

The Plan for Bryn Mawr

September 2012

BRYN MAWR
COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

More than 125 years ago, Bryn Mawr College was born from the hopes and dreams of its visionary founders. Our archives document the careful deliberations about faculty and facilities, curriculum and costs, that birthed this bold experiment in educational excellence. Subsequent generations built upon that well-prepared foundation, strengthening existing programs and adding new ones, ever aware of our evolving national and international environment but ever true to our core commitments.

Now it is our turn to chart a course for this beloved College, to continue the legacy of attentive, insightful planning that has shaped and reshaped this institution from its earliest years. With pride in our heritage, I am pleased to present you with *The Plan for Bryn Mawr*, a strategic vision for the College generated through the intensive, participatory planning processes in which we have been engaged for the last two years.

Bryn Mawr works best when it gathers the voices of its entire community, the voices of its faculty, students, staff, trustees, administrators and alumnae/i. As a consequence, *The Plan for Bryn Mawr* has drawn upon the work of many committees, task forces, retreats, workshops and forums. An important prelude was provided by the Board of Trustees' ratification, in April 2008, of the recommendations of the Task Force on Balancing Mission and Resources. These recommendations stimulated and guided the work of subsequent planning efforts, such as the Curricular Renewal Working Group, the Campus Facilities Master Plan, and the intensive faculty effort led by the Committee on Academic Priorities to create *The Working Model for Balancing Innovation, Institutional Goals, and Sustainability*. Our Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research have also undertaken significant programmatic reconsideration and development. Concurrent with these faculty actions, the Board charged two recent task forces, one to assess the competitive position of the College and the other to strengthen the relationship between the College and its alumnae/i. In spring 2010 the formation of a small cohort of faculty, trustees and administrators as the Thinking Forward Group (TFG) created a coordination mechanism for these multiple planning efforts.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the TFG undertook the task of synthesizing the results and recommendations generated by this intensive and multifaceted planning activity and of shaping an initial presentation of possible directions for the College community. In the fall of 2011, the Board meeting and four community-wide workshops provided venues for the frank and fruitful exchanges upon which further refinements of emerging strategic directions could be based. A draft of these directions was then discussed in three special meetings convened by the faculty members of the TFG in spring 2012 and was approved by the Board of Trustees at its April meeting.

This final version of *The Plan for Bryn Mawr* will be our guiding document as we continue the work of earlier generations to strengthen our core and to enhance our competitive position. It will direct the course of our forthcoming fundraising campaign because the realization of the dreams and aspirations expressed in this vision of our future will depend greatly upon the generosity of all of us who care deeply about Bryn Mawr College.

Jane McAuliffe
President

FOUNDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

- Opportunities for women to assume leadership roles have increased dramatically and with that increase comes a greater demand than ever to prepare young women for the choices and the responsibilities that will be theirs.
- Our ever more diverse student body makes Bryn Mawr's campus a microcosm of the world, enriching experiences both within and beyond the classroom by bringing together multiple perspectives, values, and intellectual orientations.
- A renewed sense of accountability to people and to the planet inspires young women to seek institutions that can prepare them to pursue the work of sustainability and social justice.

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

- Pressure on the cost and economics of higher education presents a practical concern for families faced with financing several years of postsecondary schooling and provokes the political reality of an active and acrimonious public debate about the value and benefits of that investment.
- Demographic shifts and increasing global competition from traditional and new players compel all colleges and universities to address the realities of changing levels of student demand.

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- To meet fast paced technological development and the explosion of information creation and dissemination, colleges and universities must be nimble in assessing and implementing new technologies.

These are real challenges facing many, if not all, distinguished colleges today. Despite the progress we have made in core investments, such as faculty salaries and financial aid, we have more work to do in this competitive landscape. Although many of our alumnae/i provide enthusiastic and unwavering support to the College and their

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

We must focus on our abiding mission: educating undergraduates and graduates by supporting a world-class faculty, by stimulating deep inquiry and exploration, and by preparing students for lives of productive promise. This must be our guide—our north star. To attract the students who will flourish at Bryn Mawr and to sustain the rich academic legacy they inherit, we must take careful, considered, and purposeful action.

BRYN MAWR'S RESPONSE: OUR EDUCATIONAL MISSION

We begin envisioning our future by acknowledging that we are an educational community concerned foremost with the role of knowledge in exploring the possibilities of the self and its potential for positive action in the world. We are a community of faculty and students who come together to confront questions simple and profound: What knowledge and perspectives can I contribute to our common understanding of the world? What must I learn for myself and from others to take the path I see before me? What will be my life's work?

As a liberal arts college operating in a global context, we must keep this educational endeavor—embodied in the interaction between faculty and students—at the center of our plans for the future.

“What knowledge and perspectives can I contribute to our common understanding of the world?”

To this commitment, we bring the particular strengths of Bryn Mawr:

- We are small by design so that the advantages of our size can translate into a transformative community in which our students, our faculty, and our staff can flourish.
- We are committed to intellectual engagement and to academic excellence with a proud history of extraordinary scholarly accomplishments.
- We are a college, and a community, of international perspectives with a deep dedication to dialogue across culture, gender, religion, race, and class.

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

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

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

THE PLAN FOR BRYN MAWR: PRIORITIES

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

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

1. Today's Learning for Tomorrow's Lives

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

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

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

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

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

- New pathways through academic majors that provide rigorous yet flexible academic preparation with clear links beyond the undergraduate degree. This includes a broader menu of multidisciplinary 360° clusters (innovative course groupings that take a multidisciplinary approach to a single topic), AB/MA options in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities; and expanded faculty advising and mentoring.
- Faculty funds for scholarly and creative work that enriches the curriculum; for technology that enhances teaching and research; for “guest faculty” that expand our academic reach; and for sabbaticals that facilitate student research.
- A newly conceived student hub or center that will create a platform for connecting student learning to the work of the world. Its mandate will be integrating career-development strategies that align with our liberal-arts curriculum, including guaranteed internships, additional community-based learning opportunities, and certificate programs that introduce profession-specific skills in fields like finance, media, and public policy. The Center will coordinate increased alumnae/i engagement with students for mentoring, internships, and job placements.

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2. Advancing Science

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

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

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

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

- Strengthening the preparation of our students for advanced study in the sciences through curricular innovations, expanded undergraduate research, and intensive faculty mentoring.
- Expanding options for concentration and careers in the sciences through new 360° courses and by building new curricular pathways in premedical education and public health.
- Doubling our collaboration with the Posse Foundation, a national college access and leadership development program, by launching a Science Posse that secures the success of its student cohort through preparatory programs, research opportunities, and close faculty mentoring.
- Forging stronger connections between the study of science and majors in the humanities and social sciences, affording non-science majors the ability to enrich their work with an understanding of how scientific disciplines are connected to theirs and are also relevant to the lives they will lead.

3. Women for the World

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

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

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

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

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

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

- A network of partnerships with international institutions to connect our students and faculty with a broader community of scholars and practitioners working on these key issues. These partnerships will support internship-service placements, technology-enabled global classrooms, teaching exchanges for faculty, and new study abroad sites for students.
- A more globally focused curriculum, including 360°s on international issues, an International Studies major, an enhanced program in Middle East and Islamic Studies, and continued excellence in languages.
- Marquee events that use the College's convening power to host important speakers and to mount significant conferences dedicated to the research and practices best able to advance equity for girls and women.
- Initiatives that invite the world to Bryn Mawr, such as "in-bound" study abroad, visiting faculty appointments, and enhanced international recruitment.
- A special scholarship program for students willing to spend a postgraduate year with an international organization that seeks to help women and girls by working on poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and conflict resolution.

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FOUNDATIONAL INVESTMENTS

The Catalytic Role of the Faculty

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

The Student Experience and Student Community

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

Graduate Education of Distinction and Distinctiveness

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

Technology for Teaching and Research

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

Facilities

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

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

THE PROMISE OF BRYN MAWR

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

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

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

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

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

BRYN MAWR
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