ACADEMICS

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Bryant’s transformation during this 30-year period was dramatic in many ways. That’s not too surprising — after all, a regional business college evolved into a nationally-ranked university.

But the changes in Bryant’s academic programs were especially remarkable.

To give a full account of that evolution would require several volumes, because there are numerous stories for every academic program and educator. There are stories about how subject knowledge changed, how new courses were created, and how university leaders made institutional decisions that set off chain reactions of new policies and opportunities.

To understand the major changes in Bryant academics during this era, we should view things from different perspectives. So, in this chapter we will consider:

1. **Historical Evolution** – How and why Bryant changed academically.
2. **Focus Initiatives** – Programs for entrepreneurship, character, leadership, and innovation.
3. **Faculty Reflections** – Professors recall how their courses developed over time.

The first section – **Historical Evolution** – takes us on a journey from Bryant earning business accreditation to becoming a renowned university. You might be surprised that major decisions now taken for granted didn't come easily; advocates for change had to overcome serious doubt and resistance.

The second section – **Focus Initiatives** – explains programs that promote the values, skills, and perspectives that prepare students for success: Entrepreneurship, Character, Leadership, Innovation. Another focus initiative, promoting an International outlook, has its own chapter.

The third section – **Faculty Reflections** – shares insights from seven professors about how their academic programs developed through the years. It’s a little unfair to feature so few educators since all Bryant faculty deserve recognition for their scholarship, teaching talent, and dedication, but this is just meant to help illuminate how a university curriculum tends to evolve over time.

And don’t worry — there’s no test at the end of this chapter. So enjoy this behind-the-scenes tour of our recent academic history.

"...a regional business college evolved into a nationally-ranked university."
“I arrived here about 30 years ago,” recalls David Lux, the Founding Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Founding Dean for Bryant Zhuhai. “When I was thinking about joining the faculty, I had asked around about Bryant. The word that came back to me was that it was a happening place. ‘It’s a dynamic place; things will happen.’ That’s been true for all these years.”

Indeed, during this transformative era many things happened. Here are some of the milestones.


“We really needed rehabbing, and that was what Bill O’Hara did,” recalls Mary Lyons, a Bryant Professor of Communication and Literary Studies. She has served on 15 executive search committees, helping select Bryant presidents and trustees – including O’Hara and the two men who succeeded him.

As president, O’Hara formalized a committee for long-term planning, comprising faculty, staff, and students – making Bryant one of the first colleges in New England to create a strategic planning process. In addition to defining Bryant’s mission, the committee set practical objectives, such as maintaining an enrollment level of 2,600 to 2,700 full-time students, and the ambitious goal of enhancing Bryant’s national and international reputation. At first, students and faculty were skeptical, but the plan was ultimately successful in helping raise the College’s endowment from $3 million to $30 million (today it is nearing $200 million), attracting Bryant’s first endowed chair, and paving the way for AACSB accreditation.

O’Hara made student concerns a top priority, establishing an open-door policy, principally through biweekly “Meet the Prez” sessions in the Rotunda. And he launched the President’s Speaker Series, which expanded students’ cultural horizons by bringing prominent leaders to the campus.

O’Hara helped build Bryant’s reputation as a business resource by establishing the College’s Small Business Development Center and the World Trade Center, and
by encouraging faculty to serve as expert resources for local media and as consultants to local businesses.

But what O’Hara remembered most fondly about his tenure as president of Bryant was the relationships he built with students. “I’ll always remember the Blizzard of ’78,” he said. “The East Coast was paralyzed, and a dozen or more faculty and administrators were trapped on campus. At about 11 o’clock at night, there was this banging on my door. And I’ll never forget — there were 25 snow-covered students out there. They had come to see if Mrs. O’Hara and I and the dog were all right. Isn’t that wonderful? We had them all in for hot chocolate.”

This focus on students and checking on one another just like a family has continued to the present day. What sets Bryant apart — besides academic excellence — is the collegial and purposeful community of students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

1989-1996 William Trueheart was Bryant’s sixth president

Trueheart had served as Executive Vice President of Bryant during the three years prior to being inaugurated as president in 1989. He was the first and only African-American president in New England.

“While not necessarily committed to going to university status,” Trueheart recalls, “we were strengthening our critical programs. I came from a liberal arts background and thought that in order to recruit high-quality liberal arts faculty, we should offer more liberal arts courses and recruit teachers who could contribute the kinds of skills our students needed as they moved on to positions of responsibility — oral and written communication skills, not just pushing numbers. Even auditors have to do that. So that was part of our academic plan.

“To strengthen the business program, we needed to get accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International. To achieve that accreditation, we needed to make a lot of costly, major changes. We needed to replace some faculty who did not possess terminal degrees in order to meet AACSB standards. I was more involved in that work than college presidents usually would be. I was proud of the great work our academic leaders accomplished. The whole institution pulled together to make it happen.

“We also had to strengthen other aspects of the college. We had to work to diversify our faculty; that was a high priority for me and for the board because we had been very homogeneous. It was a rocky road because we were buying out contracts and encouraging others to seek new opportunities. Going for AACSB required all kinds of personnel changes. And not having the accreditation limited our ability to attract the best business faculty and the best students, including international students, because they couldn’t go on to graduate school. To get international students, the board hired my wife, Carol, who was formerly with the Peace Corps and quite a world traveler, to travel to eight other countries to find strong students who were also full-tuition payers. Margaret Drugovich, now president of Hartwick College, was the person I asked to focus on enrollment management and diversity, and she became my assistant as well. We wanted to make sure that recruitment had the full support of the college — academic as well as administrative. We weren’t too successful in recruiting minority students. There was some improvement, but not to the degree I had hoped. It improved under Ron Machtley as president, partly because of his expansion of athletics.

“We also entered into an articulation agreement (typically between a four-year university and a two-year community college) with Community College of Rhode Island, to strengthen the relationship with them through recruitment. We approached other colleges in Rhode Island, but they viewed us as a rival rather than feeder. We made good efforts at recruitment, but it would have helped to have had more resources to be able to do more.
“Something that a lot of people don’t know is that the stand-alone business schools always had general education and the arts and sciences as well. They had an arts and sciences faculty. Even in 1990, I think the arts and sciences faculty was already larger than the business faculty, because it was getting ready for AACSB, and AACSB required that at least 60 percent of the degree be in general education. So, you had to have a strong general education faculty.” - David Lux

“In technology, we knew changes were moving rapidly. We knew that as a business institution we’d be more heavily influenced by the need of students to be more technologically competent, so we made it a priority. We hired technology faculty and administrators to try to get up to speed academically and administratively.

“Financial viability was important too. Our board made it clear that it was important to build our endowment, so we’d be less dependent on tuition. Because we knew how many students were enrolled in schools around the country, we knew there’d be a dip and a decline in business disciplines. We wanted to protect ourselves from that decline in applicants, so we decided to raise tuition in early years so there’d be a decreasing rate of increase in years when competition would be keenest later. One reason for that concern was the higher costs that would come with pursuing accreditation. But also, we knew we’d have tuition competition with colleges like ours. We had one of the lowest tuitions, so we could increase without becoming an outlier. So that provided more resources for us to do what we had to do. That was a tough decision. Some on the board, faculty, and alumni criticized us for doing that. But it was the right decision.

“We had to make changes administratively to accomplish things different from prior administrations. We hired a very strong Vice President of Academic Affairs. He took the lead with me in figuring out how to make changes in faculty lines to achieve accreditation. He had experience with AACSB and prior liberal arts. He knew how to encourage, advise, and support the deans and department chairs in identifying faculty we needed in order to get accreditation approval.

“It changed the culture for the faculty in that research became a critical and major component of being able to work here ...”

“All of that helped build the base for the academic strengthening that allowed Bryant to later think about whether to become a university. Ron Machtley, to his great credit, had that vision and built on the foundations, and did it brilliantly.”
1990 THE ERA OF BRYANT’S FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS BEGAN

Professor of Management Roger Anderson, Ph.D., was the first Bryant faculty member to receive a Fulbright scholarship award. In 1990, he taught for a semester at Dokuz Eylel University in Izmir, Turkey. (In 2013, he was awarded a second Fulbright grant, traveling to Warsaw, Poland, where he taught and visited seven countries.)

In later years, seven other Bryant faculty members received grants through various Fulbright programs: Professor and Chairman of the Department of Communication Stanley Baran, Ph.D., (Germany, 1997); Professor of Accounting Charles Cullinan, Ph.D. (Portugal, 2000); Associate Professor of English and Cultural Studies William Graves, Ph.D. (Belarus, 2002); Professor of Management Christopher Roethlein, Ph.D. (Czech Republic, 2007); Professor of Legal Studies Michael Bryant, Ph.D. (Germany, 2009); Professor of Economics Joseph Ilacqua, Ed.D. (Pakistan, 2014); Professor of Anthropology, African Studies, and Music Alex Perullo, Ph.D. (London, 2015-2016).

1994 BRYANT RECEIVED FULL ACCREDITATION FROM AACSB

“One of the things that really changed Bryant was completing our AACSB accreditation,” recalls Ron Deluga, Professor of Psychology “That was on the business side of the house, primarily, but it changed the culture. It changed the culture for the faculty in that research became a critical and major component of being able to work here as a faculty member. And it really upgraded the professionalism of the entire college at that time. It was a massive change in faculty over a short period of time. That decision was carried out by President Trueheart and the two Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs who served during this period, Dr. James Robinson and Dr. Mike Patterson. Mike particularly really pushed that through.

“It was a huge change in the curriculum, in the type of faculty that were here, and even the nature of our offices. We each used to share offices with another faculty member. I look back and wonder how I did that, because it meant constant interruptions from students of other professors that I didn’t have anything to do with. But we eventually got our own offices, so we could more easily concentrate on our work.”

Professor David Lux has a similar memory. “When I arrived in 1990, it was the first week of school. I went down to public safety and asked if I needed a parking sticker. I was asked if I teach in day school or night school. I said I was full-time faculty. ‘Oh, don’t worry about it then,’ I was told, ‘you only need one if you teach in the night school.’ And that was characteristic of the transition of Bryant from being the stand-alone business school. Many of the students then were night students. There were different, separate classes for day students and night students. So that was the start of a transition and the coming age of AACSB.

“There was an Old Guard that asked: ‘Why do we need to change? The evening college is good enough; it’s a money maker. What’s all this stuff with AACSB, and publications, and higher academic standards, and all that kind of stuff?’ But then those who observed higher education in business knew that the rigor and academic standards required by AACSB would position Bryant much better for the future. The majority of faculty and the board wanted a higher-caliber, nationally recognized school. And this was a solid decision that set the stage for later increases in quality and reputation.

“I was hired as part of a move to create academic standards that were higher level than the old academic standards. And that had been going on for quite a while. That was really the drive of Dr. James Robinson, who was the vice president for academic affairs at the time. He launched the move toward AACSB and that really created two factions in the business school.

“It’s been a long, long transition. The last of the anti-accreditation people are just retiring now. And for the College of Arts and Sciences, one of the things that Dr. Robinson was committed to doing was upping the
quality of the arts and sciences education. He launched a program that really came to a conclusion the year Ron Machtley arrived in 1996. He launched an initiative to upgrade the curriculum reform to bring the liberal arts curriculum much more into sync with the NEASC academic standards to raise academic standards and make a better general education.

According to Professor Roger Anderson, “AACSB required a very different kind of faculty and it caused a dramatic change in culture. And parts of that period were quite difficult because you may have had people who had been teaching a particular course for decades, and those people were told they couldn’t teach those courses anymore because they were not AACSB qualified. So, it was really difficult for many of the faculty who had been at Bryant for many years and had given themselves over to serve the institution. They felt they were being left behind.

“The reason for bringing in these terminally qualified people who were active in scholarship was that that’s a central focus of AACSB. In order to be promoted, in order to be tenured, in order to receive merit increases of any kind, you had to be productive as a scholar. We had faculty who just didn’t have that background. Many had been at Bryant for years when this change took place, and suddenly their prospects for advancing were gone. Some of the established faculty took things in stride and welcomed the new people. For others it was very difficult.

“Also, at that time, there were dramatic increases in tuition. Tuition was going up 18 percent a year for several years in a row for all of this. And oddly, it didn’t hurt the enrollment at the time. There was a perception that price equates to quality. But it really did change the distribution of incoming students in that at the beginning of that period around 80 percent of students were from Rhode Island; now it may be under 10 percent. There was also a robust evening program that was essentially shut down as a result of AACSB. Bryant used to have branch campuses in Providence and Newport, but they were closed.

“Dr. Mike Patterson eventually became Vice President for Academic Affairs. He was a retired military man, and he took the institution through AACSB in a very disciplined manner. That was from 1988 to 1996. Under Mike Patterson’s leadership, we marched to the finish and got the AACSB accreditation. And once the accreditation was achieved, things settled down.”
Dr. Roger Anderson explains that at the time of AACSB accreditation, "There was only one major, Business Administration, and five concentrations — Management, Marketing, Finance, Accounting, and Computer Information Systems. There were arts and sciences courses and arts and sciences faculty, but there were no arts and sciences programs. I was asked to be the academic dean and I took that role with the agenda to reform the curriculum. It was during my term, in the early 1990s, that we introduced the arts and sciences minors.

EARLY ’90s BRYANT INTRODUCED MINORS FOR ARTS & SCIENCES

"The decade prior to Ron Machtley assuming the presidency of Bryant College had seen a gradual but ultimately sharp decline in the number of traditional undergraduate students enrolled – from approximately 3,100 in 1986 to just over 2,100 students in 1996," recalls Dr. Roger Anderson. "This drop in enrollment was the result of a marked decline in the number of high school graduates nationwide, as well as a sudden decline in the number of young women enrolling in business programs. As a result of this combination of factors, there were five empty dorms, staff layoffs, a predicted budget deficit of $1.75 million, and a college community anxious about its survival."
1996  RONALD K. MACHTLEY BECAME  
BRYANT’S SEVENTH PRESIDENT

Under President Machtley’s leadership from 1996 through the end of this 30 year period, Bryant experienced a transformation of its facilities, academic programs, technology, and campus life, resulting in national recognition and an impressive increase in rankings. Student enrollment was up again. Bryant was back – bigger and better than ever.

But how was a non-educator chosen to lead the college at a time of such threatening challenges?

Mary Lyons, the professor who served on numerous executive search committees, recalls the presidential selection process: “Ron Machtley first came to our attention as a suggestion from President Trueheart, who had co-taught a Bryant class with him about government, law, and politics, a class that drew on Ron’s experience as a U.S. Representative in Congress. He taught on Mondays, and then flew back to Washington for the week.

“The search process had been going on a long time, about seven months, with no luck. It was like rolling admissions: we figured we would know the right person when we interviewed him or her. I knew Ron. I’m a Rhode Islander and remember his campaign for Congress. At this point, Ron was doing work in telecommunications and traveling all over the world, so I was on the phone with him when he was in South America, Germany, or wherever. I was coordinator for the search committee, so I was arranging the interview appointments.

“I had changed Ron’s appointment because another candidate, for some reason, had to come and go at the last minute. I basically had to hide Ron behind a potted palm in the Marriott because he was a very recognizable figure in Rhode Island. I asked him, ‘Do you mind waiting?’ No, no, that’s fine, he said. That’s Ron; he didn’t mind.

“So the other candidate left, and everyone was despondent. He’d come so highly recommended, but he was just awful. Ron came in – I remember this so vividly – and he sat at the table. Everyone was so discouraged because we had been at this for so long with nothing to show for it. And I remember exactly what Ron said: ‘I am not an educator, but I owe everything I’ve been able to do to education.’ That was his opening statement. I was sitting toward the end of the table and watched what happened. It was like a fast-forward of a dry, unwatered plant – it’s coming to life and you can see it.

“I watched everyone’s body language change. They were leaning in and listening intently. Ron talked about the first teacher who made a difference in his life when he was growing up in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He said the only educated people he knew were his teachers, his clergyman, and doctors. He was drifting as a high schooler, as a lot of guys do, and he said he had an English teacher and principal who was also the football coach. ‘He took an interest in me. And he told me to join the team. Because of the direction this one man gave me, I later qualified for the U.S. Naval Academy for college. If it weren’t for that one teacher …’

“Sometimes you can say that an interview got a person a job. That’s what happened with Ron. And it wasn’t because we were desperate, it was: why didn’t we meet you seven months ago?
“There’s kind of an epilogue to this story. Ron’s inauguration was a big to-do, with a tent for some of the president’s guests. For some reason, I was early and noticed a gentleman sitting in the reserved section — an older gentleman, in a suit, alone at that moment. I have no idea why, but I went up to him, on a hunch, and asked, ‘Are you Ron’s principal and teacher and coach from high school?’ And he said, yes. That is so Ron. Who did he have as his guest of honor? The man who made it all possible — the teacher, principal, and football coach who helped turned his life into something very special.

“Ron is a very ethical man. He’s not perfect; nobody is. But he does things because in his heart he feels it’s the right thing to do. And the kids love him. They call him Big Dawg. And at any kind of gathering where he’s introduced, you’ll hear the students hoot and holler. That’s been going on since 1996. He hasn’t lost the magic. They love him.”

Professor Ron Deluga contends two things dramatically changed Bryant: AACSB accreditation and when Ron Machtley arrived. “I’m stealing someone else’s phrase — Ron was not a breath of fresh air; he was a hurricane of fresh air,” said Deluga. “He got things done, at so
The new college president immediately had to grapple with a downturn in enrollment and other troubles, but he jumped right in. "There’s an old Navy adage," Machtley noted, "when you’re in battle and you’re hit by a torpedo, first stop the flooding, then fight the battle." Bryant’s leaders began to stop the flooding by implementing the New Century Plan for Excellence, a strategic vision the Board of Trustees had charged Machtley with developing soon after he arrived.

All understood that Bryant could not afford to stay with the status quo, but it was also felt that Bryant should not forget its heritage. "As I looked at the history of Bryant since 1863," said Machtley, “what we’ve done really well is enable our students to go out and be successful. And it became clearer and clearer to me that if our students became great, then Bryant would become great. So it became our mission in 1996 to be a student-centered college, focused on excellence, to ensure that every student would achieve his or her personal best in life and in business.”

The new mission marked a “very important cultural shift,” said Jack Wolfe ’99H, a past chair of Bryant’s board of trustees. “The board had always had a financial orientation, but Ron’s emphasis on character and integrity, on the whole person, moved us to have an equally strong student orientation.”

The New Century Plan called for new academic and athletic facilities, cutting-edge technology, and more scholarships. To execute the plan, President Machtley...
recruited a team of higher education veterans from within and beyond Bryant, including J. Thomas Eakin in student affairs, V.K. Unni in academic affairs, and Roger Anderson, a former Bryant dean and management professor who became the president’s executive assistant. The team worked together exceptionally well. Indeed, they carried out the five-year plan two years ahead of schedule.

A surge in student applications reflected the Bryant comeback. In 2001, President Machtley was able to say in an interview with *Bryant Business* magazine, “We have about 66 percent more student applicants than we had in 1996, a growth rate that exceeds that of most other colleges.”

**1997 FIRST LADY KATI MACHTLEY STARTED THE SUCCESSFUL BRYANT’S WOMEN’S SUMMIT**

Kati Machtley was truly the President’s working partner on numerous fronts, including co-hosting hundreds of events every year. Her leadership was particularly important in an event she founded and directed, Bryant’s Women’s Summit.

The Women’s Summit became one of the most popular women’s conferences in New England. It is the largest and longest-running conference for women in Rhode Island, selling out every year since its inception.

Twenty years later, in 2017, the *Providence Business News* reported: “Founded by Director Kati Machtley to encourage more women to enter careers in business, the event welcomed 350 people in 1997. This year’s event sold out within hours and will welcome more than 1,000 attendees to the school’s Smithfield campus for a day filled with panel discussions, keynote speeches — including by actress Geena Davis and Liberian Nobel Laureate and peace activist Leymah Gbowee — and networking. The project has evolved from the idea of merely helping women see business as a fulfilling career choice to an event that challenges women to maximize their potential and then helps them develop the tools to do so. An event for both those starting out on a career path, as well as those looking to reinvigorate one in progress, the summit is a testament to Mrs. Machtley’s determination to make a difference and her ability to inspire others to join the mission. And it is a sign of what can be accomplished when a good idea is well-executed.”
Workshops explore strategies for professional and personal success – At the 2018 Women’s Summit, participants could choose among 24 breakout sessions throughout the day, with experts leading each one. Kati Machtley said workshops are designed to help women achieve success and ensure well-being with subjects like “innovative thinking, financial empowerment, confidence building, improving communication skills, cybersecurity, diversity awareness, entrepreneurship, marketing, mentoring, and healthy lifestyles.” Activities are held all over the campus. Some of those who attend the event have never been to the campus, so they discover the impressive functionality of Bryant’s facilities and enjoy the warm welcome.
**1997 **BRYANT UPDATED AND EXPANDED ITS TECHNOLOGY

Bryant made a multimillion dollar investment in a new campus–wide computer infrastructure. IBM evaluators rated it among the best in the country.

As the internet and email transformed communication, Bryant provided full access to the necessary technology to all students, faculty, and staff. Soon after, Yahoo, Forbes.com, Wired magazine and Princeton Review ranked Bryant as one of the “most wired” colleges in the U.S.

One of President Machtley’s early technology initiatives was providing laptops to all incoming freshmen, with the laptops replaced every two years as part of tuition. Before the program, 40 percent of students did not have laptops. The new program ensured that all students had the most current technology, regardless of their personal finances, as well as uniformity and compatibility in communications.

When President Machtley first proposed the laptop program, many doubted its value, but later, what had seemed like a luxury, was deemed another competitive advantage for Bryant. It was a big investment when the value of this technology was not considered certain, but the president could see that the digital revolution would change everything in higher education, the marketplace, and business world.
1997  BRYANT ADOPTED NEW STRATEGIES TO BOLSTER STUDENTS’ BASIC SKILLS

The Writing Center was established in 1997 to provide students the opportunity to work one-on-one with writing specialists. The professional staff, and student writing consultants who are trained and certified by The College Reading and Learning Association, work with students at all stages of the writing process – brainstorming, outlining, thesis development, and draft editing.

Bryant later expanded this service to create an Academic Success Program to give students regular access to other learning specialists who could provide individualized assistance and group workshops for improving study skills.

Today what started out as a Writing Center is the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), staffed by professional math specialists and peer tutors, as well as writing specialists. In addition, ACE offers one-on-one and group appointments for a variety of subjects including economics, finance, and accounting. It has helped students with remedial skills and B students become A students as a result of improved academic skills.

The Academic Success Programs also provide specialized services for international students and English language learners to help them improve their performance and confidence. In addition, ACE serves students with various learning disabilities to help them strengthen their academic skills. While the Bryant curriculum is challenging, ACE has really helped students to enhance their study skills.

1998  BRYANT CREATED A FINANCIAL SERVICES MAJOR

Bryant became the first institution of higher education on the East Coast, and second in the country, to offer an undergraduate degree program in Financial Services. That major brought together an interdisciplinary curriculum of legal studies, accounting, and marketing – preparing students for the intensely competitive, technology-based financial services environment. And it helped position Bryant for an important, growing partnership with a pioneering company that had just moved in across the street, Fidelity Investments.

President Machtley wrote at the time, “We long have recognized that meaningful change requires looking beyond our walls to identify the needs of the audiences we serve. After all, we stand not as an isolated ivory tower, but as a business leader. That explains, in part, why Bryant is one of the first colleges in the nation to offer a major in financial services. We observed the decade’s mega-mergers, society’s demographic shifts, and the region’s most thriving business sectors – and we asked the pertinent questions. What do these changes mean for business? What will companies need from the employees of the future? How can we best prepare our students to thrive in new careers and to lead in new environments?”

Robert C. Pozen was president of Fidelity Management and Research Company when the new major was announced. He shared some insights about the financial services industry with Bryant Business in 1999. He noted that job prospects for financial services graduates were very good: “In general, there’s a huge need for anybody who knows operations, marketing, budget management, human resources, how technology and the Internet work, and so on.

1998  V. K. UNNI BECAME VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

V. K. Unni was President Machtley’s first major academic hire. A gifted faculty member, Unni worked collegially with everyone and hired many new faculty during his leadership tenure. He also ensured that Bryant would pass all of its accreditation reviews, both AACSB and NEASC.
“More specifically, there’s a need for people who can value securities on a daily basis and who know how to calculate the net asset value of funds. We are looking for college-educated people who have some general financial background. We want smart people who are able to think well, logically and creatively. We look for a strong work ethic and personal integrity.”

2001 BRYANT ADOPTED A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN, VISION 2010

With the College’s messaging on track and enrollment growing as a result of the initiatives of the New Century Plan for Excellence, attention turned to the need to address key “structural” concerns: non-competitive facilities, program limitations, and insufficient philanthropic support.

Based on a campus master plan developed in collaboration with the architectural firm, Stubbins Associates, Bryant announced a $50 million expansion plan to create both exceptional buildings and beautiful green space. The plan called for the construction of the George E. Bello Center for Information & Technology, the Douglas and Judith Krupp Library, the Elizabeth and Malcolm Chace Wellness and Athletic Center, extensive renovation of the Unistructure, and the creation of the Hassenfeld Common.

After careful analysis of demonstrated market potential, consistency with the College’s core identity, and ability to leverage existing resources, Bryant added new degrees to its program offerings: Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, and Bachelor of Science in Information Systems. The College also enhanced its International Studies Program and added a new minor in International Business. In just three years, the campaign concluded when it exceeded its fundraising goal — raising more than $40 million for scholarships, new programs, and new facilities. The increased philanthropic support fueled Bryant’s growth strategy at a crucial time.

Phase II of the Vision 2010 strategic plan was based on the premise that to compete Bryant had to differentiate itself from competitor institutions by creating situational value. That involved: first-rate academic programs that blended liberal arts and professional curriculums and theory with practice; a strong focus on character development; a highly “personal touch” focused on each student as an individual; a clearly defined international focus and strategy; and facilities and technology which would be second to none.

Vision 2010 had five strategic pillars: Academic Quality and Reputation, Student-Centered Learning Community, Facilities and Technology, Internationalization and Diversity, and Individual High Touch. The process required each vice president, in consultation with his/her divisional staff and the other members of the President’s Cabinet, to develop goals related to each of the five strategic pillars. This process helped ensure that responsibility for advancing the University’s strategic objectives was understood and shared across the entire institution.
2001-2018 BRYANT WENT GLOBAL

Through the years, Bryant became increasingly ambitious about providing a global perspective to students – combining extensive study abroad and overseas travel opportunities with globally-oriented coursework and intercultural programming on campus.

By 1999, Bryant had augmented its international studies concentration and created a new minor in International Business. Throughout the curriculum, professors incorporated international case studies in class discussions. The John H. Chafee Center for International Business at Bryant offered students and area businesses a wide range of resources for learning about world trade, including seminars led by faculty and outside experts, and videoconferencing services that enabled classes and companies to conduct virtual meetings with people in other countries.

In 2005, Bryant entered into a groundbreaking educational partnership with the China University of Geosciences in Wuhan Province. Also in 2005, the U.S.–China Institute opened on the Smithfield campus, enhancing academic and business programs with Chinese academic institutions and organizations.

In 2007, Bryant launched the Sophomore International Experience (S.I.E.). By 2018, 34 percent participated in the program; there are 52 study-abroad countries to choose from, with 291 locations.

In 2008, Bryant created an International Business major, and it became one of the University’s fastest-growing majors, recently ranked third in the nation by College Factual/USA Today.

In 2013, MBA students in Bryant’s first graduate Global Immersion Experience traveled to Chile.

In 2015, Bryant opened a campus in China, Bryant Zhuhai, a joint venture with the Beijing Institute of Technology (Zhuhai). It is located in Zhuhai, a city of 45 million people that is directly across the South China Sea from Hong Kong. The four-year degree program is taught in English and designed to mirror Bryant’s rigorous U.S. curriculum, with graduates receiving a Bryant degree.

Bryant’s progress in going international has been so important, we devote an entire chapter to it.
BRYANT LAUNCHED ITS FIRST COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

“The Campaign for Bryant: It’s About Changing Lives” was led by Jack Callahan ’56, ’05H; George Bello ’58, ’96H and Malcolm “Kim” Chace ’09H. In just three years, the campaign concluded when it exceeded its fundraising goal — raising more than $40 million for scholarships, new programs and new facilities. The increased philanthropic support fueled Bryant’s growth strategy at a crucial time.

Years later, William J. Conaty ’67, ’98H Chair of the Board of Trustees, said that when Ron Machtley arrived at Bryant as the new president, “he found a campus that did not match the ambitions of our institution. Though rich in intellectual vigor and institutional reputation, at that time Bryant lacked the physical resources — great facilities — to fulfill its mission to develop the mind, body, and spirit of each student.”

The generosity of alumni and friends during Bryant’s first capital campaign was soon evident in new, stunning buildings at the center of the campus: the George E. Bello Center for Information and Technology, the Douglas and Judith Krupp Library, the Elizabeth and Malcolm Chace Wellness and Athletic Center, and, in subsequent years, the Ronald K. and Kati C. Machtley Interfaith Center, and the Michael E. ’67 and Karen L. Fisher Student Center.

Together, the Bello, Chace, and Interfaith Centers created an arc of buildings that symbolized the education of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit.
BRYANT LAUNCHED NEW MAJORS IN COMMUNICATION, APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In anticipation of the creation of a College of Arts and Sciences, it was decided that Bryant should start three pilot majors. All the departments in arts & sciences were asked to submit proposals based on the following three criteria: 1. Bryant’s historic focus on education for career success; 2. Utilization of existing resources and faculty; 3. Contribution to a financially sustainable model. A total of 20 proposals were submitted and the three cited above were selected.

“Today’s Bachelor of Science in IT combines traditional computer science courses with knowledge of business management and financial and analytic practices.”

Bryant’s new Communication Department was designed to give students an advantage in the professional world by immersing them in Standard English and communication theory, so they could create well-constructed arguments and compelling presentations. Stanley Baran, Founding Chair of the Communication Department, said at the time, “What is considered acceptable writing and speech is not what it used to be, but good writing and oratory are always going to prevail.”

Recognizing that communication is an ever-changing industry, Bryant’s communication program gives students the flexibility to design programs of study that work in the real and virtual worlds. The Communication Department covers the whole spectrum — interpersonal communication, mass communication, writing, and media production.

Ron Deluga was Founding Chair of the Psychology Department. “It was a privilege being the first chair, and it was a rare opportunity to create a new department from scratch,” he said. “We had worked closely with President Machtley to push this through — particularly with the Board of Trustees — because we never had non-business majors before. The board had to be convinced this was a good idea to help expand enrollments. We developed a minor that created a lot of interest from students. And the thinking was, based on data from other universities, that the type of students interested in majoring in psychology tend to be female, and they wanted to attract more female students to Bryant.”

Recognizing the growing importance of information systems in business decision-making, Bryant started an undergraduate degree program for Information Technology. Today’s Bachelor of Science in Information Technology combines traditional computer science courses with knowledge of business management and financial and analytic practices. The integrated curriculum teaches the range of skills necessary for success in nearly all contemporary careers. As an information technology major, students benefit from exposure to diverse technologies, including software development, digital arts, databases, information technology security management, telecommunications, website building, computer architecture, project management, and analytics. The program also explores the creation of technology tools and topics such as programming, data structures, and algorithm design. As the technology has developed and changed, so too has the information technology major. Now a data science major is about to launch.

At the graduate level, in 2001, Bryant also started a master’s of Information Systems.

And during this time period, Bryant augmented its international studies concentration and started a minor in International Business.
2002  THE BELLO CENTER FOR  
INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY  
OPENED, WITH A NEW LIBRARY INSIDE

Expanding beyond the Unistructure, the original idea was for a new classroom building, but after a review with the architectural firm, Stubbins Associates, it was decided to move the library from the inside of the Unistructure to a new facility, thus freeing up more space for additional academic classrooms. So, one of President Machtley’s first priorities was to build a new library. In 2000, a ribbon was cut to open the George E. Bello Center for Information and Technology, which houses the Douglas and Judith Krupp Library. Even the name of the building foretold the coming technology revolution of sorts.

“When we first opened, some students seemed a little intimidated,” recalls Mary Moroney, Bryant’s Director of Library Services from 1982 to 2018. “Even some faculty said, ‘Oh, wow, look at this building; I don’t know if I can navigate this.’ It was so different and it was stunning. For those familiar with the old, much smaller library in the Unistructure, it took some adjustment.

“A huge change over the years is our having so many more electronic books than physical books. We buy e-book and video collections, some we own outright, and some we subscribe to. In 1995, we still had journals on CD-ROMs, but we didn’t have these databases. Now we have enormous databases with access to 30,000 journal titles and back files — academic journals, popular journals, association journals, the whole gamut. We planned the building so that every seat had both a plug for data and electricity, as we were not sure the building could handle the volume of traffic expected on an everyday basis with every student coming with a laptop and limited bandwidth on the then WiFi systems. As it turned out over the years, the inclusion of those plugs was an excellent choice not for the reason initially thought, but for power as battery units are depleted in the laptops after use throughout the day.
“We’re more of a general library than a research library. But, being part of a global system, if someone is doing very advanced specialized academic research and we don’t have a particular publication, we can borrow from other libraries — even in other countries — and, in turn, libraries borrow from us.

“Library staff are often invited to teach in courses, like Writing 101, or teach a workshop about plagiarism, or how to cite web sources. We have a liaison program with different librarians helping in particular academic fields, like management or accounting. They keep in touch with those professors and students, helping them with research in their own subject areas. That kind of support service is part of the Bryant experience. So, if you’re in the Honors program and doing a project, you get assigned a personal librarian. That’s your go-to person.

“While the library is considered this physical facility, in a sense we’re now all over the campus. Off campus, people can access all kinds of electronic information. That includes students at our Zhuhai campus in China. Once in a while a librarian working at midnight will get an instant message chat session with someone from Zhuhai. If students study abroad, they’ll still connect with us and say, ‘oh, thank you so much; I’m in Australia and need help; I don’t know their library at all.’ They know they can connect with us.

“In 2006, we started digitizing everything about Bryant’s past. For example, we scanned The Archway newspaper from 1946 to the present and put that online. We scanned all the yearbooks and put those up there so the whole world can see. We scanned some Bryant newsletters, anything that was serial in nature. And other little things, like the original school charter, so people can see that and celebrate Bryant’s rich past, from 1863 on.

“In 2007, we became one of the first libraries in New England to offer ‘text a librarian’ service.

“In the Bello Center we also have the Walter and Heidi Stepan Grand Hall. Bryant never had a large space to host lectures, speakers, or dinners. The Grand Hall has enabled Bryant to host regional library conferences
and other academic conferences, like for Accounting or World Trade days. And nationally-known speakers address large audiences in there.

So, all of that makes the library feel vibrant — connected with ongoing education and the whole world.

**2002 BRYANT CREATED A SIMULATED TRADING FLOOR**

A state-of-the-art simulated trading room, the C.V. Starr Financial Markets Center (FMC), was set up in the new George E. Bello Center for Information Technology. With real-time financial data, the FMC gave students hands-on experience with investing, so they could see theory put into practice, and experience firsthand the speed and complexity of actual financial markets. Advanced finance students have had the opportunity to manage real portfolios. Modeled after the Fidelity Space in Boston, the FMC showcased state-of-the-art equipment and technology. What became unique about this space was that it became a major teaching resource center, not just a visual showcase. Faculty, led by the then chair David Louton, discovered ways to use this technology space for teaching classes. It was new in higher education as a concept.

**2002 BRYANT WAS RECLASSIFIED FROM A BUSINESS-ONLY CATEGORY TO A MASTER’S INSTITUTION BY THE CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

In the early years of the new century, Bryant was ranked among the Top 20 in its small category of business specialty schools. Bryant continued to rise in national rankings throughout this 30-year period. By 2018, *College Factual/USA Today* ranked Bryant #3 in Marketing, International Business, and Accounting. In its ranking of “Return on Investment/Value” they gave Bryant an A+ for “Immediate Post-Graduation earnings” and A+ for “Mid-Career, Post-Graduation Earnings.” *Forbes* magazine put Bryant on its list of “300 Schools Worth the Investment” and *MONEY* 2016 featured Bryant in “50 Schools that Add the Most Value.” With the increased master’s degree programs, Bryant was successfully reclassified by the Carnegie Classification System in its Master’s University category. Today it is ranked in the Master’s University Northeast, which has more than 200 listed schools in this category.

**2004 BRYANT CREATED A COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

“The Financial Markets Center takes students out of textbook thinking,” explained finance professor Asli Ascioglu. “The students enjoy the courses so much, I don’t think they notice how well they’re learning.”

“Enrollment had regained slightly, but if you looked at the demographics you saw that Bryant College couldn’t go on only focused on business,” said David Lux. “Bryant College needed to diversify from strictly business as the economic cycles were devastating for enrollments.” It was obvious we had to diversify the curriculum, and that meant creating new programs. And the most obvious one was a College of Arts and Sciences — a focused liberal arts college. I became Dean of the new College and continued dealing with all the functions of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies for a few years.
“President Machtley and the senior administration had brought in an enrollment management consulting group in the late 1990s, and they said that in order to establish new programs and revivify the college, we needed to focus on one or two programs. And the ones selected were communication, psychology and computer science. I agreed with new programs but believed we needed to have a market basket when trying to bring in new students — you had to offer them viable choices. I wanted to look for places and areas where we could have a fit with the business school programs and turn it into a matrix. I worked to get new programs put in place that would show synergies across areas; for example, health care communication or health care psychology.

“The actuarial mathematics program was then a business program, and in 2005–2006, as we were coming up to AACSB reaccreditation, the College of Business wanted to move the actuarial program. It had about 30 students, and it was struggling mightily. They weren’t sure, using the AACSB faculty’s sufficiency standards, that they could get the faculty certified. And I said we’d take actuarial science students in the College of Arts and Sciences. We took them and within a couple of years, it was one of the biggest programs in the college, with 180 students. It remains a strong and very competitive program, one of the best in the country.”
“I pushed the College of Arts and Sciences toward being more science related — highlighting things like health care in sociology, psychology, and communication — to have those things available as pieces that would attract students. My philosophy was that you needed a program that interacts and causes things to happen.

“Every major in the College of Arts and Sciences, other than the very first couple, was built on the back of a minor. We built on the enrollment that was already there. The day we opened the major, the enrollment was already there. When the College of Arts and Sciences first opened, there were three or four majors. Today there are 14.”

John Dietrich, Professor of Political Science and Chair of the department, helped with strategic planning for the College of Arts and Sciences. He notes that transitioning to the new college went smoothly, partly because the pieces were already in place. “We actually had most of the courses and faculty, stemming from the decision in the early 1990s that all students should have a minor. So, it was a win-win.

“I think mathematically and, to some degree intellectually, Bryant remains business-first. When we were creating Arts and Sciences, we were conscious that alumni thought of Bryant a certain way. One of our goals was to show that one doesn’t have to push the other out. We could gain the practical benefit of some of our fastest-growing majors being on the arts and sciences side. We would not be hitting admission targets now if we didn’t have the Arts and Sciences side.”

It was clear that successful leaders in business needed a background grounded in Arts and Sciences courses and that careers from the Arts and Sciences program would need a grounding in business. So from the very start, the plan was to have all business students receive a minor in Arts and Sciences and for all Arts and Sciences students to have a minor in business. While this took longer to coordinate, it has today given Bryant a unique niche in higher education.

Wendy Samter, Ph.D., succeeded Lux as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 2015. She joined Bryant’s Department of Communication in 2003 as an Associate Professor and went on to become Professor and Chair (2005-2013), Director of Graduate Studies (2011-2014), and Associate Dean (2014). She was instrumental in developing Bryant’s nationally recognized undergraduate communication program and establishing a graduate degree in communication.

Samter said Bryant leaders recognized that “it’s not as sustainable just to be known as a business school. In today’s world, it’s a different job market. Graduates are not going to have just one or two jobs; they’re going to have many jobs. And what they can take from the liberal arts is all of the experience that enables them to adapt and be flexible. Many of the skills that employers are seeking are from the liberal arts side. So that’s one of the reasons Bryant leaders recognized that the business-only model wasn’t as sustainable for what the future was going to be.”

She acknowledged that there are natural tensions between the two colleges, but “I think it’s better than it’s ever been since I’ve been here. And the Dean of the College of Business has campaigned on the need for students to be interdisciplinarily trained, so that’s helped. Setting the tone at that high level is very important. We also have a provost who’s a lawyer, Glenn Sulmasy, who greatly appreciates and promotes the arts and sciences, and that helps in the colleges working together.

“It’s been a culture shift, and it takes a long time to change a culture. But we are increasingly interdisciplin ary now, and as we bring on more majors that require interdisciplinary connections, more and more faculty are working together. They work together in thinking about courses, in developing them, teaching them, and assessing them. You see how powerful interdisciplinary education can be. One of the unique aspects of Bryant are the interdisciplinary office arrangements that have faculty in both the College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences interspersed and not in the traditional format of schools and departmental office buildings separately housed — sometimes in different buildings.
“Graduates have the same employment rate on the arts and sciences side as business, about 99 percent. Our average salary post-graduation is actually a little higher. And in the last class, 18 percent went on to graduate school. In terms of the number of faculty, we’re a little bigger today, but that’s mostly because of the general education requirements, that all student are required to take as part of their core curriculum, and there are more sections of arts and sciences. But in terms of student majors, business is approximately 78 percent of majors, while we’re about 22 percent of majors. We’re coming up, but not as fast as we originally intended. We have around 800 students now with arts and science majors at Bryant. We think we’ll reach critical mass when we have about 1,000.”

In August 2004, Bryant College became Bryant University, composed of two colleges: the College of Business and the new College of Arts and Sciences.

The change in identity was part of Bryant’s strategic plan, Vision 2010. It was intended to advance Bryant as an institution providing students with the best integration of a business and a liberal arts education and to make it a more internationally attractive school. All students with a business major are required to complete a liberal arts minor, and all students majoring in liberal arts are required to complete a business minor.
“Changing the name from College to University was a way to let everyone know that Bryant has grown and evolved in significant areas,” said John “Jack” Callahan ’56, ’05H, Chairman Emeritus, Board of Trustees. “Bryant needed a name that reflected its brand.”

Bryant’s increasingly diverse curriculum, its expanding graduate programs and its academic rise in the national rankings, had all spurred Bryant’s leaders to consider the shift to university status.

“Changing our name from College to University will help Bryant reach international students, to whom the word ‘college’ often means ‘boarding school’ or ‘high school,’” said Carly Muise ’05. “But whether it’s College or University, Bryant will always be Bryant. That means a phenomenal education, top athletics, and absolutely some of the best facilities in the region.

“I fell in love with Bryant before it was a university,” said Muise. “To see all these developments come – the Bello Center, the Athletic Center, the beautiful Krupp Library, all the new programs – it means the world to all of us who consider ourselves part of the Bryant family.”

2005 THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER AND THE KOFFLER COMPLEX OPENED

With the establishment of the Communication Center and Koffler Complex, communication students were thrilled to have a state-of-the-art digital multimedia studio. The center is home to the University’s TV and radio stations. WJMF takes up most of the main floor, sharing space with the TV/Editing studio.

The new television studio was part of a $5 million renovation of the Koffler Center. The studio brought about new courses, such as a class in television production wherein students produced a weekly program that was cablecast to every system in Rhode Island. The former chair of Bryant’s communication department, Stanley Baran, explained that, thanks to the success of the recent capital campaign, “we don’t have to patch things together. While other schools are grappling with reduced resources, Bryant can provide an education that’s absolutely first class.”

Prior to 2005, the Koffler Technology Center was Bryant’s computer center. More than 200 terminals, microcomputers, and workstations were located there. But when every student was given a laptop in 2002, the traditional computer workstations became obsolete at Bryant. The facilities now provide some individual workstations for hands-on learning and shared workstations for group projects.
2005-2018 BRYANT PROMOTED “FOCUS INITIATIVES” TO FOSTER ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

From his first year as president in 1996, Machtley advocated programs to fulfill the mission he expressed with conviction — to make Bryant “a student-centered college, focused on excellence, to ensure that every student would achieve his or her personal best in life and in business.”

University leaders shared his realization that preparing students for success in “the real world” required more than imparting subject knowledge and providing connections for post-graduation employment. They recognized that Bryant’s curriculum and culture should also inculcate values, skills, and perspectives that shape “the character of success,” Bryant’s tagline throughout this period.

To that end, Bryant conceived and implemented strategic programs, which in the next section of this chapter are called “Focus Initiatives.” They focus on character and success in five areas: Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Leadership, Innovation, and Global. The latter focus, going global, has its own chapter, International. The other four will be explained in the next section of this chapter – Entrepreneurship, Character, Leadership, and Innovation.

Roger Anderson, Executive Assistant to the President and Bryant’s first Fulbright Scholar, described a Bryant education as providing advantages for achieving success: “At Bryant you get this additional set of skills and abilities. You learn to be an innovative problem-solver. You develop an international perspective. You develop the qualities of character necessary to be successful. You develop leadership skills and the ability to work effectively in a team. You get disciplinary experience through an internship. If you’re interested in social services, you go out in the real world and find out exactly what it’s like to work in that sector. You learn critical thinking and how to communicate effectively.

“You can earn multiple credentials at Bryant. You earn a major and minor. If you wish, you can have two minors. When you leave Bryant, you’re ready to go out and be successful as a professional.

“And it’s all within the context of a high-touch, living and learning community. I read in the Princeton Review that one of the things that differentiated Bryant was that it was a very supportive community. It’s also very competitive here, but we are teaching you to be competitive in the world, not against each other on campus.”

2009 BRYANT LAUNCHED A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN, VISION 2020

Although this plan was comprehensive in scope, its key thrusts included an increased emphasis on internationalization, program innovation, and philanthropic development. The focus on internationalization produced numerous initiatives, the most consequential of which was the development of a joint program in Zhuhai, China. Bryant’s signature Innovation and Design Experience for all (IDEA) program and a new, award-winning core curriculum were among the accomplishments of this plan, as was the launch of a historic $75 million capital campaign.

Phase II of Vision 2020 was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2015. As before, the planning process continued to be organized around the five strategic pillars to ensure that all facets of the University’s operations were covered. The major areas of emphasis in this plan included an in-depth focus on the implications of the digital age and 4th industrial revolution for Bryant, and the introduction of a Physician Assistant program.
THE HASSENFELD INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC LEADERSHIP WAS ESTABLISHED AT BRYANT

The Institute was created to provide public officials and community leaders with the tools and skills needed to make informed decisions and more effectively manage responsive organizations.

The Institute’s programs match Bryant faculty experts in leadership, management, strategic thinking, team building, and politics and law with public officials from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The institute has produced a variety of conferences, workshops, and specialized programs in the areas of: leadership; negotiation, conflict resolution and compromise; transitioning from campaigning to governing; ethics and accountability; fiscal policies; crisis management and decision-making; and public engagement.

Launched in 2010 with support from Alan G. Hassenfeld ‘85, the Institute was named after him in 2012. A former Bryant Trustee and chairman of the Executive Committee of Hasbro, Inc., Hassenfeld has had a longstanding interest in helping state and local officials prepare for the challenges of public policy governance. Impressed by the mission of Bryant’s program, he provided generous ongoing support to the Institute from Hassenfeld Family Initiatives LLC.

Gary Sasse was Founding Director of the Institute. In the years since its inception, nearly 2,000 area leaders have participated in its programs.
Then–Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. José-Marie Griffiths, established the first REDay in 2011. REDay showcases research collaboration, creativity, and innovative academic accomplishments of students, faculty, and industry and community partners. Day classes are canceled so all of the Bryant community can participate.

REDay is an annual event, and it’s become a new Bryant tradition. Students, faculty and staff enjoy the research presentations, roundtable discussions, and artistic expression.

Provost Glenn Sulmasy, who became the university’s first provost after Dr. Griffiths left Bryant, called REDay “a celebration of the diversity of scholarship. We are a learning environment that focuses on applied scholarship, that values creativity in all of its forms, and that encourages collaboration between faculty, staff and students.”

Kathryn D. Sullivan, PhD., was one of the first six women selected to join the NASA astronaut corps in 1978. She was the keynote speaker at Bryant’s second annual REDay. Addressing a packed crowd of more than 400 students, faculty, staff, and guests in Janikies Theatre, she said: “Push yourselves outside your comfort zone. Make the effort. Have the courage to explore, to discover, to take in the novel, the unexpected, the uncomfortable.”
Dr. Griffiths led a curriculum review and reorganization in 2012. Each incoming class now goes through the First-Year Gateway Experience. Its 13-credit core curriculum takes students on a journey of discovery as they explore principles of character and leadership, and of organizations and business. They learn that in today’s interconnected and diverse world, social, cultural, and ethical understanding are vital for success.

Of the more than 100 presentations — ranging from roundtable and best practices sessions to literary readings — many offer a global perspective. For example, at the 2012 REDay, Professors Richard Glass, Suhong Li, and Rong Pan discussed data they collected about the Chinese social networking site renren.com, and the correlation between spending inordinate amounts of time on social networks and low academic performance. A surprising finding, noted Glass, was that U.S. students don’t see the correlation in themselves, while Chinese students were well aware of it.

A unique component of the First-Year Gateway Experience is the integration of student life experiences with academics. The goal is to help students connect their classroom learning with what they do and think as a member of the Bryant community.

Bryant’s Gateway Experience became a nationally recognized program for education innovation.
BRYANT CREATED A NEW COMPONENT OF GATEWAY: THE I.D.E.A. PROGRAM

IDEA (Innovation and Design Experience for All) immerses students in design thinking. IDEA takes place in January of the freshman year as the culmination of the First-Year Gateway. It began as a requirement for all freshmen to graduate and is a one credit course in January when only the freshmen return early for three days of intense work.

“We start with a bunch of projects,” explains Mike Roberto, management professor, author, and the pioneer who conceived the idea of IDEA. “In the spirit of design thinking, you frame a question as ‘how might we open up possibilities?’ How might we reinvent libraries for the 21st century? How might we help shopping malls compete with Amazon? How might we redesign hotel lobbies to enhance guest satisfaction? How might we help after-school programs better cater to poor families and children? And then we go out and find locations that have to do with that prompt. And every project we put 25 students on, we call that a cohort. To that cohort, we assign mentors: one faculty member, a staff member, and an upperclassman. We also recruit alumni to be mentors.

“We start with a series of hands-on activities, like games. And we teach students how to go out and observe people in their natural environment because that’s what design thinkers do. They see what people do in their lives, in their homes, in spaces. So we teach them: What should you be looking for? What are some of the traps you might fall into? What are the blinders you might have when you observe?

“Then we send them out into the field to do their own original research, observation and interviewing. They come back; they digest that. We teach them how to develop insights and conclusions based on what they did. Then they brainstorm. We teach them how to do real, effective brainstorming. Then they do what’s called storyboarding: picking some of their ideas and sketching them out. Then alumni come in, and the students have to pitch their storyboard. And alumni tear it apart. Of course they do; they are real-world people. The students are hearing from experts.

“After students get that feedback, they begin to prototype. We buy boatloads of material. We unleash them. They’re working late into the night – like they do in Silicon Valley – building models of what they have conceived as an innovation.

“On the third day, there’s a trade show. Students have to show their ideas creatively, and they’re not allowed to use PowerPoint. This year we had 163 judges; about 100 were alumni. There were other members of the community, members of the Bryant administration, and faculty, all wandering around for two hours. And the students had to pitch their idea and explain their process. At the end, judges judge. Winning teams earn a prize, but everyone feels good and celebrates. It’s an intense, exhausting, fun three days.”

In the last two years of this period, Dr. Allison Butler became the director of the IDEA program, providing new leadership, ideas, and dimensions to the exceptional program.
The College of Business at Bryant University maintained its prestigious accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. AACSB International is the longest-serving global accrediting body for business schools that offer undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees in business and accounting. AACSB accreditation is recognized as the hallmark of excellence in business education, earned by less than five percent of the world’s business programs. Dr. V.K. Unni, who previously served for 13 years as Vice President for Academic Affairs, also led Bryant through laudatory AACSB reaccreditation efforts in 1998, 2008, and 2013.

President Machtley said the reaccreditation helped validate the University’s strategic vision: “Bryant has been bold in imagining the future, and our innovative programs prepare graduates to meet challenges head-on. We have recently undertaken several key initiatives that have reinforced our foundation for a Bryant of even greater enduring strength in the future — a Bryant University that contributes significantly to the larger world through the leaders we produce.”

Bryant’s maintenance of the accreditation effort was led by V.K. Unni, D.B.A., who has been at Bryant since 1997 and then agreed to serve as Dean of the College of Business and Distinguished Professor of Business.

“This successful effort is a testament to our dedicated faculty in both the undergraduate and graduate programs,” said Unni. “I am highly pleased to have earned this continued distinguished recognition for Bryant, which is a reflection of the University’s exceptional business programs, faculty, and students. The reaccreditation encourages us to continually improve the fine quality learning environment we deliver at Bryant University, and required the effective collaboration of faculty and administrative staff.”

Dr. Griffiths said, “Bryant’s innovative, globally-focused education provides the perspective and insight our students seek in order to be successful and active citizens of the world. Designations, including our 20 years of AACSB accreditation and national rankings, point to Bryant’s academic excellence and affirm the quality of the Bryant experience.”

In that same year, Bryant celebrated its 150th anniversary. There was much to celebrate including approximately 3,500 graduate and undergraduate students from 35 states and 85 countries. And Bryant was increasingly recognized as a leader in international education and continued to receive top rankings from U.S. News and World Report, Bloomberg Businessweek, Forbes, and Barron’s.
2014  **BRYANT LAUNCHED AN AMBITIOUS $75 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

In the winter of 2014, President Machtley wrote in *Bryant* magazine: “The value of a Bryant degree was increasing at a pace that only continues to accelerate, and, by 2020, we will have successfully achieved the ambitious goals of our Vision 20/20 strategic plan – positioning the university among the most prestigious schools in the country. In September, our Board of Trustees approved the launch of our historic $75 million capital campaign, ‘Expanding the World of Opportunity: The Campaign for Bryant’s Bold Future’ ... This landmark campaign will make a profound difference in the academic standing of Bryant and its future students.”

The capital campaign had four goals: “1. Increasing access to a Bryant education – scholarships to compete for the best students; 2. Building on teaching excellence – people and programs to enrich learning; 3. Opening the door to a world of opportunity – resources to cultivate a global perspective; and 4. Creating a campus for success – facilities to inspire excellence.”

By the following year “Bryant Builds,” the facilities component of the campaign, was well under way. The exciting Academic Innovation Center (AIC) was under construction. Its expected impact was expressed in a phrase: game changer. In 2016, President Machtley said the AIC put Bryant “on a trajectory for greatness. This is the point in time in which we will look back on our history and say, ‘we made the transition from who we were to who we became.’ This was only possible through the generosity of many of our alumni, foundations, and friends of the University.”

The capital campaign was equally ambitious in its commitment to keep faculty and programs at the forefront of innovative teaching through the hiring of additional world-class faculty, funding for endowed academic chairs, and initiatives in programs including the First-Year Gateway. Dr. Edward Kairiss was hired from his previous position at Yale to help Bryant’s faculty prepare to teach in innovative new ways.

By 2017, the campaign exceeded its goal of $75 million. In 2018, the Board of Trustees announced that President Machtley would lead the effort to push the campaign over $100 million.

2014  **BRYANT CREATED A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

President Machtley and other university leaders envisioned a School of Health Sciences, with a Physician Assistant program as its first clinical program. This was first raised with the Board of Trustees at the board retreat in January 2012. President Machtley and Dr. José-Marie Griffiths knew that for Bryant to be involved in the business side of healthcare, we also needed to be immersed in the day-to-day clinical side of healthcare delivery. After a review of all clinical programs including nursing, Bryant began with the
Physician Assistant (PA) program chosen as the first healthcare delivery program. Because of its popularity, there was a three-year wait until a university could get the approval to begin a program. Fortunately for Bryant, one of the schools in the queue withdrew, and Bryant moved up to a one-year review. The Board decided that the Bryant School of Health Sciences would have these components: First, a sector of the Business of Healthcare; second, a sector of Healthcare Delivery; and third, a sector of Healthcare Policy.

President Machtley negotiated an agreement with The Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University so that Bryant’s Physician Assistant students could use their gross anatomy laboratory and faculty would have joint positions. The location of the PA school actually took six months of study. Should it be located in Providence close to Brown Medical School and the hospitals or on the Smithfield Campus? Ultimately, the decision was to build a facility on the campus, and this decision turned out to be very advantageous.

Jay Amrien and Boyd Peterson King joined Bryant to establish the program, seek accreditation, develop a long-term plan, design the curriculum, and help design a building. Although Jay Amrien was hired as a consultant to assist Bryant in the development of the program, he was so knowledgeable that Dr. Griffiths offered him the job as the first director.

“The University clearly wanted to get into the health care arena,” explained Amrien, now the PA program director. “They were looking to expand into health care marketing, health care analytics, and health care policy. A PA program would be a first step into the health care market.

“We have looked into athletic training, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physical therapy assistant …. and there’s market analysis going on in those realms. Bryant is already expanding into health care leadership. Innovative health leadership is their new certificate program, and they’re looking to expand that into a Health Care MBA track and then go into other realms on the business side of health care. So, the vision has continued to evolve.”

By 2016, Bryant secured a $2.5-million challenge grant from the Warren Alpert Foundation in support of its School of Health Sciences, to help develop innovative approaches in healthcare management.

“Our first Bryant PA class started in January of 2015 and they graduated in March of 2017,” recalled Amrien. “It started as a class of 32 and graduated a class of 30. Fifteen stayed in Rhode Island and about 40 percent of them went into primary care specialties. It’s very interesting when you’re recruiting a class for a new program. It’s a challenge to pick a first class. We got about 400 applications. And we were concerned — how’s this all going to work out? But it was a tremendously successful class. They worked well together. And 100 percent of them had great jobs within three months of graduation, with an average salary over $100,000.

“They were diverse in every way — gender, race, career, thought, age. The average age was around 27. They ranged in health experience from about 2,200 hours, up to about 40,000 hours. Some had been EMTs, medical technicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, athletic trainers, physical therapy assistants, physical therapist. Bryant uniquely requires students to have at least 2,000 hours of health care experience, but our average is closer to 6,000 hours. We prize experience; that’s why our students tend to be a little older. Students have usually demonstrated volunteerism, leadership in underserved communities, and are often multi-lingual.

“Bryant’s 27-month PA program is very rigorous. The first year, we have 48 weeks of didactic education. Then they go straight into 15 months of clinical rotations. They can be working up to 80 or 90 hours a week in some of those. Just like medical school has clerkships, we have clinical experiences in multiple specialties. For five weeks they might be inpatient in the hospital, five weeks they might be in a pediatrician’s office, then they’ll be five weeks in surgery, five weeks in the emergency room, five weeks in mental health, five weeks in orthopedics. Twenty-four of our students also do clinical rotations in American Samoa, and they serve the community while they’re there.
“Interestingly, when we were first drawing up plans for a PA facility, we originally intended to build the program in Providence. But we realized that having our students on the Smithfield campus was a much better alternative. The facilities here are amazing, the campus is amazing, the support structures are amazing. We had health services, psychiatric support, dining facilities ...everything was here. So we built this great PA facility as a wing off the Unistructure.”

By July 2018, the PA program was fully accredited by ARC/PA after a rigorous review, a great capstone for a team effort.

2015 BRYANT ANNOUNCED ITS FIRST PROVOST AS CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

President Machtley named Glenn M. Sulmasy, J.D., L.L.M. as Bryant’s first university provost and chief academic officer, responsible for allocating resources within Academic Affairs and overseeing academic policies and activities University-wide.

Prior to joining Bryant, Sulmasy was chair and designated dean of the Department of Humanities and Professor of Law at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. An acclaimed international law and national security expert, he had over 25 years of experience in academic, law, and government service settings.

In announcing the appointment, Machtley said, “Glenn Sulmasy’s exceptional background, distinguished reputation, demonstrated leadership abilities, and international perspective will accelerate Bryant’s trajectory of excellence.”
THE QUINLAN/BROWN ACADEMIC INNOVATION CENTER OPENED

The Quinlan/Brown Academic Innovation Center (AIC) was a key component of the plan to expand facilities on campus as part of the Capital Campaign.

Prior to beginning the design process for the AIC, Bryant had spent six years assessing the functionality of two prototype classrooms. The prototypes allowed faculty to experiment with new, innovative pedagogies, different classroom layouts and furniture arrangements, and IT configurations. The first prototype, the Ideation Lab, was pretty basic with moveable tables and chairs and an array of white boards and brainstorming spaces; the second prototype built on these innovations and added a major suite of technology. The important contribution of both of these prototypes is that many faculty had an opportunity to experiment with various teaching innovations and, when the new classrooms were designed for the AIC, the designs were informed and championed by the faculty. In fact, Bryant had done exactly what our freshmen students are taught to do in their 3-day design thinking IDEA course.

When the time came to design the entire building, Brian Britton, the Associate Vice President for Campus Management, assembled various firms with experience designing in classroom buildings. Kip Ellis, of the EYP Architecture & Engineering firm in Boston, was selected for the project. It was a great choice. Ellis began working with Brian Britton, President Machtley, and a committee of faculty to create a first-of-its-kind interdisciplinary classroom building. The president and others on the team went to Stanford, Harvard, MIT, and other universities to hear about the best thinking on classrooms for the next century. In the end, the building was designed to house 10 state-of-the-art classrooms and breakout session rooms. In addition, three other components of the building made it unique. First, there is a suite for faculty to share rather than individual faculty offices; second, there is complete transparency in most classrooms; and third, the building houses more than 100 small tables and movable white boards to permit classes to break out of the classroom for a different learning experience.

In the AIC, leadership skills are developed through practical team experiential learning, design thinking through real-world simulations, rapid prototyping, social entrepreneurship and service learning projects, flipped class delivery, and more.

As a newly arrived provost, Glenn Sulmasy viewed the Academic Innovation Center as “a catalyst for transformational education, preparing students for success whether they seek to make their mark in the corporate world, in law, or in the arts and sciences.”
• Enhancing academic excellence and elevating Bryant’s profile with academic opinion leaders and key constituents.

• Building-out the School of Health Sciences with both certificate and management-oriented graduate programs.

• Integrating into the curriculum the study and application of data science, analytics, and other technology-related subjects to meet the demands of the future workplace.

• Expanding Bryant’s reach beyond China to other countries and cultures, especially in Latin and South American countries.

• Enhancing our safe and beautiful residential campus. Bryant plans to invest more than $30 million in the next three years to modernize residential housing and campus dining.

In a letter announcing the news that President Ron Machlery’s employment would be extended through June, 2022, board chair William Conaty ’67 said: “The continuity of Ron’s extraordinary leadership will position us for continued success as Bryant embarks on a series of bold, new strategic initiatives …

“Among the specific initiatives will be:

• Enhancing academic excellence and elevating Bryant’s profile with academic opinion leaders and key constituents.

• Building-out the School of Health Sciences with both certificate and management-oriented graduate programs.

• Integrating into the curriculum the study and application of data science, analytics, and other technology-related subjects to meet the demands of the future workplace.

• Expanding Bryant’s reach beyond China to other countries and cultures, especially in Latin and South American countries.

• Enhancing our safe and beautiful residential campus. Bryant plans to invest more than $30 million in the next three years to modernize residential housing and campus dining.
2018 BRYANT OFFERED MORE THAN 100 COURSES OF STUDY, WITH MANY NEW MULTIDISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

A new Bryant tagline, Inspired to Excel, reflected the ambition and success of an integrated curriculum nationally recognized for innovation.

One hundred percent of Bryant students graduate with either a major in business and a complementary minor in the liberal arts, or a major in the arts and sciences with a minor in business. And an impressive 44 percent of students complete double, triple, or even quadruple concentrations.

Coursework is integrated within a dynamic 24/7 interdisciplinary learning environment that provides abundant opportunities to build leadership skills and credentials. And Bryant’s faculty engage students with hands-on learning through practicum experiences, social entrepreneurship, consulting opportunities, competitions, and business simulations.

Bryant’s blending of business and the arts and sciences in a real-world context was praised by Jeffrey Sachs, Ph.D., internationally renowned economist and director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University: “Bryant University’s idea is truly path-breaking, and just what society needs. The Bryant experience is perfect for preparing leaders who can fulfill the highest purposes of education.”

In 2018, the last year of this 30-year period, Bryant offered the following majors and minors:

**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**
- Accounting
- Data Science
- Entrepreneurship
- Finance
- Financial Services
- Global Supply Chain Management
- Human Resource Management
- Information Systems
- International Business
- Leadership and Innovation
- Marketing
- Team and Project Management

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**
- Actuarial Mathematics
- Biology
- Chinese
- Communication
- Economics
- Environmental Science
- Global Studies
- History
- Literary and Cultural Studies
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Politics and Law
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Spanish
FOCUS INITIATIVES

ENTREPRENEURSHIP | CHARACTER | LEADERSHIP | INNOVATION

Bryant leaders wanted to instill values, teach skills and encourage perspectives that helped students succeed not only in “the real world” of competition but also in their personal lives. To accomplish this, they realized that just adding a new course or two would not be sufficient and that new dimensions had to be added to what was being taught, learned, and promoted.

The first new “focus initiative” came early in this 30-year era: instilling a truly global outlook. This was, and continues to be, an ever-growing imperative at Bryant. It’s reflected in almost every course, every activity on campus, and every career plan for the future. That’s why there’s an entire chapter on Bryant’s progress in going international.

Four other focus initiatives also deserve attention: Entrepreneurship, Character, Leadership, and Innovation. Each of these areas has long histories, yet all of them emerged in recent decades as highly relevant and worthy of renewed attention.

Here is an overview of how Bryant conceived and carried out these Initiatives:
“...instilling a truly global outlook. This was, and continues to be, an ever-growing imperative at Bryant. It’s reflected in almost every course, every activity on campus, and every career plan for the future.”

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Many colleges offer courses in entrepreneurship, but Bryant has brought entrepreneurship to life in almost every conceivable way – academically, experientially, and by example.

“Successful entrepreneurship takes a special combination of nature and nurture,” wrote President Machtley in 2009. “A solid grounding in business practices and a higher-than-usual ability to manage risk helps entrepreneurs persist through long days, uneven balance sheets, and a tenuous sense of security. All for the payoff of saying: ‘I built this. I made this. I made a difference.’

“In recent years, the entrepreneurship model has evolved from one in which the founder builds a business and passes it on to the next generation, to a model that focuses on building an enterprise, selling it, then moving on to the next challenge. The former tends to reward sustainable growth, while the latter focuses instead on first-to-market strategies and the need to succeed – or fail – fast. But both demand vision, commitment, energy, and a willingness to endure extremes of uncertainty. At Bryant, we foster these talents in future entrepreneurs. Through coursework, co-curricular activities, and engagement with the business community, students learn to assess market needs, develop business plans, and convince investors that a proposed business is viable. As a result, the campus exudes an entrepreneurial spirit. Businesses are launched from the residence halls. New and varied student organizations are created each semester. And student-run events and activities fill Bryant’s nights and weekends.”
Ever since Bryant was founded, many great entrepreneurs have come from its ranks. In fields from aerospace to fashion, from the Internet to private equity, alumni have started companies that advance to the forefront of their fields.

There are many highlights in Bryant’s development of its entrepreneurial programs.

In 1992, Professor Jack Keigwin, an Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year, began teaching Leadership and Entrepreneurship, inspiring students with stories from the field. Also in the 1990s, BRYCOL, a student-run multi-business venture, helped hundreds of Bryant students acquire real entrepreneurship expertise.

In 1996, the Center for International Business at Bryant (previously the R.I. Export Assistance Center) and the R.I. Small Business Development Corporation (housed at Bryant from 1983–2005) engaged students in internships and provided a resource for research. The Center provided comprehensive trade services for area businesses to expand into international markets. In 2016, the Center received a President’s “E” Star Award for Export Service at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., the highest recognition a U.S. entity can receive for making a contribution to the expansion of U.S. exports.

In 2001, Troy Byrd ’00 joined Bryant as the head of the Global Entrepreneurship Program and launched Bryant’s Elevator Pitch Competition. It has become one of the largest student competitions of its kind in the U.S., a trial–by–fire required of all. Student groups generate an idea for a business, then create a business and marketing plan, incorporating all aspects of enterprise development while learning the skill of teamwork. “Until someone tries to sell something, it is difficult to understand the complex, interrelated components of creating a business,” explained Professor Jack Trifts in 2009, then dean of the College of Business.

In 2007, Bryant’s Collegiate Entrepreneurship Organization (CEO), a popular cocurricular program, was named the best chapter in the country.

Bryant soon added an entrepreneurship minor, and years later made entrepreneurship a major degree program.

Executive In Residence in Bryant’s management department, James Segovis, was one of the faculty members integral in curriculum development. “Bryant students really learn how to create and organize a venture, and it doesn’t matter if it is a profit or nonprofit,” he said in 2009. “Programs at other institutions might just be high-tech or medical-focused, but I see us in a much more hybrid model. We offer a critical skill set.” In particular, Segovis felt that philanthropy changed people’s view of business. He recognized the growing interest in nonprofit entrepreneurship and saw it as a paradigm shift for millennials. “For them it’s not just about making the money, it’s about giving back.” Social entrepreneurship became an increasingly important part of Bryant’s entrepreneurship focus.

Sociology Professor Sandra Enos was also a member of that working group and is a pioneer in social entrepreneurship. “In our classes, we help students learn how to be change makers,” she explained. “Through in–class instruction and service learning experiences, they are introduced to innovative social entrepreneurship practices, here in the United States but also globally.”

The collaboration of faculty from both the College of Arts and Sciences, like Enos, and the College of Business, like Segovis, was creative and unique in designing new ways to teach entrepreneurship, noted Dean Trifts.

“At other universities, the barriers between departments, and especially between colleges, are distinct. The entrepreneurship program doesn’t fit into any department. It’s a program with the support of all faculty – we don’t see barriers here.”

Mike Roberto, Trustee Professor of Management, observed: “A lot of entrepreneurship programs out there have either great academics who can lay out theory or seasoned entrepreneurs who can tell war stories. But the faculty teaching entrepreneurship at Bryant have this kind of hybrid background – it’s hard to find people like this.”
President Ron Machtley explained this initiative in a 2008 message for Bryant magazine:

“At Bryant University, we provide students with the knowledge to develop critical thinking, a broad perspective, and problem-solving skills for success. But true achievement can’t be attained without strong personal values. ‘Character’ is as much a part of success as knowledge. Moreover, we believe it is the responsibility of the University to explore and integrate character issues throughout the student’s Bryant experience. It is not merely accumulated wealth or the corporate titles that one acquires; it is the life one leads that is the ultimate measure of success.

“Some might argue that character is more nature than nurture and is already fixed by the time students go to college. And while we know that character formation is already well advanced among those who join the Bryant community, we also know that — to quote author Michael LeBoeuf — ‘the things that get measured are the things that get done.’ So at Bryant, we’ve launched a Task Force on Character Development to encourage a conversation about what it means to be a ‘person of character.’ The task force assesses how, while providing a world-class academic experience, the University is creating opportunities for character development. As part of this initiative, a Bryant market research class surveyed understanding about character among our faculty, staff and students to provide a benchmark by which our progress can be measured.

“In addition, the Task Force has developed a simple acronym to capture what we mean by character. SIRR stands for Self-management, Integrity, Responsibility, and Respect for yourself and others — all of which are the hallmarks of a person of deeply embedded values. Through various campus-wide initiatives for first-year students, Bryant inculcates a belief in the importance of ‘doing what’s right’ as part of ‘doing well’ — and we’re heartened by the results.”

"In 2007, Bryant’s Collegiate Entrepreneurship Organization (CEO), a popular cocurricular program, was named the best chapter in the country."
“Do you mean what you say? Do you live up to your promises? Do you tell the truth? Do you think of others before yourself? And do you have the capacity of self-command? Because if you’re going to lead other people, you have to be able to lead yourself.”

- Historian David McCullough
“I’m not preachy and I don’t lecture them about right and wrong,” said management professor Michael Roberto. He makes the case that “businesses need to make room for divergent thinking and dissenting opinions. You need a culture where people can speak candidly and raise questions.” Roberto can draw a hard line, too: “I’m teaching openness and tolerance, but I’m also teaching accountability.” One example is that he doesn’t believe in bonus points. “You get the grade you earn. We give students projects where they have to make their own plans, figure things out, manage their own time. People learn from their mistakes. And that can build character.”

Renowned author and historian David McCullough was a featured speaker at Bryant. In research for his biographies on great American leaders, like presidents John Adams and Harry Truman, he learned a lot about character. He defined it this way: “It’s honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, courage – not just physical courage but the courage of your convictions. Do you mean what you say? Do you live up to your promises? Do you tell the truth? Do you think of others before yourself? And do you have the capacity of self-command? Because if you’re going to lead other people, you have to be able to lead yourself.”

President George H.W. Bush spoke at Bryant’s 145th Commencement and told the assemblage: “Here at Bryant, to their everlasting credit, they’ve taught you that character matters as much as knowledge. No amount of fame or fortune is worth losing your very soul.”

The Bryant tagline, “The Character of Success,” is still on campus banners. And every hour the tagline is broadcast on WGBH radio throughout New England, as a result of an entrepreneurial agreement established under President Machtley wherein the University FM radio frequency was powered up by the FCC and carries classical music throughout Rhode Island and Connecticut.

“Here at Bryant, to their everlasting credit, they’ve taught you that character matters as much as knowledge. No amount of fame or fortune is worth losing your very soul.”

– President George H.W. Bush, ’08H

LEADERSHIP

Leadership has long been a hallmark of Bryant, but in the early 2000s, leadership was more consciously defined, developed, and promoted by the faculty and administration.

President Machtley called leadership “that distinctive quality that drives excellence and propels teams to achieve more than they ever thought possible.” He said that “leadership requires vision, creativity, innovation, and dedication to the execution of a plan.”

Through innovative teaching and real-world, cocurricular programs, Bryant increasingly offered undergraduate and graduate students new opportunities to test and hone their leadership skills.

The faculty blended academic theory with real-world lessons to teach the competencies that characterize a great leader, including: setting a vision, being a good role model, learning to make bold choices, understanding the concerns of those you’re leading, being authentic and true to your reputation, and delegating some decision-making authority to others.

When leadership was combined with the other Focus Initiatives (Entrepreneurship, Character, Innovation, International) a new mission statement naturally emerged for Bryant: “Educate and inspire students to discover their passion and become innovative leaders with character around the world.”
Bryant students learn leadership skills early in their academic careers. The First-Year Gateway program is a nationally-recognized interdisciplinary curriculum, and it culminates in the IDEA (Innovation Design Experience for All) program. IDEA places students in small teams to solve real-world challenges faced by businesses or nonprofits. The students are assigned mentors — faculty, staff, alumni, and upperclassmen. Students present their solutions, which are evaluated by judges, including industry and civic leaders, faculty, staff, and alumni. It’s an intense leadership experience for all students, including the student mentors who are trained to coach and advise.

Each freshman also takes a course on Global Leadership and, as is evident below, professors come at the subject of leadership from a variety of different angles.

Michael Bryant, Ph.D., J.D., helps students understand the ethical implications of leadership through lessons on the history of war crimes and international humanitarian law.

Lori Coakley, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Management, created Women in Leadership, a professional development course for women and men that focuses on communication and negotiation skills. She was also a pioneer in creating the IDEA program. “Whether you’re an honors student finishing your capstone project, in CEO (the Bryant chapter of Collegiate Entrepreneurs’ Organization), starting a club, or serving on the Student Senate — there are many avenues for leadership.”

In 2000, Henry “Hank” Parkinson, Ed.D., a former assistant director of student activities, recognized that students not drawn into campus participation as orientation leaders or residence hall assistants could benefit from new opportunities to develop their leadership skills. To help those students “find their home,” Bryant started to offer new experiential learning options. The University sponsors two Linked through Leadership Programs: Learn, Lead and Change Weekends, and the Leadership Empowerment Experience. The programs are rooted in the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, which embraces diverse leadership and the goal of positive change.

In 2010, Bryant created an Institute for Public Leadership — a go-to source for public officials to acquire skills, training, and research to help them become more effective leaders. It was launched with the support of Alan G. Hassenfeld ’85H, a former Bryant Trustee and chairman of the Executive Committee of Hasbro, Inc. In 2012, it was renamed the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership. Conferences organized by the Institute bring together regional leaders to explore strategies for problem-solving. “The Institute is a perfect fit for Bryant,” said Hassenfeld. “President Ronald K. Machtley, who has served in Congress, understands the pressing need for visionary, effective leadership. Bryant’s faculty and the Institute’s founding director, Gary Sasse, have created a world-class program that can make a tremendous difference for the future.”

“Leadership is a continuum,” said Richard Hurley ’04, director of Student Life at Bryant. “At every facet of your development, you are learning about yourself, about others, and about your community.”

That attitude is at the core of Bryant’s commitment to fostering leadership skills in every student.
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New initiatives were undertaken to answer very challenging questions: How can academic leaders create a culture of innovation? How can faculty more effectively convey knowledge? How can students learn the skills, traits, and process to become innovators?

President Machtley identified six steps in how innovation evolved during this period:

“First, we began teaching every freshman ‘design thinking’ in a 72-hour ‘boot camp’ immersion experience. That’s our IDEA. program — Innovation and Design Experience for All. It’s an intense, experiential learning program that teaches new students the model for problem-solving that was created by IDEO, a renowned California industrial design firm.

“Second, we began to envision how our faculty could go beyond PowerPoint presentations to an integrated pedagogy of experiential learning in the classroom. We started with one prototype classroom — the Ideation Lab — and adventurous faculty who had participated in the IDEA. program. The classroom itself wasn’t too futuristic, but the faculty using the room were known for teaching innovatively. They experimented, evaluated results, and made improvements.
“Third, we created an additional prototype classroom in our Bello Center and Krupps Library. This was more sophisticated in its use of wireless technology, with moveable tables and chairs for easy reconfiguration of the space for team tasks.

“Fourth, throughout the pilot projects, we had pioneering faculty and leaders who were ready to imagine a whole new building that would reflect the lessons they had learned. We wanted an active, fluid learning environment — space that was flexible for future evolution, open and transparent, with light and moveable furniture, and state-of-the-art technology tools. We spent two years designing this building, and, by 2016, it opened to universal acclaim. We envisioned group integrated experiential learning in flipped classrooms, and many other possibilities. In September 2016, the Academic Innovation Center came online (AIC). The AIC added a new dimension to academic life, inspiring faculty and students.

“Fifth, we recognized that our whole community should have a rich culture of innovation. We created many programs, like ‘Faculty Without Borders’ and the enhanced Sophomore International Experience. One initiative was an event in the spring called REDay — Research & Engagement Day. It’s an opportunity for faculty and students to share things they’ve done — a research project, independent study, or classroom activity.

“Sixth, we decided that our goal was not just to teach innovatively but to develop within each student the traits, skills, and qualities that characterize innovative leaders. In creative collaboration, we crafted a definition of that elusive word, innovation: ‘The process of creating and implementing an idea that generates significant positive change that the user values.’ We then identified five traits of innovators: Curiosity and Creativity; Integrative Thinking; Collaboration; Connectors; and the Perseverance and Grit to embrace failure as a source of future success. Our students are learning those defined traits as well as the core of academic courses.”

Now the difficult process is to seek a way of assessing if students are learning more than in a traditional formatted class and if they are developing innovative traits. To help in this difficult task, Bryant hired Professor Edward Kairiss as Director of Faculty Development and Innovation.
INNOVATIVE TEACHING

New technologies and new collaborations challenged faculty to think beyond the traditional classroom lecture format to more effectively engage their students.

Professor of Finance, Jack Trifts, said, “I used to think ‘lecture’ was a synonym for teach. I’ve taught at three universities and won teaching awards at them, so I’m pretty good at what I do, but my teaching today is fundamentally different than it was 10 years ago. I don’t lecture in class. I record video lectures and post them online, so students can watch them before class. Taking the lecture out of the classroom frees up time to do much more active learning kinds of things. This “flipping the classroom” is another way of helping the students to maximize their education face time with a faculty member.

“For example, we have students in my financial statement class who are evaluating and valuing companies. At the end of the semester they will make presentations. And we’ll bring in a team of finance professionals, all Bryant alumni, and they’ll ask the students the same questions they’d ask Fidelity portfolio managers. So, it’s very real, very current and cutting-edge.

“Instead of standing in front at a podium, I’m circling around and coaching, I’m mentoring, answering questions, sometimes directly and sometimes not so directly so they have to grapple more. And with a group dynamic, it’s so different; there’s more energy in the classroom. Students enjoy it. In finance, we are technology-driven. We installed a dozen Bloomberg terminals on campus. Bloomberg is the gold standard for financial information. A bunch of us are reworking our courses to be built on that. And to be able to send graduates who are already Bloomberg-certified into the investment industry, well, that’s really cool.”

Kairiss explained, “Since our faculty are so heavily engaged with preparing and delivering classroom instruction, we try to create opportunities for them to step out of that intensive environment to rethink how they might do something new. For example, we have workshops on teaching where we typically bring in
someone from the outside to present a fresh perspective about some aspect of pedagogy.

“Another approach is what we call ‘Faculty Without Borders.’ This is a program where we encourage faculty to welcome other faculty to come in and observe their class. We make it easy with an online form: here are the times I can welcome visitors, and here are the number of empty seats available. This notion of opening your door is catching on. Not only does it help faculty share pedagogical ideas with their peers, to explore and experiment, it also helps build a culture where teaching excellence is paramount.

“Sometimes we have a ‘Teaching Slam’, which is based on a presentation format often used at academic conferences, where you’ve got a limited amount of time to do a demonstration. In one iteration of this, 10 faculty were given 10 minutes to demonstrate something they do in the classroom. Then the buzzer goes off. It’s quite effective because you’re forced to be salient and explain something you found to be valuable in the classroom.

“The ‘flipped classroom’ model gives faculty so many opportunities to tap into that part of themselves that says: ‘I’d like to try something new.’ They know that students show up not to listen to a lecture but to solve problems, have discussions, engage in debate, or do some type of group project or task, sharing and collaborating.

“Some of the technologies we see growing in popularity include ‘personal response systems.’ It’s basically electronic polling. A professor will talk for a period of time, then pose a question – perhaps a multiple-choice question or some kind of challenge – and then give students a few minutes to respond. Their responses are collected electronically and displayed on a screen. So, if I’ve just been talking about Newton’s Second Law of Motion and I gave them a question about it, and 70 percent of the class gets the wrong answer, that tells me, OK, I need to step back, and figure out why they didn’t understand it. Plus, for the students, it’s a challenge. Everybody has to participate. It’s not just a few people raising their hands; it gets the whole group involved.

“Getting good feedback is a tremendous reward in itself. The true measure of good teaching is good learning. And one of the hardest questions to address in all levels of education, but certainly in higher ed, is how do we measure learning outcomes and learning goals? So, any measurement of any kind of impact can’t be just about measures around teaching or observations about teaching. They have to be tied into measures of student learning and student progress.”

INNOVATIVE LEARNING

In this new era, Bryant students learned in many innovative ways: interdisciplinary studies, team projects, leadership training, social entrepreneurship, mentoring, global immersion, and character building, as well as new technologies. Bryant’s immersive and uniquely integrated curriculum, with a focus on international education and innovative models of teaching and learning, garnered national recognition by organizations, including the Davis Educational Foundation and Hanover Research. While the traditional lecture format stills occurs, there is much more group experiential work around the lecture to ensure both learning of important points and a retention of concepts in practical settings.

A Bryant education is designed to inspire students to “discover their unique passion and create their own path to success.” Bryant committed to developing “the knowledge, skills, connections, credentials, and qualities of character that prepare students to think ambitiously about their personal and career goals, to think in a global context, and think as innovative problem-solvers.”
$H_0: \mu \leq 50$
$H_1: \mu > 50$

$Z = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu_0}{\sigma / \sqrt{n}}$

$Z = \frac{54 - 50}{8 / \sqrt{125}}$

$Z = 0.1645$
INNOVATIVE STUDENT INITIATION

The First-Year Gateway Experience, designed under Dr. José-Marie Griffiths as Vice President of Academic Affairs, has been nationally recognized for innovation and success. And the culmination of that initiation is the IDEA program. That program has four key learning objectives: First, students learn to apply the design thinking process to come up with creative solutions. Second, they develop skills in brainstorming, as well as constructive debate with other team members. Third, they discover their cognitive style and how to work with others who have different styles. Fourth, students learn how to communicate their ideas clearly and concisely.

“IDEA pushes students out of their comfort zone, to be better learners,” observed Madan Annavarjula, Dean of the College of Business. “It helps them think in a three-dimensional space, in a practical sense, collect information, organize it, prototype it — if it’s a failure, pick up the pieces, and run with the ideas that can actually take you toward success.”

Students learn that one weakness of traditional planning and decision-making is that it tends to move in a linear way from analysis to action. Design thinking is more non-linear and iterative. It emphasizes early action — through testing, prototyping, and experimentation — assessing the results of those efforts, then iterating quickly to improve on the ideas. “Fail fast” is the motto.

“The IDEA program is an immersive experience that engages the entire Bryant community, at all levels, including our alumni,” explained Allison Butler, a psychology professor and member of the IDEA leadership team. “Students learn that they have the power to make change in their communities, and to move the needle. By learning the design thinking process, they’re empowered with a really useful tool that serves them well, no matter what they go on to do.”

INNOVATION AS A BRYANT SUCCESS STORY

Thinking back, President Machtley cited three factors for Bryant’s success with innovation:

“First, getting early buy-in. The faculty was involved in these initiatives from the beginning. Indeed, they conceived most of the ideas and led the way in implementing them.

“Second, it takes courage. Our professors were amazing in the way they embraced the challenge of examining and enhancing their pedagogy. When you have been lecture-oriented for decades, it’s not easy to produce and post a video lecture for students to review in advance of class — and then develop materials to explore your concepts in class, with online research and team projects. And it’s not easy to learn how new technology works. Yet nobody backed off. Our teachers devoted extra time in preparation and planning their courses without complaint. Their true reward has been seeing their students work harder as well ...with enthusiasm.

“Finally, innovation requires realism and optimism. When you consider the six steps in ‘design thinking’ — observation, ideation, rapid prototyping, user feedback, iteration, and implementation — you can imagine failure as easily as success. But when you work with people in research, brainstorming, trial and error, you are energized and hopeful. And when you figure out ‘the better way,’ it’s exhilarating. That’s what keeps you going. That is why innovation has a momentum that can seem unstoppable.”

While these initiatives in innovation were relatively recent, President Machtley wrote in a 2017 progress report: “With due respect to my predecessors, I should note that innovation has been in Bryant’s DNA since its founding in 1863 as a national business college. And as a university, Bryant’s integrated curriculum of business and the arts and sciences is increasingly recognized as innovative. So we’ll keep raising our game, raising our standards, and raising our hopes.”
“There’s a Chinese proverb: The teacher opens the door; the student must walk through. And to open that door has been a pleasure and an honor,” said Robert Muksian, former Chair of the Mathematics Department who retired after teaching for over 40 years at Bryant.

“I’d sometimes tell students: I really can’t teach you. I can direct your learning. I can show you what to do. I could show you how it’s done. You’ve got to acquire it. If that’s teaching, then I’m teaching. I’m imparting my knowledge. I can impart it verbally. I can impart it artistically when I’m developing things on the board, and I can impart it in prose.”

Muksian joined the faculty in 1971 and launched the Actuarial program in 1982, which grew into one of Bryant’s most successful programs. The greatest success he felt, however, was at the end of a semester when students would come up to him, not yet knowing their grades, and shake his hand. “And they would say: ‘Thank you for the course. It’s something I’m going to be able to use the rest of my life.’

He had tremendous influence in applied mathematics, yet his degree was in engineering. His doctoral dissertation was the formulation of a math model representing the dynamics of the human body. But his curiosity and research over time shifted his focus from engineering to biomechanics to finance. Later, he wrote a *Mathematics of Finance* handbook, and a textbook, *Mathematics of Interest Rates*. He became a renowned expert in finance, but he concluded, “There’s nothing more satisfying, at least in applied mathematics, than looking out after you’ve explained something and see that a student understands what you’re talking about. He’s got it! When I’d see the kid has got it, what a sense of satisfaction! Money can’t buy that satisfaction.”

That is the unique joy of teaching.

What follows are some reminiscences of nine professors who were interviewed about how Bryant and its curriculum changed through the years.
Keith Murray is a Professor of Marketing in the College of Business. He joined the Bryant faculty in 1992 and was Associate Dean of the College of Business from 2005 to 2011.

“I came to Bryant because I wanted a place that had a clear identity and mission. I liked Bryant because it was a freestanding, independent, and resourceful school of business. That way, I thought there’d be more resources for research, for better facilities, and more support for teaching.

“Now, 25 years later, the market for higher education has gotten more competitive, more intense. I think Bryant does — certainly for undergraduates — what many other institutions don’t do. We have loyal alumni who identify with Bryant and want to take care of Bryant. If we find out you’re a Bryant grad, you go to the head of the opportunity and employment line. That is an advantage in going here — knowing that you’re then going to be part of a network of support that goes on. Not just initial jobs, but then for networking. That is an asset of great value.

“We’re in Rhode Island, and Bryant is a product of Rhode Island. It builds on the notion that this is my school; this isn’t just a place I got a degree. This is a place I identify with. And alumni are passionate about making sure they do what they can and make company resources available to students. It does happen in other places, but it doesn’t happen on average as much as it does here.

“During my time, graduate studies have changed in emphasis from the stock to the innovative. It used to be the program was old, and staffing was matter of fact. Now we are judged by a more critical marketplace, and, to varying degrees, attract bright students for an unconventional program. We have pioneered the idea — in this region, not nationally — of the one-year MBA. Other institutions weren’t doing that. We pioneered the notion of an MBA boot camp; now other programs emulate us.

“There was a period of time we were letting students indicate their preferences for faculty and courses in a way that served not the requirements, but the electives of an MBA. That wasn’t done anywhere; now it’s done in a fair number of places. In some ways we don’t actually keep up what we got started. But we have changed the face of graduate education to make it more — I’m going to use the word client-responsive. People talk about students being customers; they’re not really customers, they’re clients, in much the way you’re a client of a tax attorney or financial advisor. They are our clients; we owe them a professional service. We have done a good job of making that connection much more thought through. Otherwise, before it was largely an assembly line — we do these eight courses, and then you get your degree.

“It wasn’t easy pioneering in New England. As in all places, the status quo reigned, and people dragged their feet when we talked about changing things. But we had a dean at the time, Jack Trifts, who had been somewhere else and said we could be doing a better job. He said we’d been doing things differently and everybody’s happier: applicants, graduate students, and the faculty themselves, and in the process, the program prospers.

“When we started making changes it changed our applicant base, improving it dramatically. We had periods when we had a better applicant pool than the other two or three B schools did. We had higher admissions stan-
ards than other Boston-based equivalent programs had. We were given particular recognition the first year that we sought a ranking. We were ahead of institutions that hadn’t been ranked for a long time.

“I appreciated Jack Trift’s no-nonsense attitude and his reluctance to continue doing things the way we’ve always done them: Let’s rethink how we’re doing it; let’s look at other places and give other ideas a shot, because interesting things are happening elsewhere and we ought to try them. He brought fresh air to the business program and a perspective that is only possible when you have people from outside New England come in. That isn’t a beautiful thing to say if you’re talking to an audience of Rhode Islanders, but a number of us at that time had come from other places, and we said, ‘hey, great place, but improvable.’

“We offered new degrees — a master’s in accounting, a master’s in taxation. And for a little school, adding new degrees is a big deal. It seemed to be where the market was going. I think that was reflected in the applicant pool. When we made the changes, we got the word out, and we had our first graduating class or two. It was reflected in the number and the quality of the applications. We did something that was innovative back then, and that is what we came to call a corporate MBA. We would contract with — during my time, we had two organizations: one was the Navy, and one was Lifespan, which is a health care system in Providence. We contracted with them, and we provided a tailored, customized MBA for their people. It was very successful.

“I think we actually strove for excellence more than anything else. It wasn’t a matter of just trying something different. President Machtley has taken that to an international dimension. He’s done that with our emphasis on International Business, which is not unique, but it is fairly distinctive and taken very seriously here.

“We’ve done a very good job in our International Business program. We have taken an idea that has come into its own. Most business is international now, although the average person on the sidewalk wouldn’t tell you that that’s the reality. We’ve done a nice job of helping students understand that and prepare for that. It means they now study languages when they only used to study accounting. And to make it, we have encouraged study-abroad for people who are most interested and most ambitious to see what it’s like. And the cool thing we’ve done is when you come to campus as an International Business student, we prepare you to do exactly that.

“At the same time, we require you to develop a concentration in one of the five business disciplines — accounting, management, finance, IT, marketing — so when you graduate at 22 and Hewlett-Packard isn’t wanting to hire you as a vice president in Hong Kong or China, you have a way of making yourself marketable, generate income, and get placed at a company that knows of your interest and will someday send you to China, or Hong Kong, or India. That’s cool.
Kristin Kennedy has been Chair of the Mathematics Department for more than 11 years, and she has taught at Bryant for more than 34 years. She teaches a variety of courses, from statistics to actuarial mathematics. Her research covers a broad spectrum of topics – from the art of teaching math effectively to issues in accounting, healthcare, statistical research, and business.

“When I first started teaching here, mathematics was not a major. We were a service department, and we taught basic courses that would help students understand their financial courses better and some of their science courses better. So, a basic business calculus course and a statistics 1 course were pretty much what people took. You might have a few students who wanted to branch out to Statistics 2, but we had a limited curriculum there.

“In the early 1980s one of our professors, Robert Muksian, looked ahead and realized that actuarial mathematics was going to be a new wave of the future. He instituted the major here. We only had four or five students taking the major in the beginning, but it blossomed. We now have more than 175 students in our major, which is very healthy for a school our size.

“About 10 years ago, we started a second major, the applied math and stat program. And that has been growing every single year. Of course, data science and analytics are hot terms these days, and students realize they need to know something about statistical analysis just to be in business, whether they want to major in it or not.

“So now math is a major, we have a concentration, and we have a minor in applied statistics. Not only that, we are a SAS university. SAS is a big company with a large statistical analyzing product out there. And if our students take four SAS courses, the company and our department jointly award those students SAS certification. It’s a very nice thing to have checkmarked after a graduate’s name that they are SAS certified when they go out into the world. I’ve had vice presidents of actuarial programs tell me that they’d rather see SAS certification than another actuarial exam. There are only about 21 universities in the world that offer SAS certification in data mining, and we are the only undergraduate program, so we are proud of that.

“We have an analytics concentration that is across the College of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences. That’s different from what we do with our majors. Our majors are driven mathematically and are statistically astute, whereas the analytics concentration is more for the business person who doesn’t really need to know all the mathematics and the nitty gritty behind it, but rather, how you use it, what’s it good for, how it can drive a company. So, it’s more of a business approach. Students take some statistics courses along the way, but they don’t need to have their entire program in the statistical world.
“Before we had a College of Arts and Sciences, our students were going off and doing well in business and whatnot, but we were constantly hearing from business people: ‘We love Bryant students, they do a good job, but they’re not very well-rounded. They write strictly in a business sense. They don’t know that other half of the side — the literature, the history.’ So, the College of Arts and Sciences was born.

“At that time, when the College of Arts and Sciences came on, the mathematics department was in the College of Business. We already had our major growing. A few years went on, and all of us professors wanted the math department to be in the College of Arts and Sciences because, traditionally, that’s where mathematics is in most universities. So, we talked to students about it; the students seemed fine with that. And we packed our bags and moved across the street to the College of Arts and Sciences. We’ve been there ever since.

“I have a poster in my office, with Einstein saying, ‘Do not worry about your difficulties in mathematics. I can assure you that mine are still greater.’ I like that poster for my students because I don’t want them stressed over the math. We’ll go as far as we can. We’ll understand as much as we can. And let’s not worry if something is beyond our grasp at this moment.

“The math we teach here is significantly on the applied side. We have one course called number theory, but most of the older professors here were trained in pure mathematics, not the applied world of statistics and actuarial math. We had to learn that ourselves, to teach it to our students. In the area of pure mathematics, you begin to see the mathematics of nature. There are subjects in mathematics that will just blow your mind with the beauty of why something is true. The study of infinity is beautiful.

“I never give students the kind of exam where they could just punch A, B, C, or D. I want to see their work. I want to circle where they’re going wrong. I want to write them a note on whatever work they’re handing in to me. I want them to be accurate in communicating their results. I want them to write a concise, clear interpretation of what they think those numbers mean. I like to see that they’re following the reasoning because they will turn into logical-thinking people if they practice that skill.

“We’ve got a case competition where students compete on data they are provided by companies. It would be modeled after real claims and liabilities and things like that. And they’re giving it to the students with a slight direction to help them: ‘Tell me what you think. Play around with it. Ask me a question about it.’ That really helps the students grow in a big way.

“We also have a student–run Actuarial Association. They’re very active. They schedule recruiters to come every single week to speak to the association. And students help each other. They have lots of study groups to pass all the professional exams. They are right there for each other. We show them the math, we show them how to get going, and they just take the ball and run with it.”
Gregg Carter, a Professor of History and Social Sciences, joined Bryant’s faculty in 1983. He has authored or edited 23 books on issues like gun control, working women in America, conflict management, and empirical approaches to sociology.

“When I started here in 1983, there were no liberal arts minors, concentrations, or majors. Starting in 1996, we had minors and a couple of concentrations – one in History, one in English. And post-2004, we’ve been a full-fledged university with a College of Arts and Sciences, and dozens of majors and concentrations.

“We have some flagship programs like Communication, Psychology, Politics and Law. Most of the programs are small, but you can run upper division courses because they’re filled with non-majors who are getting their minors in Sociology, History, Psychology, or something like that. And, by and large, with few exceptions, it’s worked out well.

“Getting AACSB accreditation made an enormous difference. There were four Ph.D.s in Business when I got here. Most of the liberal arts faculty had their Ph.D. A Ph.D. is about doing research, and there were very few researchers here. Now everyone on the faculty at Bryant has a serious research program, including everybody in business, as well as liberal arts. That’s helped build the reputation of Bryant within the higher education community. Now all the faculty are published in scholarly journals, and that certainly helps.

“Years ago, part of the conversation about strengthening the arts and sciences majors and emphasizing fields like psychology, sociology, and communication was to try and redress the gender imbalance at Bryant – because for the last three decades, females have been more likely to graduate from high school than males and more likely to go on to college. We wanted to better tap into that population because, like many business and engineering schools, Bryant had a 60-40 split in the opposite way: having more males.
“Another change is that we’re seeing many more students going on to law school and graduate school. If you’re talking about medicine, law, biology, Ph.D., and almost anything, the tradition was that at age 22, when you got out of college, you went straight to graduate school, medical school or law school. But business was the exception — you usually spent several years getting your hands dirty in the real world, and then got your MBA at age 25 or older. That norm has changed a bit for business. It’s still hugely there, but there are now MBA programs that encourage some applicants right out of college. You still see many more people going up for Ph.D.s like in Sociology or Economics or especially law school. Now, with biology majors, we’re seeing people going on to medical school.

“American students tend not have as much of a sociological imagination. The U.S. is the most individualistic country on earth. It’s all about me, and it’s all about ‘baby on board.’ And the revelation you get in sociology is you see the kinds of strings that are tugging on people — social forces, cultural forces, economic forces, political forces, that they normally don’t think about, that are usually coercive, hugely tracking and channeling people into certain directions.

“Traditionally in colleges and universities, faculties are ecologically organized. Where is the History Department? Oh, it’s over there. Where’s the Sociology department? It’s over there. They’re all in one section of a building, or they all have their own building. At Bryant, the tradition has been to commingle. I’m a sociologist, and next to me is a mathematician. Two doors down is a communication professor. The conversations can lead to interdisciplinary thinking. The downside to that is for young professors it’s harder to get socialized in your discipline. So there are pluses and minuses. But whenever the faculty has been posed with that decision, more people have said, ‘let’s keep our traditional system of not being ecologically segregated.’ So that’s a unique thing about Bryant.

“When I got here, research expectations were low. They’re much higher now, and there’s much more support for research. Standard faculty used to teach eight courses. Now standard faculty teach six courses. Sabbaticals are more generous. There’s been a lot more support for research summer stipends and research assistants. So, Bryant has put money where its mouth is, in terms of wanting more research and providing the resources to produce it. That’s been a big change.”

“It’s never been a demand for the College of Arts and Sciences to see how our courses will make you a better person in the business world; it’s how this will make you a better person, period — a more understanding person.”
“Sales is in the middle of business and liberal arts. You need to understand psychology and relating to people, the creativity of a presentation, empathy, ethics, all of these things we consider to be on the humanities side.”

Sports is not the only arena in which Bryant students intensely compete with other universities. There are a growing number of regional and national sales competitions, where student teams get to showcase their ability in front of an audience that included prospective employers.

In 2012, Bryant organized and started hosting the Northeast Collegiate Sales Competition (NCSC). The annual event has corporate sponsors and draws more than 400 people. “Our team members are usually juniors and seniors, and they’re really pumped up about sales,” said Stefanie Boyer, Associate Professor of Marketing, and Director of the NCSC. “I found these competitions were a great way to motivate students. I teach them the sales process, and then they have to work with companies and sell to them, with a panel of judges giving them feedback.”

Under Boyer’s leadership in creating an innovative sales program at Bryant, sales became a minor in 2013 and is expected to become a concentration or major.

In classroom teaching, Boyer starts by asking students what they think of sales. “A lot of people think about the fast talker, the guy selling snake oil who makes you feel uncomfortable. But then I explain that it’s not the way we go about it. We talk about professionalism and the cornerstone of any profession: trust. If you lose trust, people don’t want a relationship with you any more – whether personal or in business. We teach students to be honest, to provide value to the customer so they want to do business with you again.”

Boyer teaches the whole process of sales – prospecting, pre-approach, identifying needs, presenting, handling objections, closing, and follow-up.” And, beyond theory, she engages students in active learning activities, including role-playing.

To help students with role-playing, she brought in an improvisation professional from the Providence Improv Guild. They conducted adaptability and improv training workshops, helping students learn to more confidently and creatively think on their feet.
“Sales is in the middle of business and liberal arts,” said Boyer. “You need to understand psychology and relating to people, the creativity of a presentation, empathy, ethics, all of these things we consider to be on the humanities side. But sales is really a part of everything, nearly every facet of work. And it’s not just selling a product or service; it could be selling an idea. For our students, it could be persuasion to help in getting their first job or promotion.

“The first step is prospecting. That requires research to find the right clients; people who could use your services or product. Then you have to pre-approach, doing the research needed to qualify leads. Then you have the approach, your first encounter – the beginning of the meeting. Those are just the first three steps. We deepen the curriculum within every step of the process.”

The first sales class is about professional selling. Typically, students interested in going into sales would take a sales internship next. They’d have a project at a company that ties in with what they’re learning in class. The internship involves a lot of hands-on experience and then they do presentations. There is also a sales management course, where they are mentoring students in the other sales class. They do a self-directed learning project and, if they are sales managers, they’re taught an effective process to support sales people.

There is also a sales mentorship program where students work with corporate sponsors and Bryant alumni. “I’d say the biggest thing that is unique about the Bryant network is that alumni really, really care about the success and well-being of current students,” said Boyer. “They give generously of their time.”

What drew Boyer into sales? “I’ve sold my whole life and didn’t even realize it. My undergraduate program was psychology and criminology. Then I got my master’s; I studied marketing, international business, and finance. In all these experiences I was selling, with the marketing component. When I was getting my Ph.D., I felt it was all coming together. I worked with my mentor, focused on self-directed learning and how it was relevant to sales people. I had always identified different challenges while selling, so my research aligned with my teaching.

“And I love sales because students come into this class and have a certain level of skill, and when they’re done, their skill level is through the roof. It changes so much. It’s very rewarding because they often end up with a job offer or an internship from it.”
Gaytha Langlois is a Professor of Science and Technology, and was Chair of the Department from 2008–2014, helping to create new programs in Environmental Science and Biology, including the M.S. in Global Environmental Studies degree program.

In collaboration with colleagues, she helped plan new laboratory facilities and research programs.

“About 30 years ago, we established minors in biology and environmental science,” she recalls. “Prior to that, if students wanted to study environmental topics, they would take ecology, geology, various science courses as extra electives.

“There has been a long-term interest in ecology and biology. Around 2009, we created biology and environmental science. Our Biology major has grown dramatically, and it correlates nicely with the Physician Assistant program, which is a master’s degree.

“Our graduates have gotten into medical school, veterinary school, nursing programs, Ph.D. programs, and a lot of laboratory situations. So, for both the Environmental Science major and the Biology major, graduates have done very well.

“All of our students are required to take two science courses and a lab. And they can’t take two intro sciences; one has to be at least a 300-level course. Our faculty really tries to make those kinds of courses interesting to students. We do a lot of field work, and a lot of linkages with real-life problems, and show how geology or chemistry match whatever course we’re teaching. In the major courses, we have more intense work because we have to prepare them to compete with other biology or environmental science programs.

“Around 2007-2008, the University funded really nice labs and outfitted them with state-of-the-art equipment. So students are taught on instruments they’ll encounter if they work in a hospital or an environmental chemistry lab. We created eight research labs. Some are combined so that two professors share common equipment, but each have their own workspace. For example, in one lab, it’s a combination of botanical and geochemistry training, and that’s where our electron microscopes are set up. It is a scanning electron microscope, as opposed to the type you might use in medical studies, which is called transmission electron microscopy. For that, you have to be able to slice the cells in very thin layers, so you can see inside cells. The scanning electron microscope approach looks at the surface of cells and any tissues. That works very well for environmental studies and for some types of medical work.

“We have another shared lab that is combination environmental chemistry and microbiology. We have one that is primarily electronics because Brian Blais, one of our long-time professors, is an expert in mathematical modeling of the brain. All of his work is computational, so his lab is based on the computation side of science. We have another lab that is biochemical and cellular biology; Chris Reed is the lead chemist there. He is also an instructor in chemistry, and an expert in creating new vaccines. His work is not only exciting but also at the forefront of medical science.

“My lab focuses on microscopy because that’s the type of research I do. And we have a shared lab with 10 different instruments. We have an ICMS, which is very good at detecting extremely low levels of metal in
either water or solid materials. We have a GCMS, which has a number of attachments so different professors can do assessments of organic materials.

“Environmental science students are required to do a research project. We put students in labs and teach them how to use as much equipment as possible. We share students, move them around, and take them to conferences. Bryant students are very confident. They have been taught to speak well and write well. They’ve been taught to present with confidence. So, when we take them to conferences, they are better presenters than biology students who haven’t been required to do it. That gives them a nice advantage.

“The environmental fields and biology fields are listed by the Department of Labor as some of the fastest-growing fields of work now. It is expected that there will be lots of jobs in these fields. That makes it all the more attractive for students who want to focus on those studies.

“We have been able to attract grants from the National Institute of Health. We have National Science Foundation grants, EPA grants, NASA grants, and NOAA grants.

“We are a broad-spectrum department — we have physics, chemistry, geology and geochemistry and microbiology. We have very broad expertise. To design and create the new labs in 2007, we must have had 30-40 meetings with lab designers, engineers, and campus folks. It’s a great layout. We created this forum area, and the research labs encircle that. The forum area is where students and faculty are constantly mixing. Any given day, you’re likely to see a professor meeting with lab students or class students...going over materials, planning for field trips. That forum allows us to move students in and out of different labs when we need them to learn new expertise. And they’ll work with a different professor to do that.

“We were a Department of Science, and now our name is Science and Technology. We changed to that name because technology was being translated to mean computers, yet all the inventions and new innovative techniques were emanating out of science studies.”

“At Bryant, you have a lot of freedom to become what you want. It’s not highly structured like you might find in a department on a large campus where you have a slot and teach certain courses in a set sequence. You can become something else. I’ve probably changed my focus four or five times. Because of the flexibility of Bryant, faculty can really pursue their interests. You are never discouraged from applying for a different grant or developing new expertise or continuing studies of a different type. In that way, it’s a healthy educational ecosystem. It’s a key to why people stay. It’s also a key to how new people come in and find such positive energy. Maybe they’re only here for a short time, but that’s good, too. We have a mixture of old and new. That’s not necessarily true at big institutions, where you might become an old fossil, and nobody pays attention to you anymore. We’re encouraged to stay active.”
Dr. V.K. Unni served as Bryant’s Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1997 to 2010. He was instrumental in the college becoming a university, going international, and achieving accreditation from the AACSB. He has continued to serve on Bryant’s faculty as a Distinguished Professor of Business.

“When I came here, President Machtley had just joined and was getting used to the place. He was not very familiar with academics at that time, but he had a lot of enthusiasm and took the initiative to get Bryant going. And he gave me a lot of flexibility to work on things other than academic affairs to help Bryant because when we came here enrollment was at a low point. Dorms were closed. This was a five-day-a-week campus; there was nothing much going on during the weekends. Student retention was very low. And faculty morale was not that great.

“We soon had a set agenda in terms of strategic planning — the physical aspect of campus buildings was one component but also for the academic side. We focused on how to increase enrollment, how to increase that retention rate, and this was a combined effort by vice presidents.

“We brought in a person from Boston essentially to start what we call the First-Year Experience for freshmen. We also had consultants from Harvard talk to us about how advising students was important in the retention process. Administrators were assigned by President Machtley to advise students, with each of us taking a number of students. And we started the Sophomore International Experience and other initiatives. Learning from all that, we developed a nice model, which helped us improve retention.

“We were traditionally known for business programs like accounting, but that in itself was not enough. It took us a few years, but in 2004 we decided to go from a college to the university. That initiative focused on a couple of things. One was how to attract international students. That was one component of increasing enrollment, and that really worked very well. The biggest change in this transition from college to university was in academic affairs. When we were Bryant College, we were following the model of Babson and Bentley. We had an undergraduate dean for all the programs, regardless of arts and sciences or business. Similarly there was a graduate dean for all the graduate programs, and I was Vice President for Academic Affairs. Because of the shift from college to university, organization separated into two colleges: College of Business, College of Arts and Sciences. So we went out and recruited deans for both colleges. And not only the deans, but even within each college the departments wanted to reassign titles and a few other things.

“New academic programs were added to attract students. Traditionally, we were known to have more male students. We wanted to attract more female students, so we did some homework on that. Based on our research we found that Communication and Applied Psychology were two subject areas where we could attract more women. So we started communication course programs, and we thought about what kind of communication program we should design. We brought in some external consultants, we converted a building into a studio, we bought all new communications equipment, and we recruited a lot of faculty in the communications area. Similarly, we started Applied Psychology courses. In business academic programs, we also recruited a
lot of faculty. We brought in Ph.D.s not only from the New England area but Ph.D.s from Northwestern University, Stanford, and other great institutions, which was extremely helpful. In so doing, we increased the diversity of faculty. We hired more women, Hispanic and African-American faculty. That helped improve our programs.

"As programs developed, problems came up with the facilities. Our classrooms were all in the Unistructure. Classrooms were looking like high school, and labs were looking like high school labs. We tried to create and improve classrooms and facilities in general, including the faculty offices, and created the new Krupp library. The Bello Center for Information and Technology was an exceptional endeavor of President Machtley. He was primarily responsible for getting the funding opportunity for that. And he focused more on strategic planning — what we should do the next few years. His initiatives on technology, like his laptop program, helped enormously in updating everything on campus.

"We also started the new International Business major. Though traditionally we were more of an accounting business school, the International Business program really captivated the audience. We recruited a lot of faculty in international accounting, international finance, international management, international marketing. With faculty input and ideas, we developed international business programs that were really attractive. Not only would students spend a semester abroad, they’d also be provided with internships in the countries where they wanted to specialize.

"So this campus slowly woke up. We increased enrollment, filling the dormitories and even constructing a new dorm to accommodate more students. Campus beautification began and we raised our profile in the world. More people started looking at our website. Accreditation was an important part of this story. There are two types of accreditation: one is the regional accreditation, which every university in New England has to go through. That comes only once in 10 years. We were able to get that during the last two times with no major concerns of any kind. Then there’s special-ized business accreditation called the AACSB which accredits programs in business only. And less than 5 percent of the business schools in the country — not only country, the world — are accredited by AACSB. Now they are coming every five years, revisiting us, to make sure our programs are of the highest quality, the faculty are of the highest quality, the publications are of the highest quality. There are so many standards that we have to comply with. Achieving accreditation was important from the academic side. When we have orientation for incoming freshmen, we can tell them that they are coming to an institution that is not only nationally but internationally accredited by AACSB. That is their golden seal to get a job because employers may not be familiar with Bryant but they will know if the applicant has an AACSB degree. So that was extremely helpful.

"When I look back at all the accomplishments under President Machtley’s leadership and the team effort of all of us pulling together, it’s a feeling of real gratification. A lot of credit goes to alumni for all of their support through the years. And more than I can say, the faculty were tremendous assets in all that now has been achieved. They have great loyalty to Bryant. So many of the faculty we recruited some 20 years ago are still with us. Turnover here is very marginal. We love our work, and we enjoy celebrating Bryant’s success.

"All of these advances are reflected in the steady increase in Bryant’s rankings. When I came here, we were listed by U.S. News & World Report under business professional institutions — Babson, Bentley, and Bryant. That didn’t give us many opportunities to be recognized. So we appealed to the Carnegie Classification people and were soon classified under the Masters One category. From then on, we rose in the rankings every year. Our academics kept improving, our students were getting better jobs, and in turn students were speaking very positively about Bryant to media visiting on campus. All of that helped strengthen our academic community. And it indicates that there’s a big, bright future for Bryant."
Ron Deluga is a Professor of Applied Psychology. He joined Bryant’s faculty in 1981 and became the founding Chair of the Department of Psychology, which he helped create in 2000.

“Most psychology programs across the country prepare students to go to graduate school. And we do that, but we have an additional layer beyond that. That’s why we’re actually called Applied Psychology. We also prepare students for entry-level positions in psychology or related fields. Probably 60 percent of our students work for a year or two or three, after they graduate from Bryant in some field, and then go on to graduate school; 40 percent probably go directly to graduate school. But we have a lot of graduates who have gone into entry-level positions. We have students working in marketing, in social services, throughout the United States. That was the idea: to prepare students for entry-level positions. That’s unusual among psych programs. Most psych programs are hyper-focused on getting students into graduate school, but we tried to expand it because not everyone wants to go on to graduate school after they graduate.

“The nature of our program is to be very hands-on with what students do in a classroom, and the types of assignments they have. We have a requirement during their senior year that they do an internship off campus or complete a major research project. The vast majority of students do internship; maybe 20 percent do the research. It depends on the professor and the nature of the course, but we get them actively involved very early.

“I’m teaching Positive Psychology. We were among the first universities to offer a course in that 15 years ago. It’s the study of what’s right about people, and optimal human functioning. Historically, psychology is focused on the negative, what’s wrong with people. But this focuses on what’s right with people.

“I teach an exercise in sports psychology class, too. All those students are interested in sports, and many of them are student athletes, so they bring their experiences as student athletes into the classroom. Recently, we’ve been talking about team dynamics, team cohesion. I was talking about visualization and imagery: imagine yourself doing well and going through a series of steps to improve your performance. That applies to sports, but it applies to life in general. As a matter of fact, a lot of what we talk about are general life skills they can translate from the classroom and playing field to their lives — things like conflict management, working with a team, bouncing back from adversity, that sort of thing. We have a chapter dealing with anxiety. You must manage your own anxiety but also notice the anxiety in an opponent. They might get more tired earlier in the competition than you’d expect, because they burnt so much energy worrying before the event even started.

“Our Psychology Department is a great team. The current chair is Joseph Trunzo, a clinical psychologist. He just wrote a book dealing with treatment of Lyme disease and how to cope with that. We have Christine McAuliffe, a licensed psychologist who recently worked with adolescent females who have anxiety-related issues. Nanci Weinberger is a developmental psychologist. Allison Butler is an educational psychologist. And Heather Lacey is a cognitive psychologist.
“Students learn a lot of interpersonal skills from psychology courses and from classroom interaction. Many classes involve team presentations. Learning to work with other people is very important, especially people from diverse backgrounds. Teams are randomly arranged or appointed, so it’s not like students choose their friends to work with. They have to learn what makes other people tick.

“In psychology classes, students tend to be very interactive. We’ll be talking about a subject, and a student will raise his or her hand and mention something that’s quite different from what other students have experienced in their lives — because we have students from all over the world. That adds a really interesting dynamic to the classroom, where we’re all learning something.

“Education is a two-way process. That’s what I tell students. We’re all here to learn together.”

“I’m teaching Positive Psychology ....A major topic is the study of happiness, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. It’s a fun class because it’s very upbeat and the students are high achievers; they want to do really well.”
Michael Lynch, J.D., CPA, is a Professor of Accounting. He joined Bryant in 1977, created the Master of Science in Taxation (MST) program, and served as coordinator of the MBA program for nearly 20 years. As director of the MST program, he helps shape the University’s curriculum.

“As an educator, you have to have knowledge that goes well beyond the textbook. You have to have practical experience. I’m a CPA, an attorney, with a master’s in tax, so I work with clients and learn from other professionals.

“One of the most important things, especially at the graduate level, is to be a researcher. A professor once said to me: Would you rather have your students drink from a moving stream or a stagnant pond? He said, let me see your research; I want to see if you’re a stagnant pond. I do a ton of research, assign work to my students, and tell them what I do in the courts or with a client. I bring real-life experience in. Tax is black letter law, but it can’t be taught that way because if you only understand what you can deduct, what you can’t, what’s taxable, what isn’t, you could never plan for someone. You could never go beyond. You could never look at the next generation when you’re passing wealth, and you could never look at the next year when you’re planning bonuses, commissions, alternative types of income.

“When I started the MST program in 1977, at the time it was the most successful program at Bryant. We were rejecting people that we wanted to accept. There was no room. There weren’t enough teachers or anything. Now we’ve saturated the market, and it’s difficult. Graduate programs in general are shrinking because businesses aren’t paying for grad school anymore. And the Big Eight firms, the Big Four, they expect you to arrive with 150 credits and a degree. They’re not paying for grad school anymore, so it’s on the student.

“So, in 2007 we created the Master of Professional Accountancy (MPA). This was to meet the 150-credit hour requirement, it’s a master’s in accounting, or in 2007 we said it’s an MPA in tax. So, we’ve got the master in tax, master in accounting. For people who aren’t sure, we have an MPA tax, where you take five courses in accounting and five in tax. Or in the MST it would be 10 tax, or in any MPA Accounting it would be nine accounting, one tax. So it serves the assurance side, it serves the tax side, and basically the people that are going to go out to the medium-sized and regional firms where they have to do both, we serve that market as well.

“But the key is we want to keep Bryant students at Bryant. So, in their senior year, first semester, we let them take a grad course, and that counts towards their undergrad and grad degree. And then senior year, second semester, they can also take another grad course that counts towards their grad degree. So, by the time they graduate undergrad, they only have eight left. And we do four in the summer, four in the fall, because the firms don’t want you in the summer or fall because there’s not as much work. So, by January 2nd, now it’s busy season; our students are ready to go out in the market. So that’s been a very successful program.

“At the undergrad level, we have AACSB accreditation, which basically means, in my opinion, that you just can’t drive in, teach a course, get in your car, and
go home. It’s expected that you’re doing high-level research, current research that benefits the practitioners on current and future topics of tax and accounting, whatever. And we’re doing that, and the more we do that, the easier it is to attract higher-level faculty.

“If you compare the faculty, say, in January 1977, when I took my first class, to the faculty here today, it’s night and day. The faculty today is more diverse. There are many more elective courses. There are more majors and minors. The publications are just off the charts. And, it’s funny, I find that the more faculty are involved in their research, the more they want to be involved in running the school. And they are the type of people that seem to have a lot of knowledge. Their doors are always open during office hours. They want the students to come in, and the students know it, and they come in.

“We know what the other faculty are doing. We try to collaborate. We can work off each other. So, if you’re teaching, say, inventory and finance, I can do inventory in accounting; I can do inventory in tax. So, the students really understand inventory. And a lot more collaboration is going on, and that’s wonderful.

“When I’m teaching accounting majors, I always assume they’ve already passed the CPA exam, that they’re already working for a Big Four firm, because that’s just around the corner. I have a standing joke with my students that when I see them after class, I shake their hand and say, I want to be the first to congratulate you on passing the CPA exam. ’Professor, I haven’t taken it yet.’ I know, I tell them, but I want to be first to congratulate you, because I know, based on 41 years of experience, you will take it and pass it.

“It’s easy to get out of Bryant and prepare a tax return, put the right number on the right line and write out the check, and pay the right estimated taxes, and get an extension, and finish the return. That’s easy. The hard part is the liberal arts side — the writing and reading, and knowing what not to write. That’s extremely important. When you write something, you’re always looking at the future. And the liberal arts side is looking at the planning aspect, as opposed to the historical reporting. So once everything is done, now it becomes people; it becomes social. You have to take the information you prepared and sit down with people older than you who know their business better than you’ll ever know it as the outsider coming in, and explain to them the changes you’re going to recommend. And if they don’t like you as a person, they’re never going to listen to you. It’s extremely important to know what the other person is thinking. And they’re probably not thinking about you, and probably not thinking about the topic you want to talk about. So, again, that’s liberal arts, and we stress that. We stress reading novels, newspapers, journals, being current, knowing what’s going on in world affairs and in sports.

“After 41 years of looking back, I have seen my students succeed and make a lot of money, but they’re also happy in what they do, they’re happy in their home life, and they’re generous. They give back to Bryant not only in money but also in time, whether they’re on the board of trustees, or the alumni council, or just coming to a football game. So, I’m very proud to see my students succeed, and I do everything possible to help them succeed. Even if they’ve been fired, I have connections with placement agencies to help them find another job and end up in a better situation with a brighter future. So I follow the students. I don’t teach them and then say, ‘OK, there’s another group coming in.’ I follow them, and I think that’s extremely important.”
Professor Eileen Kwesiga teaches Principles of Management in the Department of Management in the College of Business. She also teaches a sustainability course called *Managing Nonprofits*, and teaches MBA students. Kwesiga has been on the Bryant faculty for 10 years. Prior to academia, she worked for leading businesses such as General Electric, problem-solving in the IT arena, implementing and integrating systems.

“Bryant allowed me to combine my teaching interests and my involvement in community. And I was able to translate that into research. And not just local research; also international research. That’s the growth a lot of scholars go through professionally, after you acquire tenure. You start thinking about what contribution you want to make in your field.

“I came from East Africa, so I wanted ties in that area, and to do research that informs the world about other communities. Especially in Africa, which has always been looked at as a problem continent, I saw an opportunity to highlight that there can be a meaningful exchange of useful knowledge even in places where others may want to write them off. That’s what led me to do research with indigenous communities, indigenous knowledge, social entrepreneurship, the impact that it has on life of others, and meaningful collaborations between indigenous communities and international organizations. That also led to advocacy, especially as we look at social sustainability goals mandated by the United Nations (UN).

“As a scholar who hailed from an emerging economy, and now in a developed economy, I’m able to cross back and forth, not only in travel, but in the exchange of knowledge. And Bryant has been supportive. Those of us in the international research area are provided money for our research. It’s not perfect; of course, we would like more. But there is needed support, and I think it’s pretty generous compared to other schools.

“It's funny that in my first sabbatical, I got tenured, and during my second sabbatical I applied for a full professorship, which I was able to get. So I’m grateful for that time to do good research, rest, develop myself, and pursue other interests. When you come back, you’re reorganized, you’re rejuvenated, and you have seen other things that definitely help you contribute more to Bryant.

“Two years ago, I put together a Sophomore International Experience to South Africa for faculty. We had a lot of interest because we have many international scholars at Bryant. Even if they’re not international faculty, they bring their experiences to the classroom. They start thinking about new possibilities and they challenge themselves. Exposed to seeing what the world is, we bring that knowledge to the classroom. First of all, in our teaching. And also in providing an example to our students. We tell them: You can work in any part of the globe and it's perfectly OK; you will be all right. Students take advantage of those travel opportunities, through the Sophomore International Experience or Study Abroad.

“All the faculty mentor students, whether via teaching, via the examples that we set, opportunities we make available to them, the opportunities we provide. Mentoring is not just sitting down and advising. It's doing all of these different things, constantly. And our students are not bashful. They take advantage of those opportunities. Like today, I was sharing with a student things I've done with the UN; she was very interested.
One of my friends had told me there’s an internship program available in her department in the Office of Human Rights in Geneva, so I called my student and she is applying right now, as we speak. So mentorship is something that we are consciously and unconsciously doing in our daily interactions with our students at Bryant.

“I was an international student many moons ago and I went to Canada. Had never been there, and it was a culture shock. It was so different, and the language was too fast for me. I was worried whether I would be successful. Our students are more savvy than that, but still, for many international students, there is a transition. So at orientation I’m always happy to advise parents, put them at ease, let them know their son or daughter is going to be fine; don’t worry. I’m glad that Bryant offers that help to international parents.

“Social entrepreneurship is increasingly popular. The key takeaway for me is that business has a role to play in social issues — as a business you can do well by doing good. Some of the amazing partnerships I have seen are international collaborations, where multinationals did not think they were going to benefit but ended up being an outstanding success that carried on for many years. Because this is a time when people appreciate organizations that don’t just exist for the purpose of making money — that they also try to effect positive social change — many more people buy into it. Before, organizations were instituting corporate social responsibility just to look good, or to give the sense they’re doing something. Now, they are seeing that it’s good business. We can take care of the environment; we can take care of our communities so that they can be healthy, and then they can buy more from us. So it is beginning to come full circle, and it’s delightful.

“I joined Bryant at a point when we had transitioned from a college to a university. So I came in at a peak time when a lot of heavy lifting had been done, which is fantastic. And I have seen us grow through the challenges. Growth is not always as smooth or fast as you want it to be, but we have definitely made good strides in the right direction. We see opportunities to do more, so we should not get complacent. We cannot get comfortable. We still have to work hard to make sure that we are very competitive and attracting quality students, and preparing our students to be not only good business leaders but also good social citizens.

“I think teaching is a passion. And it’s not a competition about being the most popular teacher. It’s about, at the end of the day, when you leave that classroom, do you feel that you’ve imparted knowledge. And it’s about growth. If I can look back and see students who now are senior managers, and some are on their way to becoming partners in organizations, I’m very happy. Sometimes we are hard on ourselves. We think, oh my gosh, did I do a good job? Was I too hard? Or was I too lenient? But it’s like parenting. As long as you’re striving to give your best every day, the results speak for themselves. So honestly, I love my craft. I am passionate about teaching. And I’m passionate about Bryant. I’m just hoping that we continue on, and we’re healthy for many, many years to come.”
“There’s nothing more satisfying, at least in applied mathematics, than looking out after you’ve explained something and see that a student understands what you’re talking about. He’s got it! When I’d see the kid has got it, what a sense of satisfaction!”

—Robert Muksian, former Chair of the Mathematics Department
STUDENT LIFE

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Thirty years ago, Bryant was widely viewed as a commuter school, lagging in its “student life.”

In the late 1990s, the new president, Ron Machtley, and a new Vice President of Student Affairs, J. Thomas Eakin, were determined to change that. Their vision, shared by trustees and other leaders, was to make Bryant a truly residential campus, change the idea of extracurricular activities to cocurricular activities, and make Bryant a student-centered community.

That vision has been largely fulfilled, but it wasn’t accomplished easily or quickly. Indeed, the success story is still unfolding.

In 1998, President Machtley announced the appointment of Dr. Eakin as vice president of what was then called Student Affairs. In that role, he was responsible for career services, residence life, multicultural student services, health services, counseling, and student activities.

Arriving at Bryant, Eakin brought with him 25 years of experience as associate vice president for student affairs/student development at Penn State – a much larger university – so he came with extensive knowledge of how to create a residential campus, with needs that must be met 24/7.

In 2001, Eakin explained, “Everything we do in Student Affairs relates to our institutional mission of being student-centered and focused on excellence. We work closely with Academic Affairs to emphasize the education of the whole student by developing the skills and qualities identified in the strategic plan (The New Century Plan), designed to prepare our students to do their personal best in life and business. “Throughout the College, we are working to 1) develop a distinctive campus climate built upon sound community principles that support the development of intellectual,
physical, and spiritual dimensions; 2) build campus-life programs that engage students and develop personal effectiveness skills and desired personal qualities; 3) create an effective and efficient program of student services; 4) review and improve the quality of campus life; and 5) assess and expand student internships and enhance career and employment opportunities.”

Eakin went on to accomplish what he had set out to do, retiring in 2013.

During his 16 years of service to Bryant, Dr. Eakin made substantial and enduring contributions. He helped launch distinctive programs such as the Sophomore International Experience, diversity initiatives, expanded services for women, and Bryant’s award-winning career services center. He also helped create innovative programs integrating coursework with an array of cocurricular opportunities, ensuring that the Bryant experience was 24/7. In recognition of the many contributions made by he and his wife, Marj, the University dedicated the Tom and Marj Eakin Student Leadership Suite on the Fisher Student Center’s third floor.

In 2013, President Machtley announced Eakin’s successor, John Saddlemire, D.Ed., formerly vice president for student affairs at the University of Connecticut. Saddlemire brought great leadership and management experience to the job, having served for 29 years in a variety of complex roles at public and private universities, and more than 25 years of continuous teaching. Under Saddlemire’s leadership, the quality and quantity of Student Life programs continued to improve, with more activities and resources.

In 2015, President Machtley was awarded the Region I President’s Award by NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. The award is given to a college or university president or chancellor who, over a sustained period, advanced the quality of student life on campus by supporting the institution’s student affairs staff and initiatives.

In 2016, the Center for Higher Education Enterprise selected Bryant as one of the “most promising places to work in Student Affairs.” Saddlemire said the national recognition reflected the department’s impressive work on diversity and inclusion.

The dedicated staff in Student Life continue to work night and day to ensure the safety, well-being, and personal growth of Bryant’s students.
RESIDENCE LIFE

Over the last 30 years, Bryant transitioned into being a truly residential community — no longer a “suitcase school” with the students leaving on weekends.

Bob Sloss, Associate Dean of Students, recalls how things have changed during his time at Bryant, “When I got here in 1985, we only had the suite style-buildings 1 through 13, Hall 14, which was a freshman hall, and townhouses A through E. Back then, the school policy was to house all the upperclass students and only about 450 of the incoming freshmen, which worked out OK because the bulk of our students were from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. But it was very difficult for the kids who couldn’t commute from home and had to get apartments at 18 years old in nearby cities. And I’m not sure how we retained those people. But with the help of other senior Student Affairs people, to be more industry-standard with other colleges, we were able to guarantee freshmen housing and eventually add even more housing to accommodate students.

“We built Hall 15, then Hall 16, Hall 17, townhouses. We added H through M, then O and P and then N. So we were able to retain a lot more students. Housing went from under 2,000 beds to more than 2,800 in 2008. Bryant now has much more of a residential campus feel.

“We understood that a resident student needs a lot more than just a bed. There needed to be athletic facilities and workout facilities and dining options, evening events and weekend events. As our residential population grew, all those things had to grow along with counseling, public safety, our student activities people — as they were called back then — and our international student staff.”
John Denio, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, observed, “I think we’re unique in the sense that all four class years are predominately represented on the campus in residential living. At most institutions, you are on campus for your first couple of years and then move off into the community. We have some of that, but for the vast majority we retain all four classes. So it brings a nice blend to the community, having a majority of seniors living on campus along with first-year students. The full-time residential population is around 86 percent; it fluctuates depending on the year and the class size.

“We have more than 600 beds in the townhouses, and that’s a very popular place. It’s seen as kind of a culmination of your residential experiences. We have had students in recent years move into Providence, but the vast majority of each of the classes is represented on campus. And I think that brings flavor to the social aspect of campus. It has added to the sense of community over the years and to the strong Bryant pride.

Part of it, too, is the physical nature of the campus. It’s a very nice setting and the University has tried to maintain the residential facilities so they are attractive and appealing to students. The other big piece is convenience and accessibility.”

Sloss agrees that convenience is one of the many benefits to residing on campus. “There are so many more activities and resources now. Students can just swipe their card to take buses anywhere for free in Rhode Island. And there’s the option of car-sharing.

“There are great athletic events with a Division I institution. And we have many kinds of entertainment — movies, dances, comedians, bands, gaming nights. They might set up 100 easels in the rotunda area for a paint night, and participants get a painting at the end of it.

“And there are six or seven places to eat on campus, including late at night. On weekends, one is open until 2 A.M., in Hall 17.

“One of the biggest draws is our health and fitness facilities. There are numerous kinds of exercise equipment. Plus, there’s a strong intramural program, which students love. So all of those activities keep students active on campus, nights and weekends.”

Kristin Ridge, Director of Residence Life, joined Bryant in 2006. She explained that even students who live near campus and could easily commute usually choose to live on campus because they appreciate the many benefits and advantages. “Making friends is easier, acclimating is easier. And it’s convenient to have a job on campus if you live here. It’s a financial commitment, but it’s part of the investment in the overall educational experience.

In 2018, the Village Renaissance program began. In this three-year project, the University is investing $30 million to upgrade the residence halls — changing entrances, adding new fixtures, and improving the aesthetics.

Some students venture into Providence a bit more than they used to, since car services have made the city more accessible to them. “But if students don’t leave campus,” explained Ridge, “it’s because Bryant is the social epicenter. There is this sense of what students call FOMO — Fear of Missing Out — that if they leave the campus, they’re missing whatever parties and activities are happening over the weekend. Some freshmen will get dressed up like they’re going out for the evening, but they’re leaving their hall to go down to a party at the townhouses. So that’s ’going out,’ even though they didn’t actually leave campus.”

RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

“Bryant’s 64 Resident Assistants are wonderful. They are my favorite thing about being here,” adds Ridge.

“It feels like they are responsible for everything under the sun. They do a lot of programming in terms of introduction to the campus if they have freshmen students — social diversity, different religions, different celebrations. They answer a lot of questions: How do you get an internship, how do you study abroad, how do you do Sophomore International Experience, how do you do laundry? All those basic things. And for seniors, the question often is: what else should I experience at Bryant before moving on to other places?”
“RAs receive a package where their room and board are covered by the institution in exchange for their year-long position. And they have to go through a rehire process every year.

“A huge part of their role is crisis response. Every area has at least two RAs on duty every night, even when we’re on school breaks. And they do rounds to deal with any policy violations they come up against. They are also the people who students will go to if someone needs medical attention or there’s some sort of emergency. And RAs are 19 when they start this job. They complete about 200 hours of training to be able to hold this position. They learn how to handle all kinds of situations, including the nuance of being an authority without being aggressive and unintentionally escalating a situation. It takes massive leadership skills. It’s often something that will set them apart for jobs later in life because they can work with people in the most challenging of circumstances.”

In 2014, Emily Socha ’16 posted a brief explanation of “The Life of a Bryant RA.” She wrote, “Sometimes we get a bad reputation on campus for ruining a ‘fun night,’ but on other nights residents are happy that we saved their friends from what could have been a horrible disaster. As an RA, we wear many hats. We’re students, friends, athletes, club members, family members, and more. It’s tough to balance all the roles at some points, but we definitely find a way to manage the huge responsibility we’ve taken on. Many times we’re put in situations that include helping with homesickness, the loss of a loved one, policy violations, and crisis management. At the end of the day, the job is all about connecting with residents and establishing a safe and fun community.”

Bryant has 64 Resident Assistants—each responsible for about 40 students. Before students show up for the academic year, all RAs return to campus 10 days early to be trained and retrained for the position. Head RAs return even earlier to learn additional responsibilities and prepare for the coming year.
Extracurricular activities and sports play a big part in Bryant’s culture. Students sign up for intramural sports for two main reasons: to get exercise and meet new people. Fitness and friends!

**SOCCER** continues to be one of the most popular intramurals on campus. Games are played at night at the Turf Complex.

**SOFTBALL** is also a popular sport. There are usually over a dozen teams, playing two nights a week.

**FIELD HOCKEY** is played in Bryant’s new indoor field facility, offering 6 vs 6 competition.

**FLAG FOOTBALL** draws a lot of players. It’s an exciting game, so it’s not too hard for organizers to find another 12 students to form a team.
The Chace Athletic Center offers tremendous variety: a state-of-the-art gym, with equipment ranging from weight lifting to elliptical machines. There’s a lap pool, basketball and racquetball courts, yoga studios, and dance classes.

For fun competition or exercise, Bryant offers many non-varsity sports activities, including: Badminton, Bulldog Dancers, Bowling, Cheerleading, Cycling, Fishing, Hockey, Karate, Mixed Martial Arts, Rugby (men’s and women’s), Running Club, Ski & Snowboard, Spikeball, Squash, Tennis, and Women’s Crew.
The Fisher Student Center is a hub of campus activity. It is home to the Center for Student Leadership and Involvement, the PwC Center for Diversity and Inclusion (which includes the Intercultural Center, Women’s Center, and Pride Center), the Office for Student Event Services and Orientation Programs, and the University Bookstore.

**STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITIES**

*Bryant students have many opportunities to influence day-to-day student life. Some of the campus organizations that attract and develop leaders:*

- Bryant University Student Government
- Commuter Connection
- Bryant Pride
- Greek Leadership
- Hillel
- International Student Organization
- Interfraternity Council
- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
- Multicultural Student Union
- Panhellenic Council
- Student Programming Board
“Every year, Bryant Convocation celebrates the first gathering of students, faculty, administrators, and staff and reaffirms a commitment to the shared values and purposes that distinguish Bryant as a University.”

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In 2006, Bryant’s Convocation address was delivered by the Reverend Jewelnel Davis, chaplain at Columbia University. Her theme of “centering down” drew from Quaker concepts of authenticity and grounding. Rev. Davis emphasized the importance of self-knowledge to help one focus on essential priorities. She cautioned students about the notion of “waiting for life to begin” until a goal is reached or a possession, credential, or status is attained, and urged the audience to find joy in the process of “getting there.” Rev. Davis advised, “Enjoy your ‘now.’”

In 2011, Bryant’s then Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor, José-Marie Griffiths, Ph.D., challenged students to “stretch in new directions” by trying on “new ideas and see how they fit.” She told the future graduates, “You will be challenged by different people to integrate multiple perspectives — social, cultural, ethical, spiritual, intellectual. You will collaborate with peers and mentors, and, in the synergy of those interactions, you will discover abilities you didn’t know you had, stretching to take on new roles and expand your accomplishments.”