. A primary method to improve engagement is our emphasis on and commitment to student-faculty collaborative learning spanning experiential and service learning projects; consulting; participation in problem-based learning, practica and internships; cross-disciplinary collaborations; and research and creative production with faculty, staff and other professionals. We additionally recognize that intellectual growth and learning is strongest when it is accompanied by a sense of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

C. Create a culture of excellence for staff, faculty, and administration

1. *Encourage a collaborative culture that focuses on a commitment to the entire institution, rather than one based solely on individual departments or colleges.*
2. *Support cultural change*
 - a. *Address the need for institutional improvement*
 - b. *Communicate the importance of adapting to changing external and internal influences and demographics.*
3. *Foster collaborative relationships among faculty, staff, administration and other key constituencies.*
4. *Utilize consistent assessment and established mechanisms for the allocation of resources.*
5. *Maintain and enhance support for our human resources through regular evaluation of salaries, health and retirement benefits, wellness initiatives, and technology and facility needs.*

A final strategy to create a responsive learning culture at Bradley involves the perceptions and concerns of our most important asset—our faculty, staff, and administrative personnel. We must nurture an environment that advances institutional excellence, embraces change, integrates across functional disciplines, creates trust, and promotes fairness. We additionally must maintain and enhance support for our employees, in the form of compensation, benefits, technology, facilities, support services, and other important infrastructure items, particularly in light of rapidly escalating costs for these benefits.

II. Development and Application of Emerging Knowledge

A. Invite Development of Centers of Excellence

1. *Criteria include but are not limited to*
 - a. *Consistency with strategic direction of developing and applying emerging knowledge and technologies, including new discoveries as well as new interpretations of existing knowledge.*
 - b. *Significant level of interdisciplinary and/or external collaboration*

- c. *Demonstrated impact on undergraduate and graduate student engagement and learning*
 - d. *Long-range sustainability based on potential demand and current/future competition*
 - e. *Ability to achieve critical mass within a specified period of time*
 - f. *Significant and self-sustaining external funding*
- 2. *Present examples include but are not limited to:*
 - a. *BEST program (Building Excellent Scientists for Tomorrow)*
 - b. *Turner Center for Entrepreneurship*

Bradley's predominant focus historically has been in the development and application of basic scholarship within the context of a broad and excellent liberal and fine arts education. This focus provides a unique identity and differentiates Bradley from small, liberal arts institutions, as well as large, state research institutions. A strategy for the institution to pursue with vigor is the development of Centers of Excellence that are consistent with this focus, and that capitalize on the unique strengths of Bradley. An invitation to create such Centers will be extended to the entire campus.

B. *Create post-baccalaureate programs in emerging areas*

- 1. *Criteria*
 - a. *Consistency with strategic direction of application of emerging technology*
 - b. *Sustainability based on potential demand and current/future competition*
 - c. *Ability to achieve critical mass with a given period of time.*
- 2. *Present examples include but are not limited to:*
 - a. *EMBA*
 - b. *Caterpillar for the 21st Century certificate program*

While broad growth through the creation of new programs can lead to dilution of resources, we must strengthen Bradley's unique identity as an institution that excels in developing and applying knowledge generated through research and creative production, technology, and discovery. A select area for growth may be graduate programs which are consistent with this identity.

C. *Expand application experiences for students (e.g., internships, practica)*

The development and application of emerging knowledge as an important component of Bradley's identity will guide scholarship and curricula. This focus additionally holds implications for pedagogy and the form of undergraduate and graduate study. At Bradley University, students will experience directly the application of knowledge through active participation in industry, in organizations, and in community service organizations.

III. *Global and Regional Partnerships*

A. *Foster relationships with strategic partners*

- 1. *Criteria*
 - a. *Consistency with strategic direction*
 - b. *Sustainability*
 - c. *Provision of needed expertise*
 - d. *Cultural fit*
- 2. *Current and potential partners*
 - a. *International institutions*
 - b. *School districts*
 - c. *Industry*
 - d. *Peoria NEXT*

- e. *Government entities*
- f. *Cultural institutions*

B. *Support Emerging Knowledge and Technology*

1. *Ensure that library and computing resources remain competitive.*
2. *Develop a campus-wide infrastructure to use Internet2.*
3. *Implement Internet2 capabilities across appropriate academic units.*
A current example includes the screenwriting course offered collaboratively by the Slane College of Communication and Fine Arts, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Arts and Letters at California State University at Los Angeles, and entertainment industry professionals.

To create a learning environment distinguished by expertise in the discovery and application of emerging knowledge, Bradley will expand its relationships with key academic, corporate, government, global, cultural and community partners. We can leverage expertise more efficiently through the creation of knowledge networks, rather than through reliance on only our own expertise. Such partnerships will enable Bradley to move beyond our geographic boundaries, enhancing our recognition in regional, national, and international venues. Leveraging relationships and enhancing collaborative efforts also will provide Bradley a critical and competitively-required “operating scale” in certain programmatic areas.

Bradley is already recognized as one of the top twenty-five most connected universities in the country. As one of only eight comprehensive universities that are full members of Internet2, Bradley has the means, virtually unique among our peer institutions to form strategic partnerships and collaborations. We will continue to be leaders in supporting emerging knowledge and technology.

HEART OF THE PLAN: METHODS TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION

Three critical elements needed to ensure that our efforts to improve and shape Bradley’s future are realized are **leadership**, **collaboration**, and **continuous improvement**.

A. *Leadership*

1. *Unify the identity of the university through communication of the strategic direction.*
2. *Articulate a cohesive vision for the future*
3. *Model appropriate commitment to the university, rather than to individual programs*
4. *Provide consistency and direction for difficult choices*
5. *Support equity in decision-making*

Leaders of the university, from the President, to assistant program directors, to student government representatives, will help determine the success of this plan. They already have represented their constituents, contributed their insights, and generated several of the solutions contained in the plan. In addition, their abilities to persuade and to motivate others are required for campus-wide improvements to occur.

B. *Collaboration*

We encourage collaboration across departments, programs, areas, and colleges in order to diminish various silos of interest. Collaboration will be rewarded and supported, a concept rarely modeled in academic communities.

C. *Continuous Improvement*

1. *Develop a comprehensive assessment process for academic and administrative units*

2. *Enhance flexibility/agility of the university to respond to changing needs and visions*
3. *Determine parameters/benchmarks for academic and administrative program viability*
4. *Promote fairness and open communication within the university*

We can and must do better in order to realize our potential. We intend to be the best comprehensive university in the country. We can improve our culture, our students' learning and well-being, our faculty satisfaction and productivity, and we can tap into our potential to achieve even higher levels of excellence. One important element in the improvement process is determining our current strengths and weaknesses, compared to peer and aspirational institutions.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

An important outcome of any successful strategic plan is to align resources with initiatives. For this plan to be ultimately successful, the application of start up funds, coupled with self-sufficiency, need to be addressed in a timely and openly communicated fashion. Reallocations to areas of emphasis may result in changes to current fiscal patterns of allocation.

Facility assessments and needs previously addressed in this plan easily exceed \$150 million in cost. When other programmatic initiatives are identified (e.g., Centers of Excellence), required technology and facility support can be identified and provided, subject to resource identification. Operational support for Centers of Excellence and other focused initiatives can be seeded with institutional allocations of faculty, staff and operating resources, but their ultimate success will depend on developing external support and self-sustaining operations.

The University's endowment has grown to over \$200 million and sustains many campus initiatives and activities. While greatly improved over historical levels at Bradley, many campus needs require additional endowments. Ultimately, Bradley University has certain wherewithal to respond to developing initiatives but constituency support is critical to many unmet campus needs. Not only do Bradley's internal resources need alignment with this plan, but Bradley's upcoming capital campaign can be successful only if integrated to develop external support for this strategic plan.

CONCLUSION

This plan focuses on three critical components to ensure effective implementation: leadership (engaged and committed), collaboration (intra- and inter-institutional) and continuous improvement (strategic and programmatic). We will design policies for the development and allocation of resources to ensure implementation of this plan.