

The Plan for Bryn Mawr

September 2012

BRYN MAWR
COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

FOUNDATIONS

Early in 1879, a young woman in Baltimore wrote: “If asked what kind of a college women are most in need of, from a student’s standpoint I should say that they want more institutions where the work they do will be effective, where they can systematically labor under excellent instructors and where the results of their study will give them a recognized, definite position from which to start life.”

Six years later, Bessie King’s dream was realized with the founding of Bryn Mawr College, an ambitious institution dedicated to academic excellence and to unleashing opportunities for women of intellect and ability.

Students and faculty flocked to the newly founded Bryn Mawr to join an audacious experiment and to explore the promise it held for them and for the future they would shape. They came contrary to prevailing wisdom and to customary practice. They came to learn and a critical few stayed and undertook the graduate study that prepared them to teach the next generation.

Over the last century, that founding promise has become a legacy of opportunities both dreamed and achieved. Today, that abiding promise is our responsibility.

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CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the years since our founding, women's academic options have expanded exponentially and we have witnessed transformative growth in all of higher education. Bryn Mawr operates in a complex and competitive environment marked by dramatic changes in the educational landscape. Many of these changes have been positive:

and with that increase comes a greater demand than ever to prepare young women for the choices and the responsibilities that will be theirs.

the world, enriching experiences both within and beyond the classroom by bringing together multiple perspectives, values, and intellectual orientations.

women to seek institutions that can prepare them to pursue the work of sustainability and social justice.

Other changes pose significant challenges to institutions like ours. Those most pressing for Bryn Mawr include:

concern for families faced with financing several years of postsecondary schooling and provokes the political reality of an active and acrimonious public debate about the value and benefits of that investment.

players compel all colleges and universities to address the realities of changing levels of student demand.

accessibility for students from all backgrounds comes at a significant cost.

and the explosion of information creation and dissemination, colleges and universities must be nimble in assessing and implementing new technologies.

Our commitment to accessibility and affordability for students from all backgrounds comes at a significant cost.

These are real challenges facing many, if not all, distinguished colleges today. Despite the

progress we have made in core investments, such as faculty salaries and financial aid, we have more work to do in this competitive landscape. Although many of our alumnae/i provide enthusiastic and unwavering support to the College and their

personal and professional achievements inspire our current students, we must connect even more of our alumnae/i to the mission of today's Bryn Mawr. While we cherish the community-enhancing advantages of our small size, we also recognize the

We are a force for change: our faculty in their research, in their experience and connections beyond Bryn Mawr, and in their challenges and encouragement in the classroom—our students in the perspectives they bring to this community, in the power of the education they achieve for themselves here, and in what they become.

We are different—in the intensive mentoring that marks our teaching, in offering excellent Ph.D. programs in a liberal arts college context, and in the traditions of mutual trust and respect that bind us together as a diverse but intentional community.

Sustaining this mission and these distinctive elements as we respond to enormous—and perhaps disruptive—change will not be easy. We cannot be cautious or tentative. We will use our size, our commitment to discovery and open dialogue, and our ambition to innovate and move forward. We have exciting opportunities before us.

THE PLAN FOR BRYN MAWR: PRIORITIES

Over three years of planning across the entire community, Bryn Mawr College shaped a focused set of priorities for itself. To arrive at this point, we collected ideas and ambitions, we carefully identified distinctive, innovative, and significant improvements, and we captured the wisdom of the entire community.

This is our plan and these are our priorities. Each priority addresses genuine opportunities for change and builds on foundational strengths. Together, they reflect our belief that no single response or initiative will be sufficient in our current context. We must make a concerted effort across our entire educational endeavor.

1. Today's Learning for Tomorrow's Lives

Students come to Bryn Mawr to undertake an intellectual and experiential transformation. They arrive with one set of interests and capacities and, through intensive interaction with faculty and each other, leave with expanded horizons, enhanced capabilities, and lifelong passions.

Increasingly, our students bring to Bryn Mawr questions about how to lead lives of purpose in a complex and changing world. They ask about the relevance of “liberal arts,” about preparation for life and work, and about how best to chart a meaningful pathway through their undergraduate years and into their early careers. This entire exploration takes place in the context of continuous social, educational, and technological evolution.

Bryn Mawr upholds a defining commitment to liberal-arts education informed by thoughtful investigation and discourse across the disciplines. While sustaining

this focus, we also ask ourselves how we can provide an educational experience that responds to the needs of our students for the lives they will lead when they leave campus.

This priority comprises both innovations and investments that link undergraduate majors to multiple postgraduate options:

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preparation with clear links beyond the undergraduate degree. This includes a broader menu of multidisciplinary 360°

clusters (innovative course groupings that take a multidisciplinary approach to a single topic), AB/MA options in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities; and expanded faculty advising and mentoring.

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that enriches the curriculum; for technology that enhances teaching and research; for “guest faculty” that expand our academic reach; and for sabbaticals that facilitate student research.

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will create a platform for connecting student learning to the work of the world. Its mandate will be integrating career-development strategies that align with our liberal-arts curriculum, including guaranteed internships, additional community-based learning opportunities, and certificate programs that introduce profession-specific skills in fields like

nance, media, and public policy. The Center will coordinate increased alumnae/i engagement with students for mentoring, internships, and job placements.

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2. Advancing Science

Bryn Mawr has a nationally recognized success rate in educating women scientists and mathematicians. From the early establishment of Ph.D. programs in science and math, the College has maintained a principled commitment to the roles of research, teaching, and mentorship in preparing women for academic and professional careers in the sciences. We know from decades of experience that a women’s college provides an ideal environment in which to nurture scientific interest and talent among students, and Bryn Mawr will continue to lead its peers in advancing women who specialize in science.

Yet science education is not just for scientists. Most of the complex challenges we face have scientific and technological underpinnings and we want all of our

students to understand these with sufficient sophistication to respond effectively in their professional and personal lives.

This priority has three aims: to advance scientific thinking and problem solving for science and non-science majors, to strengthen support for faculty members in their teaching and research, and to link our science curriculum to emerging research fields and career paths. Specific initiatives include:

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q%PVCMJOH PVS DPMBCPSBUJPO XJUI UIF 1PTTF 'PVOEBUJ leadership development program, by launching a Science Posse that secures the success of its student cohort through preparatory programs, research opportunities, and close faculty mentoring.

q'PSHJOH TUSPOHFS DPOOFDUJPOT CFUXFFO UIF TUVEZ PG humanities and social sciences, arming non-science majors the ability to enrich their work with an understanding of how scientific disciplines are connected to theirs and are also relevant to the lives they will lead.

3. Women for the World

As a college founded for the education and advancement of women, we are aware

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that the goal of gender equity remains a distant one in most parts of the world. We aspire, therefore, to graduate global citizens who have an informed awareness of the world's most pressing concerns—extreme poverty, environmental degradation, the ravages of war and conflicts—and of how these injustices fall disproportionately on women.

Bryn Mawr has long been a globally connected college. For generations we have welcomed to our campus students and faculty from around the world and we have graduated alumnae/i who live on nearly every continent. In our ever more interconnected world, however, we are rapidly expanding the scope of our global activity and involvement through faculty research links, admissions outreach, alumnae/i engagement, and partnership development. While such internationalization efforts are

common to most selective colleges and universities, Bryn Mawr brings a special intensity and focus to this work.

Our aim is to create and direct purposeful change in the lives of women, efforts informed by both intellectual and experiential engagement with these defining issues. The true promise of women's lives—genuine empowerment and opportunity—will take root only through a complex understanding of economics, public health and the environment, politics and organization, security and diplomacy, and human rights.

This is not something that Bryn Mawr can do on its own. We have an opportunity to reimagine our relationships across the world with multiple institutions and organizations and to create a platform for collaboration and partnership. Our students and faculty will find new colleagues and

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FOUNDATIONAL INVESTMENTS

The Catalytic Role of the Faculty

The priorities just outlined clearly depend upon the intellectual energy of our faculty and their commitment to research-intensive teaching. Across the disciplines, faculty members will be asked to create new courses and curricular pathways; to advise students on projects and internships; to work together on new partnerships and collaborations; and to sustain the excellence of our teaching and research. This work will require time and financial resources to underwrite the faculty engagement that can bring this plan to life. This funding will support sabbaticals, course development, technological experimentation, travel and project expenses, as well as other needs.

The Student Experience and Student Community

Bryn Mawr is a social and academic community with important connections to our neighboring schools and to greater Philadelphia. Our plan and priorities include new investments to benefit our student community and to offer events that can enhance student life both on campus and in the Philadelphia region, especially with our Quaker Consortium schools.

Graduate Education of Distinction and Distinctiveness

Our Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research anchor our educational enterprise in a bedrock of advanced research and professional excellence. We will seek increased support for the recruitment of highly qualified students and for the resources and opportunities necessary to underwrite their academic success.

Technology for Teaching and Research

Several technological investments will support our educational priorities, provide faculty and students with better tools to explore new modes of learning, and facilitate virtual collaboration and communication around the globe. These investments include e-learning tools, video-conferencing platforms, information access tools and resources, and expanded training on technology for students and faculty.

Facilities

Three facilities projects will support our strategic priorities. In Park Science we will create and reconfigure research and teaching spaces to match the needs of twenty-first century science. Canaday Library will become a prime academic center to serve today's needs for print and digital resources, for both solo and group-centered study space, and for display of the College's extraordinary art and manuscript collections.

In Thomas Hall we will address preservation needs of this historic building and improve spaces for scholarship and research, for faculty-student collaboration, for learning and career support programs, and for community-wide events. Together, these projects will transform the physical context in which we learn, teach, and work as a community.

THE PROMISE OF BRYN MAWR

The women who come to Bryn Mawr manifest, by their choice, the confident willingness to resist crowd mentalities. They have already launched themselves upon the path of reflective self-transformation that will mark their adult lives as Bryn Mawr women.

In many ways, making this promise today is more complex and challenging than ever before. Looking back, we see how far we have come. Looking forward, we see how far we have yet to travel. Yet our students have opportunities across an always-expanding horizon of possibility here and around the globe.

Standing on the threshold of our next 125 years, what is our promise to future generations? To what will we commit on behalf of students today and tomorrow?

The answer is simple: we build from our traditions and principles, we invest in our faculty, we take up innovations that improve our educational practices, and we focus continually on enlarging opportunities for our students.

This is the best and most truthful response to our legacy: We look forward, with optimism and commitment, to educating women of tomorrow. We have a promise to keep.

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