Introduction

Bryant University, celebrating its 160th anniversary in 2023, is a selective university with distinctive business, health sciences, and liberal arts programs. Bryant’s multidisciplinary curriculum, which integrates business and the liberal arts, offers real-world experiences for students who also graduate with global perspectives. The College of Business offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as executive development programs.

The College of Business continues to be the cornerstone of Bryant University, accounting for almost 80 percent of the University’s undergraduate enrollment, and 90 percent of the graduate enrollment. More than 80 percent of undergraduate students reside in campus housing, ranging from traditional first-year residence halls to senior townhouses. The College of Business continues to attract its student body from northeastern states, with the majority from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

The organizational structure of the College of Business consists of the dean, an associate dean, five department chairs, and several program co-coordinators. Currently, Madan Annavarjula serves as dean of the College. Recognizing the value of an external perspective, the College of Business dean established a board of advisors in the fall of 2017. The role of the College of Business Board of Advisors, composed primarily of leading business professionals from for-profit and non-profit organizations, is to bring an external perspective to strategic planning and to provide input into programs reflective of and needed for the markets that the College of Business serves.

The following sections explain the efforts of the College of Business to develop a new Strategic Plan for the next five years (2023-2028) that enables the college to create an innovative new curriculum, enhance student success and outcomes, and foster a culture of shared success among its faculty, staff, and students.
Industry Analysis

Five years ago, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of the higher education industry using the “five forces framework” authored by noted management and strategy expert Michael Porter. We studied the impact of the “buyers” (students and parents), *suppliers* (professors, technology providers, etc.), *barriers to entry* into the higher education industry (profit/non-profit entrants), *threat of substitutes* (online education, corporate universities) and the general status of the *competitive rivalry* within the higher education sphere (tuition and discount rates, scholarships, facilities etc.).

At the time, we came to the following conclusions:

- Each of the five forces is moving in the wrong direction, with (tuition) price rivalry expected to increase further in the future.
- The analysis suggests that colleges and universities will experience increasing financial pressure in the years ahead, particularly small non-profit private colleges with limited endowments.
- The winners also will find ways to mitigate negative forces, such as by finding more attractive niches/segments within higher education.
- Winning strategies will establish competitive positions in which differentiation is enhanced, price rivalry is muted to some extent, and where barriers to entry are substantial.
- Alternatively, winning strategies will establish formidable low-cost positions, in which scale economies are maximized, fixed costs are amortized more effectively, etc.

What has happened since then regarding these industry forces?

- Buyers have become more powerful, and substitutes such as online education continue to be a threat. Consequently, price rivalry has increased substantially. Discount rates at private colleges and universities have soared in the past decade. See the chart on the next page from NACUBO:
As competition has intensified, significant changes have occurred in the college admissions process over the past five years:

- Test-optional has become much more prevalent, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- Competition for students has extended well beyond May 1st as that date has become less significant than it used to be. Many colleges continue to recruit and compete for students beyond May 1st, even attempting to lure students who have deposited at other schools by the traditional May 1st deadline.
- Many, though not all, colleges have focused even more heavily on demonstrated interest in evaluating students during the application process.
- The pandemic had a negative impact on international student admissions, and the recovery in that area has been slow to date for many institutions.

These changes make the competition for students even more intense. The continued demographic decline among high school graduates in the Northeast impacts Bryant University a great deal, given our high concentration of students from New England, New York, and New Jersey.

Our Academic Programs

- Our International Business program continues to be very highly ranked nationally (top 20 by US News). However, enrollments have lagged in this program in recent years for several reasons including challenges in our foreign language program and the decline in international students due to the pandemic.
- Our Finance program has the most concentrators by far on campus. We have made great strides in enhancing our experiential learning opportunities for finance students. Moreover, we have recruited several strong young faculty members to the department. A focus on hiring more women has resulted in a much more balanced department in terms of gender. We hope that these hiring efforts will help us recruit more women to the concentration moving forward.
- We have introduced several new increasingly popular concentrations in the past five years including data science, digital marketing, team and project management, and leadership and innovation management. We have also revamped our entrepreneurship major in a major way.
- Bryant hosts a very popular and successful intercollegiate sales competition. This year, we had more than 350 students and faculty in attendance. The competition has attracted many corporate sponsors and partners, and it has helped us place students in terrific jobs.
- Our Accounting program has suffered enrollment declines in the past five years. Student interest in accounting has declined nationally, but we have lagged national enrollment figures. The College of Business is focused on reversing this trend.
- At the graduate level, our online Professional MBA program has gained traction in the market and attracted very high-quality students. The program has been ranked in the top 50 nationally two years in a row by Poets and Quants.
- This online program has not cannibalized our part-time in-person MBA program. Meanwhile, our one-year, full-time MBA program has experienced strong enrollments in the past two years.
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**Competitive Analysis:**

We benchmarked Bryant against our peer institutions in New England with strong business programs as part of our strategic planning process. We have summarized key findings below.

The benchmarking analysis reveals several key challenges and significant opportunities for Bryant:

A. Bryant is concerned about its high acceptance rate compared to some of its peer schools. Since the time these data were collected and analyzed, Bryant has nudged its acceptance rate down (both in 2022 and 2023). The goal is to continue that downward trajectory.

B. Bryant also has an opportunity to improve its percentage of students of color (non-white + international), and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged (as measured by percentage of students receiving Pell grants).

C. Bryant has faced serious challenges to recruit female students (similar to other institutions, that focus on business (Babson and Bentley).

D. The competitor analysis reveals that, for Bryant to compete effectively with other successful business programs in the area, it has a serious need to make a significant investment in new business school building and related infrastructure such as technology, experiential learning spaces etc.in the near future.

E. In this context we feel very fortunate that Bryant has recently received a transformational gift of a 250,000 Sqft building across the road from our current campus from Fidelity Investments. The University has embarked on plans to develop this as the future home of the College of Business along with other facilities and shared spaces.

F. The analysis also identifies one very important strength for Bryant: we deliver a very strong return on investment for our students. According to GWU study on ROI on Educational Investment, Bryant is in the top 1% of schools, delivering an exceptional ROI for its graduates. Combined with the historically strong career outcomes of our graduates, Bryant is well regarded as a desired destination for students for the foreseeable future.

Additional qualitative analysis reveals several other important strengths of a Bryant business education:

1. Breadth and depth of experiential learning opportunities
2. Strong co-curricular programs (Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization, for example)
3. High number of faculty with international backgrounds and experience
4. Significant efforts to enhance our teaching effectiveness through programs offered by the Center for Teaching Effectiveness (which we proposed during our last strategic planning process).
5. Strong involvement by alumni in our classes and campus organizations as guest speakers, judges, and mentors.
6. Good partnerships with local corporations who work with our students and sponsor projects for our courses.

Based on these realities and the research we conducted, the College of Business has embarked on developing a new strategic plan for 2023-2028. The following section explains the strategic planning process and engagement with key stakeholders.
The current Strategic Plan of the College of Business has been in place since 2018. In May of 2021, we decided that the College needed to develop a new strategic plan that reflected the collective vision of the university, the faculty, and the Academic Affairs Leadership. Since the university strategic plan (Vision 2030) was being discussed and developed at the same time, we decided to delay the development of the College of Business plan until such a time that the University Plan had taken shape. In this way, we could align the CoB strategic plan with the university plan. The group’s work unfolded in four phases:

**Phase 1: Initial Meetings and Brainstorming**
Initial discussions were led by Dean Annavarjula and Associate Dean Das with CoB faculty and department chairs which resulted in a broad understanding of the steps involved and the process moving forward. A strategic planning steering committee was formed that included Professors Michael Roberto, Peter Nigro, Andres Ramirez, Elzotbek Rustambekov, Dirk Primus, Eileen Kwesiga, Asli Ascioglu, Saeed Roohani, Keith Murray and Suhong Li.

Initial meeting of the steering committee was held in the form of a retreat in November 2021 to generate ideas and identify next steps in the process.

The committee proposed the following steps:

1. Hold discussions with all faculty and the Dean’s Council on specific areas as identified by a faculty survey and the steering committee meetings.

2. Develop a matrix of ideas to identify key goals for the CoB plan.
3. Create a statement of values and a redesigned mission statement resulting from the discussions.

4. Develop metrics that measure progress toward achieving our goals.

5. Align with University Vison 2030 plan.

Phase 2: Survey of Faculty
In the winter of 2022, we surveyed faculty based on key issues during the steering committee’s planning retreat. The following questions were included in the survey.

1. What attitudes and skills do we want all Bryant CoB graduates to have? (Mindset)
2. How do we enable effective learning? (Pedagogy)
3. What outcomes do we desire for our graduates? (Outcomes)
4. Where do we see our Graduate School in the future? (Graduate Education)

Workshops and discussions were held with the CoB Dean’s Advisory Council in Spring 2022 on specific themes and their responses were carefully recorded. The CoB Dean’s Council consists primarily of Bryant CoB Alumni. In addition, selected Strategic Planning team members met with the Bryant Senior Advisory Council to discuss the draft plan and receive feedback from them to be incorporated in the final version.

Phase 3: Draft Version of the Plan
The Strategic Plan Steering committee met in May 2022 to refine the feedback from Dean’s Council. A matrix consisting of strategic pillars, action steps in the areas of teaching, research, community engagement and administrative support was developed (appendix-**).

Throughout this time, we presented interim progress reports at faculty-wide meetings and gathered additional input and feedback. We used breakout brainstorming sessions at these faculty meetings to generate and collect ideas.

Phase 4: Provost Review and Approval
Dean Annavarjula forwarded a draft of the plan to the Provost Rupendra Paliwal on behalf of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee in November 2022. The plan was further refined based upon comments from Provost Paliwal. The revised plan was then presented at the Spring (April) 2023 meeting of the CoB Dean’s Council. The finalized plan that was vetted by the Dean’s Council, the steering committee and the Department Chairs was then presented to President Ross Gittell in late Spring for his review.

The final approval from both President Gittell and Provost Paliwal was received in mid-summer 2023.

The following section describes the proposed strategic plan that was developed with input from students, alumni, faculty, administrative leadership, and the Dean’s Council.
Our Vision:
College of Business at Bryant University aspires to be among the top private accredited institutions nationally and internationally by offering a high-quality experiential business education that is current in its content, comprehensive in its scope and conscientious in its impact.

Our Mission:
“We educate and inspire our students to become purposeful leaders in a data-informed world.”

Why This Mission?
We believe that students must become purposeful leaders to make a positive impact on the world.

We believe that students must be equipped to thrive in the age of big data, powerful analytics, and digital transformation.

We believe that Bryant’s hands-on, learning-by-doing approach inside and outside the classroom will prepare our students to lead and to thrive in this data-informed world.

We are living in the age of big data. Technological transformation has unleashed the power of data to shape and guide our decisions in ways that didn’t even seem possible a short time ago.

Our students must understand how technology can shape our lives and organizations for the better, as well as how it can create harm. They must be equipped to understand how artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other technologies are reshaping the way organizations operate and decisions are made. They must know how to leverage technology, analyze data, and critically evaluate information to come to meaningful conclusions.

We must equip and motivate our students to make better decisions by harnessing the power of data, analytics, and technology. However, we want our students to exercise sound judgment guided by their purpose, ethical principles and their values and not simply rely on algorithms and machines to make decisions.
Beyond Books, Boundaries, and Borders

To achieve our mission, we believe that Bryant’s College of Business must be committed and prepared to go beyond books, boundaries, and borders in all that we do.

- **Beyond Books**: Enrich and increase content of experiential learning in all courses and programs. These efforts include internships, practica, consulting projects, case studies, student research and corporate connections.

- **Beyond Boundaries**: Encourage and enable students to expand their horizons by exploring business-related knowledge across traditional functional areas, applied fields, STEM discipline. Augment their knowledge through certifications and micro-credentials.

- **Beyond Borders**: Design curriculum to include international content, perspectives, and experiences. Provide enriching short-term and long-term study abroad programs, increase Fulbright opportunities, and facilitate international student and faculty exchanges. Expand Bryant’s partnerships with leading institutions around the world.

Leading with Purpose:

What does it mean to lead with purpose? Why is this capability so essential in today’s world?

1. Students must find their purpose in life in addition to discovering their passion. Doing so will help them find meaningful work and satisfying, productive careers.

2. Purposeful leaders must be empathetic and understand what drives those around them, as well as the challenges and obstacles others face each and every day.

3. Leaders must rally others around their organization’s purpose to engage and motivate their team members to achieve shared goals.

4. Being driven by purpose means that leaders make decisions guided and driven by their core values, not simply the bottom line.

5. Being driven by purpose means making decisions that will have a positive impact on employees, customers, partners, communities, investors, and the planet itself.

What we value:

1. **Intellectual curiosity** - We strive to create and nurture a sense of intellectual curiosity in our students by creating an environment that fosters curiosity and creativity.

2. **Diversity** - We believe that enhancing diversity in all respects makes us all stronger and better citizens, and it prepares our students to succeed in their chosen professions.

3. **Empathy** - We believe that building a sense of empathy in our students helps us build successful global leaders of tomorrow.
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4. **Creativity** - We believe that the classroom is a place to build new and original ideas, challenge existing notions, and contribute to solutions for a sustainable world.

5. **Authenticity** - We believe in imparting an education that is grounded in facts, based on data, and applicable in real life.

**Goals (2023-2028)**

- Enhance the quality of undergraduate programs through curricular innovation with a significant emphasis on expanding and deepening our approaches to experiential learning.
- Enhance mentorship, internship, and career opportunities for our students.
- Increase the proportion of women in our student body.
- Enhance graduate curriculum to increase enrollment in graduate business programs.
- Establish a global mindset in our students through innovative curriculum, immersive experiences, and career planning.
- Create new opportunities for lifelong learning for our alumni.
- Recruit and retain talented new faculty.

**Action Plan - Four major initiatives:**

**Initiative One: Enhance curricular innovation:**

- Revitalize the business core curriculum to reflect cutting edge topics and areas including coding, data analytics and visualization, artificial intelligence, digital marketing, fintech, etc.
- Establish long-term partnerships between corporate partners and each of our business core courses to provide experiential learning opportunities for our students in each discipline.
- Ensure that students have an experiential learning capstone experience in each major/concentration.
- Provide opportunities for students to earn additional professional certifications and badges during their time at Bryant.
- Develop a new concentration and minor in the business of healthcare (committee established in March 2023, conducting market research and interviewing industry experts at this time.)
- Design strategies to increase enrollments in traditionally strong programs like Accounting and International Business.
- Offer new graduate degree programs and stackable certificates tailored to market needs.
- Enhance student life and career placement opportunities for our graduate students.
- Develop new opportunities for lifelong learning for our alumni (online modules, stackable into certificates or graduate degree programs)
- Recruit high quality practitioner faculty to improve the connection between classroom learning and corporate world.
Initiative Two: Create a cluster of interdisciplinary labs that foster experiential learning and research.

a. Women in Business Lab: Build on the new Women in Finance initiative to develop a comprehensive program to attract, develop and mentor women in various fields of business. The lab would possess physical space on campus, but more importantly, it would be a hub of faculty-student-alumni interaction, both virtual and in-person. The lab’s activities would include:
   i. Student mentorship programs
   ii. Invited speakers
   iii. Alumni events
   iv. Grants for research

b. “SAIL” - Strategy, Analytics, & Innovation Lab: This lab would combine analytics, data science, and design thinking - the latter giving us a human dimension to our data analytics work. We would emphasize that a clear strategic direction must guide all data-driven decision making. The lab would become a hub for entrepreneurially minded students on campus, but we would encourage students from all disciplines to interact in these spaces. SAIL would consist of physical spaces dedicated to teaching as well as spaces focused on independent student and faculty work. The physical dimensions of this lab would include a makerspace, student venture area, data analytics and visualization center, design thinking center, etc. These spaces would encourage interdisciplinary work by students from a range of majors, and they would focus on innovative approaches to experiential learning.

c. Institute for Women in Finance and Leadership: This Center would be the first in a series of Business discipline-based initiatives to promote and recruit qualified female students into the various business programs and provide opportunities to high school students to understand careers in business, mentor current students, and help improve career outcomes.

d. Financial Markets Center: In addition to these labs and centers, we would completely redesign and improve our Financial Markets Center, which has been a hallmark of experiential learning at Bryant for many years. This center will be the hub for our Archway Investment Fund, as well as for other aspects of our finance education.

Initiative Three: Enhance Global Perspective

a. Increase international partnerships to support the recruitment of students, creation of new graduate programs, and enhanced opportunities for study abroad.

b. Hire additional international faculty with expertise in international business, knowledge of other cultures and markets, and relationships at other institutions around the globe.

c. Invest in creating a more welcoming climate for international students when they arrive on campus at Bryant.

d. Revitalize custom study abroad in the international business program.
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**Initiative Four: Create a formal alumni mentorship program for our students.**

- Develop a formal program whereby interested students could be matched with alumni dedicated to mentoring them about careers, purpose, and succeeding in a data-driven world.
- Develop a reverse mentorship component to the program, whereby students could help inform our alumni about cutting edge technological and societal trends, particularly as they relate to young consumers/employees/citizens.

The following graphic illustrates mapping of the key strategic planning elements.
Bringing it all Together... The New Bryant College of Business Building

We propose to build a distinctive, world-class home for the Bryant University College of Business. This facility will enhance the brand identity and differentiation of the college amidst a highly competitive marketplace. The building will enable us to bring students, faculty, alumni, and corporate partners together in spaces designed to promote active and experiential learning.

Why a new building?

1. The College of Business serves as Bryant’s signature academic program. It should have a distinct identity on campus. When visitors arrive, they should be able to see the central importance of business education at Bryant. A state-of-the-art building would bring together our talent and technology in spaces that promote effective teaching and learning for our students. We want students to be real-world ready, and we need a modern facility to achieve that goal.

2. The building should encompass what students and families expect in a cutting-edge business school. It should highlight our signature programs and enhance our mission to make experiential learning a cornerstone of a Bryant education. It should include a state-of-the-art financial markets center, makerspaces and collaboration space for student entrepreneurs, a professional sales training center, and data science and analytics capabilities that support our vision to be a leader in this area.

3. A key goal would be to create centers of expertise that support collaboration between faculty, students, alumni, and corporate partners. These centers would house innovative teaching spaces and areas for hands-on project-based activities to support experiential learning. By co-locating learning spaces, faculty offices, and centers, we can foster cross-disciplinary interaction and informal mentoring and advising. “Learning by walking around” would become the norm.

4. Imagine a space that allowed finance faculty, students, and alumni to quickly access a state-of-the-art financial center to support the current and future goals of our acclaimed Archway Investment Fund program. Imagine a place that enables students and faculty to move seamlessly from classrooms and offices into areas that support project-based work in data visualization, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. Imagine moving quickly from a classroom to a sales training center where students could role play and practice sales pitches with industry professionals. At Bryant today, these spaces are spread across multiple buildings which inhibits spontaneous collaboration.

5. Our competitors have established separate, innovative spaces for their business schools. These buildings are centerpieces of their campuses. In the past decade, we have seen new business school buildings constructed at a range of rival schools including Providence College, Stonehill, Merrimack, Fairfield, Fordham, Fairfield, UMass-Amherst, and Sacred Heart. Others, including Babson, Bentley and Northeastern, have created specialized facilities to support their signature programs. We lag substantially behind these other schools due to the Unistructure’s obvious shortcomings, and because we lack a distinctive business school building. As a result, Bryant risks losing many talented students.
Bryant University embarked on a bold new era of excellence and innovation with the announcement of a significant campus expansion thanks to a generous real estate donation from neighboring Fidelity Investments. The financial services company donated 100 Salem Street, a building part of their Smithfield corporate campus just across the street from the existing Bryant campus entrance. The acquisition marks the most significant real estate gift to Bryant University since Earl Tupper gifted his farmland to create Bryant’s Smithfield campus in 1967, and the university moved to Smithfield from its original Providence location.

This generous donation propels Bryant’s Vision 2030 plan as well as the CoB Strategic Plan forward by reimagining Bryant’s campus to include a state-of-the-art facility to house its top-ranking College of Business, the Graduate Programs office, the Executive Education and Career Accelerator, and the Women’s Leadership Institute. In addition, this new facility will also support extra-curricular activities and provide gathering space for all Bryant students.

The extended campus bolsters the bold initiatives put forward by Vision 2030 as well as the CoB Strategic Plan, which includes continued investment in academic excellence, immersive experiential learning, and Top 1% student outcomes, including high earnings and economic mobility.

Bryant will build out the 250,000-square-foot building to include classrooms, entrepreneurial innovation space, and state-of-the-art labs and engage students in design thinking, professional sales, fintech, AI, and data analytics. The facility will also include faculty and administrative office space and meeting and gathering spaces.

The additional square footage that the campus expansion provides will allow the creation of the "Innovative and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem" initiative that takes ambitious projects from ideation and incubation to venture capital funding. This new Center for Entrepreneurship will enhance collaboration between students, faculty, and industry throughout Rhode Island.