To appreciate Bryant’s spirit of community, this chapter focuses on the university’s purposes, people, programs, and events.

PEOPLE
Who are the members of the Bryant community, and what inspires them?

- Trustees
- Students
- Faculty
- Administrators
- Staff
- Parents
- Alumni

PURPOSES
What galvanizing ideas and ideals give Bryant its sense of community?

- A student-centered community
- An academic community in the real world
- A community of mentors
- A historic and proud community
- A multicultural and global community
- A mission-driven community

PROGRAMS & EVENTS
What are some of the catalytic programs and events that promote a spirit of community?

- Community service
- Trustee Speaker Series
- Intercultural Center
- Interfaith Prayer Breakfast
- Reunion @ Homecoming
- Commencement
The meaning, integrity, and success of any great institution comes from its people. All of them.

TRUSTEES

Bryant evolved from being a state-anchored institution to becoming regional, then national and international. That progress could not have happened without visionary leadership and support from Bryant’s board of trustees.

Through the years, trustees have shown great heart, wisdom, and optimism in guiding the school. More than 75 percent of current trustees are proud Bryant alumni, and all trustees have been impressively successful in their careers and civic service. Their experience in solving problems has certainly been applied to making Bryant fiscally strong and operationally efficient.

President Ronald K. Machtley said the trustees who served during this period were “brilliant and selfless.” Former Bryant president William Trueheart fondly recalled the Chairman of the Board during his administration, Hon. Bruce M. Selya, as a courageous leader.

“Machtley noted that Bryant’s trustees serve without compensation, “every one of them generous in giving their time and expertise for the betterment of the institution – and many serving over nine years.”
“...I am grateful that during my tenure at Bryant I’ve been mentored by exceptional chairmen of our Board of Trustees: Jack Wolfe ’99H; Jack Callahan ’56, ’05H; Tom Taylor ’63, ’98H; Mike Fisher ’67, ’15H; Bill Conaty ’67 and many others on the Board.”
“The focus here is always the students, there’s no doubt about that,” said Professor Mary Lyons, who teaches communications. “I don’t like the analogy that students are the consumers. No, they are learners at an academic institution. So when I’m on the curriculum committee and I’m with my colleagues looking at a new syllabus, we always focus on: what does it do for the students? We’ve moved away from an orientation of the teachers’ objectives – ‘the course is a study of such and such’ – with abstract terms, or using general language like ‘students will appreciate or be exposed to’. We have changed it to student learning objectives. ‘By the end of this course, you will be able to X, Y, Z.’ And all of those things are measurable. So we’re not making amorphous claims; we try to make the course descriptions student-centered that way.

“The biggest word for me regarding students is: respect. I respect their gifts, but also their limitations. They all come here willingly and sit down in one of these chairs, and I respect that. I’m still a teacher at heart; I’m not an instructor and I don’t profess. There’s no catering or coddling. This is something we have to do together.”
Faculty

Bryant takes great pride in the quality of its dedicated faculty and its student/faculty relationships and mentorship. Teaching extends beyond the classroom. Faculty members make themselves available for academic counseling, and there are many opportunities for students to discuss personal and career concerns. “Part of our sense of community is that the faculty are so accessible, with generous office hours,” said Robin Warde, Bryant’s director of Alumni and Parent Engagement. “The professors are actually the teachers, rather than Teaching Assistants (TAs), so they’re around more. And our graduates say that they still stay in contact with some of their professors.”

Bryant professors love their work – and the freedom that goes with it. In 2001, Science and Technology Professor Gaytha Langlois said, “We have freedom of expression, freedom in research, and freedom in course structure. We can try more interactive teaching methods, which help us remain more attuned to students.”
Economics Professor William B. Sweeney, Ph.D., retired from Bryant in 2007 after 42 years of teaching, mentoring, and inspiring students. In 2001, he too praised the spirit of collegiality in Bryant’s faculty. “What’s unique here is the mutual respect and interaction among disciplines. There isn’t any infighting – instead, there’s lots of sharing and communication. That camaraderie is important for students. The faculty spirit and esprit de corps enhance the quality of their overall experience.”

In 2018, John Dietrich, Professor and Chair of the History and Social Science department, said, “Sometimes there are changes that might not be appreciated from the outside, things that cannot develop if you can’t both recruit and hold good faculty. Our retention rates on faculty are absolutely off the charts. That shows we made the right choices on who to hire. It shows that when they were here, they were happy, and it means a new generation can move into different leadership roles or move into different things. In most cases, historical transformations require a mix of stability – because you can’t change everything at once – and enough new blood to push it to the next level. Perhaps it was luck, or just very good hiring, but we’ve been able to do that.”

ADMINISTRATORS

“When we talk with alumni and admitted students about Bryant’s sense of community, we often say there’s a family feeling,” said Robin Warde, Director of Alumni and Parent Engagement. “Much of that is Ron and Kati Machtley being here on campus, and the provost is on campus, the head of Student Life, and the vice president of Student Life. I’m fortunate to live within a mile. Our Athletic Director lives near campus. So there’s a good, caring presence all the time.”

2006 was the 10-year anniversary of President Ron Machtley’s presidency. Asked what gave him the greatest pride, looking back on his time at Bryant, he replied: “Without a doubt, the people. We have been terrifically fortunate in attracting and retaining administrators and faculty who not only buy into the
vision of what Bryant is and can be — they expand on it! They build the programs and bring the initiatives to life that make Bryant such a positive choice for today’s students. Our success has not been easy, nor has it been accidental. We have remained focused from the beginning on providing our students with an experience that gives them the intellectual tools they need to succeed and challenges them to expand their horizons so they become lifelong learners, global citizens, and leaders in the business world and their communities.”

Living on campus, with student activities going on all the time, President Machtley works many 12 to 18-hour days with his wife, Kati Machtley. She’s been a working partner from the beginning — a leader in creating events, a mentor to countless students, and a First Lady in hosting alumni, parents, and visiting dignitaries. Kati recalls that the Machtley years began on a dark and stormy night: “Hurricane Eduardo hit the East Coast the day we moved into our residence here on campus, and we spent our first night at Bryant in sleeping bags in the gym with all the freshmen.”

In the first 10 years of President Machtley’s administration, Bryant experienced remarkable enrollment growth — from 2,200 undergraduates in 1996 to 3,200 undergraduates in 2006. Rather than having tried to boost those numbers through more aggressive promotion of its traditional product, Bryant administrators expanded its market by enhancing its product — more majors in more disciplines, an expanded roster of athletic teams, and a transformed physical campus. The academic quality and diversity of Bryant’s student body have continued to improve ever since.

Lorna J. Hunter, Vice President for Enrollment Management from 2001 to 2012, explained, “The first thing we had to do was go out and re-educate our bread-and-butter population — people in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, who felt they knew Bryant well. I felt that anybody who hadn’t been on campus recently didn’t know Bryant at all.”

Numerous administrators have helped foster Bryant’s strong sense of community. For example, J. Thomas Eakin served as Vice President for Student Affairs from 1997 to 2013 and was a dynamic, creative force on campus. President Machtley praised him as “a stalwart leader of Bryant’s exceptional student life. Partnering with colleagues in academic affairs and other departments, he successfully oversaw the evolution of unique programs that integrate student life with academic initiatives — forging the distinctive Bryant Experience that sets us apart from our peers. Tom and his wife, Marj, created a wonderful legacy in our community, and we will always remain grateful for their leadership and friendship.”
STAFF

Bryant’s staff is genuinely popular with students, parents, faculty and alumni — admired for their dedication and kindness.

They are also very loyal. A large percent of the staff have worked at Bryant for more than 20 years.

Their dedication is evident in many ways, but there’s one thing they have in common: Whether in career counseling, maintenance, or public safety, they go out of their way to help students.

Mary Lyons, long-time Professor of Communication and Literary Studies, describes Bryant as “a very egalitarian learning community. Everyone has something to contribute. The faculty are the tip of the sword, but we couldn’t do our work without administrators. We couldn’t do our work without virtually everyone; certainly not without Student Affairs. And when you get into all the support people, including landscapers, maintenance workers, it’s like the three sides of the elephant. Some may think they own the whole elephant, but everyone has their own claims to the elephant; they see it their way. And it’s really important that we all get to understand each other.

“At service awards dinners each year, when you reach a milestone divisible by 5 you get an award. And President Machtley, for each of his five-year milestones, has gotten exactly the same award as somebody who might be a landscaper, or a painter, or a faculty member. After 20 years, I got a chair — a big, heavy Windsor chair that is really well-made. I got another chair at 40 years, and when I went down to the loading dock to get it, the fellow in shipping said, ‘You got a chair the last time, from 20 years ago.’ He was here then too! I said, ‘yeah, it takes a long time to get a set around here.’ We laughed. There’s a million stories like that at Bryant. There’s a real sense of community because everyone feels that they’re contributing.”

The safety and security ensured by staff is part of Bryant’s sense of community. “Parents love the fact that there’s one entrance and one exit, and this is a safe campus,” said Robin Warde, Director of Alumni and Parent Engagement. “It reinforces the feeling of family and community – that a student is a name, not a number.”
"Their dedication is evident in many ways, but there's one thing they have in common: Whether in career counseling, maintenance, or public safety, they go out of their way to help students."
PARENTS

Parents and Family weekend has always been a great time for parents, friends, and family to return to the Bryant campus to spend time with their students. The Student Senate always organized special entertainment for parents and students. But, prior to 2002, this weekend was not well attended by parents, and only about 50 families would attend.

“In 2002, a year after 9/11 there seemed to be a change in the attitude of Bryant families. Parents and family weekend completely sold out that year, and many people arrived on campus expecting to attend all the planned events.

“In the past, the Saturday evening after the football game there was a buffet dinner scheduled in the gym, which would have normally held all the families and friends who would have attended. But 2002 was different. The number of people in line waiting to get into the dinner went the entire length of the gym and spilled out to the sidewalk. We hastily set up another buffet dinner in the brand-new George E. Bello Center to handle the overflow.

“From that year on, parents have been much more involved in the Parents and Family weekends. During that weekend family members have an opportunity to attend the Dean’s List Reception with their student on Saturday morning. This is followed by a performance by the Bryant Singers or the Bottom Line, our a capella group, in Janikies Auditorium. Then President Machtley delivers his “State of the University” message to parents and students.

“For lunch that day we have a big tent with a pre-game barbecue for the students and their families. They can attend the football game after the barbecue or just enjoy time together throughout the afternoon. The fall play put on by the Bryant Players is also a relaxing way to spend the evening. Parents, friends, and family members want to be here with their children, and they feel very welcome.”
“Bryant also now has a Parents’ Council where parents meet with Bryant staff in order to discuss ways that parents can work with the university to enhance Bryant students overall educational experiences.”

Move-In Day can be an emotional time for parents and students. Many are surprised when they see President Machtley and Director of the Women’s Summit Kati Machtley drive up in a golf cart to greet them to help with moving. Kati explains, “Ron drives the golf cart with Tupper (the campus bulldog mascot) sitting between us. We have the open back on the cart so we can help parents transport their student’s cargo. Students and parents load their items into the golf cart, and then we drive it up to the dorm. Student athletes and orientation leaders then help to move the new freshmen into their dorms. Both parents and students are happy to receive a warm welcome, and to get help with transporting their carefully packed college gear into their new dorm room. The entire move in process is very well coordinated.”

Asked if the families are surprised to see them, Katie replied, “Yes. They say, “What are you doing here? Since Tupper is in the golf cart with us, families love to see him and enjoy having a photo taken with all of us. Both students and parents smile at the sight of Tupper. They appreciate the help moving in, and begin to relax when they see that we are all here to make Move In Day an enjoyable experience.”

ALUMNI

“Alumni are an institution’s pride, its proof of quality, its pledge to the future,” wrote President Machtley in 2003, “as well as the vital ingredient in a whole host of activities. Alumni help Bryant in its student recruitment efforts, graduate job placement and career counseling, and in annual giving and campaign support. So what do we provide for alumni in return? Many things. We believe that your alma mater should continue to provide value to you throughout your life, through lifelong learning opportunities, social and cultural enrichment programs, and a growing pride in association.”
In 2006, Machtley wrote, “All our graduates carry Bryant with them when they head into the world, and we want them to always be a part of bringing the world back to Bryant.”

In 2012, Bryant magazine explained that alumni engagement was an essential cycle: “As successful Bryant alumni engage with today’s students, those students acquire skills and contacts that promote early career success. As graduates intentionally tap into Bryant’s powerful alumni network, they increase their chances of personal fulfillment and professional advancement. As the success of Bryant alumni elevates the University’s reputation, both the intrinsic and market value of a Bryant degree grows, which attracts top students who will engage with committed alumni. And so the cycle repeats and expands.”

“There has always been an Alumni office,” explains Robin Warde, director of Alumni and Parent Engagement. “Very dedicated staff, including Paula Iacono ’69 and Judy Mastronardi Dumas, preceded me and ran events and reunions. But the past 15 years have seen accelerated change. Our alumni are not just in New England – they are all around the globe. We stay connected via all means – social media, our website, and email. We know not everyone can come to an event, so we offer a webinar series and an online book club to expand outreach Alumni participate from Saudia Arabia, India, and China, and our monthly enewsletter has worldwide distribution.”

“We’ve shifted our focus from mostly social programming to a more professional hands on approach to continue building our alumni network. Our goal is connecting alumni with students and to other alumni,” notes Warde. Last year, over 3,500 alumni were involved in leadership activities or directly helping students – serving in an advisory capacity, judging a competition on campus, or sharing expertise as a mentor. “New technology is helping. Linked In has been a game changer.”
“When people interact with the Alumni Engagement staff, they can tell that we have a passion for what we do. We love to hear from our alumni and their stories have a common thread. The friendships and experiences at Bryant shaped their careers and they want to give back. Our purpose is to provide a platform to share their stories and to make sure that the worldwide network of Bryant alumni continues to be a resource for the University.”

Increasing alumni involvement was an imperative in the 2011 strategic plan, Vision 2020: Expanding the World of Opportunity. Alumni may consider their participation in an emotional way, a matter of nostalgia, but there’s a practical reason, too: alumni participation is a factor in the rankings compiled by publications like *U.S. News & World Report* that prospective students and parents use in considering a university. The purpose of increasing alumni engagement is not just to get them to contribute financially, although Warde acknowledged that is important. “Because tuition doesn’t pay for the full cost of education, for Bryant to really do new and innovative things – build new buildings, engage in new academic activities – you need seed money, and that seed money can’t come from current students. It has to come from alumni.” The purpose is also to recruit alumni for leadership roles in the University, which includes capital campaigns and efforts to promote the Bryant brand.

Jennifer S. Parkhurst ’97, ’06 MBA was President of Bryant’s National Alumni Council and Alumni Association when she said in 2011: “We definitely have much more proactive approaches to try to engage alumni, to try to get them to stay involved or to reconnect. What alumni leaders do differently now is interact with students through a variety of student programming events, such as athletic games, guest lecture series, and student/alumni networking. The Alumni Association begins early to highlight the value of staying connected, the vast network available to them, and how they can impact the University in many ways.”
On May 22, 2010, President and Mrs. Machtley presented the Bryant community with its first live mascot, Iron-clad Tupper I, who was affectionately known as Tupper. He was named Tupper in recognition of Tupperware Corporation President Earl Tupper who, in 1967, dedicated the land for Bryant’s contemporary campus. Tupper I passed on in December 2018, but soon the Machtleys adopted Tupper II in Maryland and introduced him to the community in a ceremony befitting royalty.

Tupper II is much loved by the students, and Tupper loves them too!
People at Bryant often speak of the university community as “a family.” How do they mean that? The feeling seems to be that it’s a community where people work together like a family – with different skills, views, and designated tasks, but with a common purpose of helping students learn and live in a relatively idyllic setting.

A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

“Students who come to Bryant are looking for a broad-based, engaging kind of experience – where they have a chance to learn in a classroom with inspiring, expert faculty and apply that knowledge in our community of learning – which is the campus, the community, and the world.” J. Thomas Eakin, Ed.D., former Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students.

A STUDENT-CENTERED COMMUNITY

Bryant is a close-knit community partly because there’s a common purpose: to help each individual student learn and excel. The student to faculty ratio is 13 to 1, and all classes are taught by faculty.

In 2018, Bryant students came from 36 states across the U.S. and represented 54 countries, yet the campus seems like “a friendly small town” because students have positive traits in common – kindness, curiosity, respect, and ambition.
AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN THE REAL WORLD

The Bryant community has always been an integral part of “the real world” of work and service. “Real world ready” is a fairly recent catchphrase, but Bryant students have long been appreciated by employers as exceptionally hard-working, goal-oriented, and high-achieving.

The nationally recognized Amica Center for Career Education helps connect students, alumni mentors, and potential employers. The dedicated staff helps students create their own paths to success by providing comprehensive career planning, academic internships, corporate recruiting, workshops, networking nights, career fairs and other events. Its cutting-edge resources include podcasts, tutorials, career mapping tools, updated employment data, and interview practice.

Dr. Kevin Gaw, the enthusiastic Executive Director of the Amica Center for Career Education, is a strong advocate for students and makes himself available to them for help on career projects. Yvonne Combies runs the day-to-day operations of the center, assists with workshops, programs, and career fairs, and supervises work-study students. And before them, Judy Clare led the important Amica Center for 20 years.

Some 400 hundred organizations, representing a broad spectrum of industries, take part in Bryant’s recruiting and internship programs annually and consistently rate them as superior.

A COMMUNITY OF MENTORS

Mentorship is a very traditional practice in the Bryant culture. Teachers and administrators mentor students. Older students mentor younger students in various classes and programs. And generations of alumni mentor young graduates, even decades after the graduates have taken off their caps and gowns. Such mentorship has enriched the careers and lives of countless alumni.

Networking has become an increasingly influential part of the Bryant culture. Bryant teaches and fosters the art of networking. Eileen Hayes ’07 served as Chair of the Regional Alumni Council both in New York and Massachusetts, and said in a 2011 interview, “My goal is to foster alumni connections. There’s no better way to increase the value of our degrees than by giving back to the Bryant network. It’s the foundation of our education, so it’s important to stick with it.”
AN HISTORIC AND PROUD COMMUNITY

Bryant celebrated its 150th anniversary on February 1, 2013. The entire campus community gathered to launch a one-year celebration of Bryant’s sesquicentennial.

In remarks at the event, President Machtley said, “Today Bryant is the proudest university in America, and I hope you share with me the enormous sense of pride for 150 years of innovation and transformation that brings us here today. Our powerful network of more than 40,000 accomplished alumni, and the meaningful contributions they make to organizations, is just one indication of our success. Our faculty have been at the forefront of an evolving curriculum that is nationally recognized and whose programs are ranked among the best in the nation.”

A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

Bryant’s many departments cooperate on a daily basis, and, as the University has grown and launched many new programs, that collaboration has been crucial. Cooperation between Student Affairs and academics, and cooperation between Career Services and Alumni and Parent Engagement are two examples of the relationships that have proven vital for ensuring the academic, social, and career success of Bryant students.
“Tradition is part of Bryant’s sense of community, and one of those traditions is students not walking through the wrought-iron Archway gate until they graduate. The legend is that if students go through before graduation, they won’t graduate from Bryant! John “Jake” Meehan ’13 noted, “Every student’s proudest moment is walking through the Archway to the Commencement ceremony.”

AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

In 2003, President Machtley wrote about diversity in Bryant Business: “For many reasons, Bryant College was, for a very long time, not considered a particularly ‘diverse’ campus. We primarily attracted white, middle-class men and women who were looking for a rigorous academic program that would enable them to excel in their professional careers. While we are still committed to providing an outstanding education that helps our graduates to succeed in life and business, the demographics of our campus have shifted to better reflect the world in which we live. At Bryant, we are diligently working to create an environment that embraces diversity. We strive to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff whose life experiences and cultural perspectives can and do immeasurably enrich our campus life. It is not enough to merely recruit good students; it is necessary to create an environment where diversity is welcomed and where each member of our community feels comfortable. This takes strategy, planning, and resources as well as programs and staff. In this way, we will build a community that is reflective of the outside world. We will become an institution that graduates students who can excel in a diverse and global environment because they have learned to work successfully in such a community while at Bryant.”

Bryant leaders recruited and attracted a more diverse faculty and student body, with greater numbers of women, minorities, and international students – a mix that more fairly reflected the nation’s population. In 1980, only 2 percent of Bryant’s students were persons of color; by 2003 that figure had increased six-fold to 12 percent, moving toward the national average. Some of the early steps Bryant took to achieve this strategic goal included reinvigoration of the Multicultural Student Union and the International Student Organization, celebrations of ethnic heritage months and International Education Week, and efforts boosting the Diversity Council of Champions.

A MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Members of the Bryant community enjoy the University’s bucolic setting in Smithfield, “but we’re not an isolated village,” said Professor of Management Harsh Luthar in 2004. “If it’s happening in the world, it’s happening here.”

In the years that followed, Bryant developed an increasingly global and multicultural outlook, with a broader sense of community. After becoming a University in 2004, Bryant was more successful in attracting international students. About 11 percent of Bryant’s students on the Smithfield campus are international. Counting students at Bryant Zhuhai, it’s close to 20 percent.
First-year students perform in Elevator Pitch competitions – Bryant students learn to be entrepreneurial and to be leaders. Both skill sets require an ability to compete individually and to cooperate as members of teams.

A CARING COMMUNITY

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 took a heavy toll on the Bryant community. Four alumni lost their lives, as did the daughter of two other graduates. The father of Jason Coffey ’98 died with his son in the World Trade Center. William Lum Jr. ’78 also died in the World Trade Center. Lynn Goodchild ’98 and Shawn Nassaney ’98 died on Flight 175.

On the day of the attacks, a noon mass was held in the Bryant Center Chapel. Two ecumenical prayer services were held that evening.

The day after the tragedy, President Machtley sent a campus email that began with this passage:

“As we begin this day on the morning after the terrorists attack on our country, we need to reflect upon, pray about, and discuss these events. We ought to reflect upon the grief of the families that have been touched personally by these despicable acts. We also need to reflect on the heroism of the many police, fire fighters, and others who saw their duty and did it, even at the risk of loss of life. Finally, we should reflect on how fragile life can be and re-examine our aspirations and goals, and consider the importance of living lives that reflect essential spiritual values.”
A PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY

In the capital campaigns during the Machtley years, the Bryant community came through with surprising generosity. Each campaign exceeded its financial goals, making possible major improvements and new programs.

In 2012, the year before Bryant celebrated its 150th anniversary, President Machtley noted in Bryant magazine the great support given the University’s ambitious strategic plan, Vision 2020. He wrote, “This year, nearly 7,000 alumni, friends, parents, faculty, staff, and students participated in the life of Bryant through their philanthropy. The impact on our students is profound, particularly in this era when educational costs and family capacity collide. Giving back to Bryant through philanthropy transforms our campus and enriches lives, one student at a time, from the students supported through annual and endowed scholarships, to our faculty and curriculum enhancements, to our innovative technology and stunning facilities.”

A MISSION-DRIVEN COMMUNITY

Bryant’s mission was clearly defined during this 30-year period: “To educate and inspire students to discover their passion and become innovative leaders with character around the world.”

Former Bryant President Bill Trueheart explains, “There are academic institutions that became weak because they didn’t stay mission-focused. Bryant has remained mission-focused throughout its history. While it may seem that liberal arts changed the mission, it really didn’t – it complemented the business focus, making our graduates better, stronger leaders. Bryant is still on mission.”

In 2005, Bryant President Ron Machtley wrote in Bryant Business magazine: “If there’s one overriding lesson I’ve absorbed, it’s that a higher education institution can’t be static; just as the world is changing, we must embrace change. We wouldn’t have developed our acclaimed international program, achieved university status, expanded our athletic programs, renewed our AACSB accreditation, enhanced our national and international reputation, or attracted the quality of people that you find here today if we’d been satisfied with being ‘good enough.’ It is our mission, it is our destiny, to be great.”