

# **A Changing World:**

# **MARKETING PLAN**

Bradley University

2020-2025

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Bradley University is a private university located in Peoria, Illinois that was founded in 1897 by Lydia Moss Bradley. It has become one of the Midwest's top schools in terms of student-engagement and quality education since then and offers 185 programs for its 5,400 undergraduate population. It is therefore considered a medium-sized school and uses this to its advantage, with one of its main benefits being small class sizes of 17 students on average.

Our primary goal is to increase net income and alleviate the debt that Bradley is currently operating under. This goal has a set date of 5 years. The objectives to include this is to increase awareness of the offering to 90% of the target market and to ensure that our collaborators and competitors are closely monitored. Collaborators should be evaluated and leveraged to benefit both parties, while Bradley University should try to differentiate themselves from the competition like DePaul University, Butler University, Illinois State University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Our target customers profile will be what we call “Bradley Bill.” Bradley Bill is traditionally 18-22 years old, with potential religious views or a more liberal arts mindset. This customer will more than likely be located in the Midwest, be a high achiever in high school, and come from middle class / high income families. Possible interests in our engineering, nursing, direct physical therapy, or other specialty programs would make the customer even more important.

For customers, Bradley University would offer a quality education, with high levels of student-faculty engagement. There is also a very close-knit community with over 240 student organizations and faculty-led research opportunities. The location is important, being centrally located 3 hours away from Chicago and St. Louis and the price is moderately priced after the various scholarship opportunities. Eventually, these benefits lead into higher net income post-grad from a Bradley education.

For collaborators, Bradley University offers a broad base of perks, such as direct recruitment from a pool of well-educated students, community recognition, and monetary compensation. In the upcoming difficult market, these should be highlighted and pressed upon.

Tactics should be focused on the comprehensive and consistent messaging and availability for the offering, whether it be online through social media and email or through more traditional methods like mail and pamphlets. New online capabilities should be especially focused upon in the upcoming months to increase the number of customers that go into awareness.

Implementing and controlling this marketing plan will include increasing funding into online capabilities, focusing on strategic advantages and benefits, and making the customer value proposition be the focus of each media released or used. This is a learning process, full of constant benchmarking against other institutions, not on past performance, and maintaining vigilance to the environment in regards to policies and changes.

## **SITUATION OVERVIEW**

Higher education institutions across the country are suffering from declining enrollments in traditional post high-school graduate studies, for a variety of reasons. These reasons range from an increase in cheap online resources that are available for students pursuing further education, the decrease in students interested in traditional learning, and even factors such as the credit crisis in 2008 affected the next demographics of students. In the United States, these consist of 2- and 4-year institutions, which are either privately or state-owned. Students graduating high school have the choice for which institution they would prefer to attend, based off of a variety of factors that they value and consider. These factors include cost, location, major availability, size, and more. Schools struggle to compete for their niche of the student market, which is diminishing each year.

### ***Company Overview***

Bradley University is a private university located in Peoria, Illinois. It was founded in 1897 by Lydia Moss Bradley as a school of Horology (watchmaking) and has since then grown into one of the best liberal arts schools in Illinois. Bradley has 5,400 undergraduate students and graduate students. It is considered a mid-size university, with over 185 academic programs.

As its mission, Bradley “empowers students for immediate and sustained success in their personal and professional endeavors by combining professional preparation, liberal arts and sciences, and co-curricular experiences. Alongside our dedication to students, we embrace the generation, application, and interpretation of knowledge.” It has a vision to be the leader in student engagement, which it does

well due to its average class size of 17:1. Its core values include: student success, knowledge and discovery, inclusiveness and connectivity, and excellence.

Bradley's core competency is based on the small class sizes and opportunities for experiential learning. Students have the opportunity to work closely with professors, as all classes are directly taught by them, not by teacher's assistants (TA). It is a highly accredited university and has been doing well overall these past years. It is conveniently positioned in central Illinois, which keeps it within 2-3 hours of Chicago and Saint Louis, from which many of its students come from. Bradley University's competitors include all institutions that provide traditional learning. These will be more specifically identified in the strategy section of the marketing plan.

Bradley University's leadership has taken serious consideration into opportunities that have presented itself to Bradley in the upcoming years. New co-curriculars such as Women's Hockey, Bowling, and E-Sports have opened new activities for students to participate in and remain active. Increasing new nursing specific opportunities and expanding online graduate programs gives Bradley an advantage over its competitors. There is also a new focus on expanding into non-traditional higher education, while how this remains to be implemented is still in the works. Bradley's strong admissions team and spectacular Visit Day programs also is an opportunity to expand upon, as other students are more convinced by direct testimony when selecting where they want to spend their college careers. Bradley has also looked into expanding its alumni network reach, in order to reach more potential students and bring them into the "awareness" stage of the process.

There are also a variety of threats that Bradley University faces in the immediate and long-term. One of these is that there is a 2% average decline in Illinois college students, which means there is high supply but low demand for high level institutions. Income disparities continue to grow in the United States as well, which is part of the reason why the averages have been falling of students planning on attending a traditional institution. Bradley sits in debt over \$9.3 million and will see a large impact on this as the coronavirus continues to affect the market. The pandemic itself is a major threat, as the possibility of not resuming classes in the Fall may affect attendance and revenues to the university. In the short term, it may mean immediate changes to the curriculum but could prove much more difficult to navigate if social distancing regulations remain in effect for a longer period of time. Bradley has also seen the issue of inconsistent branding and low funding on select programs, which have been addressed in its new strategic plan. The perception that small schools have, in terms of number of opportunities and peer / family opinions, are also seen as a threat to the probability of a potential student choosing Bradley.

### ***Market Overview***

### Customers

Current customers of the Bradley University offering include current students, whether they be undergraduate or graduate students. There is also a smaller niche of online students that are receiving the benefits of the education. Potential buyers would be students that are looking more into higher education, especially in the more traditional sense. This topic will be looked at more in depth in the target market section.

### Collaborators

The most important collaborators for the university are the students who attend or faculty that work there. Student Admissions Representatives (STARs) are representatives of Bradley University that are trained to be knowledgeable on various benefits and aspects of the product offering. They are a valuable resource for the institution, especially in recruiting potential students through Visit Day programs and tours. Admissions Representatives, who work in the Admissions Office, help lead these students. Faculty also contribute greatly, as they are a major part of the brand and also attend recruiting events. Highschool counselors can point potential students in the right direction and professionals that work at local companies like Caterpillar, OSF, and Unity Point Hospital can be leveraged as well. Finally, alumni who have “tried” the education and liked it may be used as possible collaborators. It would be in Bradley University’s great interest to leverage these as well and build upon the network. Companies that assist Bradley with marketing and other outsourcing companies are current and future collaborators, as they own stake in the future of the company. Potential collaborators will include all of the previously mentioned, but it may prove beneficial to look into more online resources with the current context of the world.

### Competitors

There are three branches of competition that should be compared before further focusing on the target market. The first, large public institutions like Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois in Champaign, and Western Illinois University, attract students but are not necessarily similar to the full package of Bradley. Midwest private universities like Butler University, Drake University, St. Louis University, and Northwestern University are much more comparable, in terms of size and private funding. Finally, online colleges and communities will show an increase in competition as the effects of the coronavirus epidemic affect the higher education system.

### Context

### *Economic*

Income disparities are growing at an alarming rate in the United States, which means that less and less people are attending higher level education. There is also the major issue of the economic recession and possible depression because of the global shutdown on most non-essential businesses. The long term implications are yet to be seen, but it will undoubtedly lead to even less students having the funding to attend institutions. This would lead to a further loss of revenues and will lead to further budget changes. How this will affect the global context will be seen in the upcoming months.

### *Technological*

Technologically, the coronavirus also has implications on the medium from which the offering is offered. Recent resources such as Zoom, Panopto, and Bongo have been used extensively, so there will be the need to make sure that these and online student resources be available for an increase in traffic for the future. This will have a lasting implication on how education is offered and the university will need to be prepared for future capabilities that will appear in the upcoming year.

### *Regulatory*

The most important factor of the context will be based around what the government chooses to do at a national level and state level. This will be especially important to our public institution competitors, as they are influenced more by these regulations. Regardless, regulations such as the “Stay at Home” ordinances will be an issue and would lead to Bradley leaning towards online styles of education.

### *Physical*

As mentioned multiple times within the context, Covid-19 has affected much of what is currently considered “normal” for education and should be carefully considered as a long-term change to higher education, regardless of its overall impact. Physically, it is a health concern and should lead to Bradley increasing its capabilities in terms of Health Services and its messaging for it as well.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Our primary goal is to increase net income. Ultimately, we aim to alleviate the debt Bradley University is operating under. Currently, the institution is operating with a 9.3 million dollar deficit with 3.7 million dollars pledged for donation. We plan to reach our goal in 5 years. To achieve this goal, we have set four specific objectives on what will be needed to accomplish:

- *Customer objective:* Our key customer objective is to increase awareness of our offerings among 90% of our target market, stimulate their interest, and generate new demand for private institution higher education. We aim to have a consistent 3% increase for enrollment over the next 5 years.
- *Collaborator objective:* Our primary collaborator objective is to ensure new offerings are communicated and evaluated by major collaborators. Our major collaborators include Caterpillar and OSF. We aim to create awareness of newly developed programs for these organizations and implement education programs through the university and the firms.
- *Company (Internal) objective:* Our key company objective is to expand product offerings through the creation of additional majors, accelerated programs, online opportunities, and various extracurriculars. As income disparities continue to grow and demand for higher education decreases in the US, we must utilize more of the operating budget towards marketing efforts; currently allocating only 0.25% of overall budget to marketing efforts. We aim to allocate anywhere from 1-2.5% of the operating budget towards marketing efforts before the start of the next academic calendar.
- *Competitive objective:* Our primary competitive objective is to further differentiate our offerings from those offered by our competitors. In particular, we aim to offer courses, programs, and extracurriculars that aren't offered by our competitors. Major competitors include: Butler, Depaul, Loyola, ISU, and ICC.

## STRATEGY

### ***Target Market***

#### Target Customers

##### ***Customer Profile - Bring Bill to Bradley***

Our typical customer profile for our target market includes high achievers in high school that come from middle class / high income families, located in the Midwest. Students especially interested in our engineering program, nursing program, direct physical therapy program, or other specialty programs will be key in this area.

Bradley Bill, whom we would like to focus on, is traditionally 18-22 years old who may have potential religious views or a more liberal arts mindset.

Non-traditional customers within this profile would include commuters from the Peoria area who do not care for the “traditional” college experience (ie. living in dorms), out-of-state students interested in our programs, and students that took gap years before returning for their education.

## Company

### *Company Profile*

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As its mission, Bradley “empowers students for immediate and sustained success in their personal and professional endeavors by combining professional preparation, liberal arts and sciences, and co-curricular experiences. Alongside our dedication to students, we embrace the generation, application, and interpretation of knowledge.” It has a vision to be the leader in student engagement, which it does well due to its average class size of 17:1. Its core values include: student success, knowledge and discovery, inclusiveness and connectivity, and excellence.

Bradley’s core competency is based on the small class sizes and opportunities for experiential learning. Students have the opportunity to work closely with professors, as all classes are directly taught by them, not by teacher’s assistants (TA). It is a highly accredited university and has been doing well overall these past years. It is conveniently positioned in central Illinois, which keeps it within 2-3 hours of Chicago and Saint Louis, from which many of its students come from. It also has a list of notable alumni that work as experienced professionals within many respective fields, but especially in engineering at Caterpillar in Peoria.

## Collaborators

There are a few different collaborations in process for our target market, which are split into 4 separate categories below:

### *Online Collaborations*

Platforms like Sakai, Panopto, Bongo, Webster, are collaborations with companies to provide an online platform for students during both normal circumstances and extraordinary circumstances. There are also providers that help with setting up marketing campaigns and maintain the online website.

### *Recruitment Collaborations*

Student Admissions Representatives and graduate Admissions Representatives are major components to all parts of the tactics that will be further discussed in the next section. These representatives are well versed in all aspects of Bradley University and help facilitate Visit Days, communications, calling, and personal tours for potential students. High school counselors and alumni can help point students in the right direction, but it is the STARS that will play a very significant impact on students.

### *Marketing Collaborations*

Renée Richardson, the Associate Vice President of Marketing and Communications, split the areas of marketing at Bradley into 3 distinctive areas. These will be addressed here:

- Public Relations

Collaborators include local media outlets such as the Peoria Journal Star, campus communications such as Hilltop Happenings, the Bradley Scout, and the Bradley Police Department crisis communications.

- Digital Marketing

Collaborators to be leveraged include the sites mentioned in the above “Online Collaborations”, but also videography organizations, social media staff, and Student Admissions posts.

- Editorial Team

The collaborators here include the creators of the Bradley Magazine, President’s Report staff, and other content gathering / creation messaging channels.

### *Professional Collaborations*

There are a variety of companies that have either sponsored portions of Bradley or have sent representatives to the school, whether it be for presentations, meetings, or recruitment. These local organizations include Caterpillar, OSF Hospital, and Unity Point Hospital.

### Competitors

Competitors in the context of higher education universities range from large public Illinois institutions, online colleges and communities, and midwest private universities. Large public Illinois institutions such as Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois at Champaign, Western Illinois University, and Illinois State University are more indirect competitors due to their slightly different demographic that is attracted. Online colleges or community colleges are also competitors in an indirect way, as they are not in our niche that we wish to exploit. Our key competitors, therefore include Butler University, Drake



University, St. Louis University, Augustana University, and Northwestern University. These institutions are comparable in size and in price, placing them in the midwest private university market.

## Context

### *Economic*

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## ***Value Propositions***

### Customer Value Proposition

Students considering higher education have needs to be met, which are accomplished with the following value propositions:

#### *Functional*

- Quality Education

U.S. News and World Report's annual America's Best Colleges ranking for the 2020 edition had Bradley University as the top Illinois university for Midwest Regional Universities. The value provided is a quality education comparable to some of the greater offerings in the Midwest private university area.

- Student-faculty interactions

For the fourth consecutive year, the Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education have ranked Bradley University as the top university in Illinois for Student Engagement in their college rankings from this year. Bradley University was also named among the top 25 private universities in the nation. Having small class size averages (17) and only professors teaching material are major keys to having that closer interaction. This provides potential students even more opportunities to learn the material at a higher level.

- On-campus involvement

Bradley has over 240 student organizations, which means it provides the social aspect of what target customers are looking for in their college experience. Outside of these organizations, there are faculty-led research programs and a multitude of on-campus jobs or internships. The Student Activities Office is in charge of these organizations and are a strong resource for any student considering based off of this facet.

#### *Psychological*

- Close-knit community

Bradley is a close-knit community, where all students have the opportunities to join an organization, become well-rounded leaders, and not feel overwhelmed by the number of students surrounding them.

- Location

Bradley is located approximately 3 hours away from the major metropolitan areas of Chicago and St. Louis. Peoria is the second largest metropolitan area in Illinois and is expansive in its offering to what students can hope to expect from a college town.

- Scholarship opportunities

Bradley University has a variety of scholarships available for students. These range from those offered by the university itself, such as the President's Award, to scholarships awarded by individual organizations.

#### *Monetary*

- Higher net income post-grad

Attending a highly regarded private university such as Bradley University provides the value to the student of having a stronger personal brand and demonstrating to employers that the student has received instruction from some of the best professors in the Midwest region. This will lead to further payout in terms of net income post-grad.

- Moderate price for private university

Bradley is moderately priced, compared to its direct competitors. In fact, in Washington Monthly's College Ranking 2019, Bradley University is ranked number 14 in the Midwest for "Best Bang for the Buck"!

#### *Customer Positioning Statement*

Bradley University provides a high quality education, with strong student-faculty engagement for the student that is wanting more out of their college experience.

#### Collaborator Value Proposition

Collaborators of Bradley University have needs that must be met by the institution in order to continue their support and services offered. These are broken down as well:

#### *Functional*

- Recruitment

Collaborators such as Caterpillar or OSF have direct access to a large pool of well-educated students, who have already been introduced to the organizations. Therefore, there is a large opportunity for being more selective amongst these graduates.

- Perks

Collaborators receive special treatment from Bradley University in events such as the Job Fairs put on by the Smith Career Center and are often asked to present to different groups on campus, bringing current students to awareness.

#### *Psychological*

- Community recognition

Collaborators receive recognition for their efforts at Bradley University, whether it be by local news stations or the Hilltop Happenings newsletter. This can lead to an increase in goodwill and better public relations for their organizations.

#### *Monetary*

- Vetted students

Students that have been exposed to collaborators over the years have been vetted and may have even held internships with the organizations. This is important because it means that they have seen what is required and have met those standards or not.

- Monetary compensation

Paid collaborators are reimbursed well for their services to the University, on top of all the other benefits received.

#### *Collaborator Positioning Statement*

For collaborators, Bradley University offers a broad base of perks, such as direct recruitment from a pool of well-educated students, community recognition, and monetary compensation.

#### Company Value Proposition

The value provided by following the proposed goals and objectives for Bradley are important for the sustainability of the institution in the short and long-term. Bradley University primarily makes its income from its students tuition payments and donations from alumni and other significant stakeholders. The market potential for Bradley University is large, especially if focused on the target market proposed.

Bradley University provides quality education, experiential learning experiences, a range of well-educated students from multiple disciplines, and a great deal of recognition in the central Illinois and Midwest region. Its programs have been recognized nationally and it is a moderately priced investment that continues to pay off over time. Although currently in a financial slump and difficult context, we fully expect that increasing what is being offered and further stressing specific benefits to the target market will lead to results and positive financial statements within 5 years.

#### *Company Positioning Statement*

Investing in Bradley University and this marketing effort will pay off in all aspects of the organization and will net results such the continuation of nationally ranked programs and financial surplus in the upcoming years.

## ***Competitive Advantage***

This brief overview of the competitive advantage that Bradley has over its closest competitors for Bradley Bill are highlighted below.

### Sustainable competitive advantage

Exhibit 1 is a positioning map created based on two important factors that target customers must consider when looking at the market for higher education. As can be seen, income and academic ability should be considered, as they have a large amount of influence over any choice that is made. DePaul University and the University of Illinois in Champaign are close contenders on this map, but what sets Bradley apart in comparison for sustainable advantages includes the following points:

#### *Points of Dominance*

Bradley offers wider course offerings than many of these institutions, smaller class sizes on average, student-faculty relationships and engagement that have been nationally recognized, a wide array of community resources such as the Illinois SBDC or the Peoria Economic Development Council, the Smith Career Center (providing job opportunities and customized professional consultation), and large scholarships for both in-state and out of state students.

#### *Points of Parity*

Bradley University has similar prices to the average tuition of its nearest competitors on the positioning map, has high-quality education like these other institutions, religious organizations on campus, and a great reputation in the Midwest region like DePaul and the University of Illinois.

#### *Points of Compromise*

Bradley University lacks diversity on its campus, which is one of its greatest pitfalls as an institution for minority students. Peoria is a smaller city than Chicago, but has a significant amount of crime, which can help be mitigated by the Bradley Police Department. Finally, Bradley University does not have a strong athletic presence outside of its more recent success in Men's Basketball.

## **TACTICS**

There are a variety of ways that Bradley University will implement the strategy in order to achieve its goals and objectives. These customers will be drawn to Bradley through awareness of the institution,

alignment of desires and needs, and action that brings prospective students to campus and to leave a deposit. Two main tactics that will be utilized will include messaging and availability, especially with the current circumstances that Bradley University (and the rest of the world) finds itself.

## ***Into Awareness***

### **Messaging**

Bringing a larger base of prospective students into awareness over what Bradley University has to offer will be a major part of increasing its awareness to 90% of our target market. Through messaging, this can be done through a variety of ways.

- Mail

Bradley University sends out mail via the US Postal Service to students that are juniors or seniors in high school, as they are in the beginning stages of their college search or nearing the end and could possibly be convinced if their attention is hooked. What would increase the probability of a response may be to include something that garners a response. For example, mail in-rebate communications have shown efficiency in responses, as there is incentive. Perhaps by including some sort of “golden ticket” idea would work to capture the attention. A suggestion that we would suggest is that it be some sort of social media contest. For example, a pamphlet for some kind of Tik Tok challenge would be useful, especially with the increase in usage that the United States will see in the upcoming future. As seen by the Admissions Office video on Tik Tok with benefits of Bradley, there was a great response on this platform by students within our target market. This would increase the awareness of a larger base of students who may be drawn from “unaware” to “aware” of what Bradley could offer.

- E-Mail

Electronic mailing is also another medium for Bradley University to increase its receptivity. Currently, it is used to relay information and try to show the benefits and features of the Bradley offering. Figuring out a successful copy will be a major key in the upcoming digital age and the university should increase its focus on how to garner attention quicker. Although a funny or perky email subject can prove useful at times, adding meaning to it or a polarizing line may prove more useful in eliciting a response from a prospective student. Students nowadays are easily polarized within their emails, since there is so much information overload. Having something that sticks out, draws them in to present the benefits and features, and causes redirection to the Bradley website would be ideal. There should be further information to introduce students as to what Bradley stands for and what value it brings.

- Social Media

Social Media is a major part of marketing today, as companies figure out how to create their own platform and attract consumers. It will only increase as cell phone usage and high speed internet continue to exponentially increase. The Bradley offering of a high quality education with experiential learning should carry over onto these platforms. The positioning of Bradley currently on social media is very average, but can be expanded upon by utilizing their greatest collaborators: the students. The Admissions Office has been great at doing this for recruitment purposes, so using students and having them be more involved in social media marketing for large accounts would prove beneficial. Increasing hashtag challenges, Tik Tok and Snapchat usage, and gauging what is relevant and trending at that time would lead to more interaction with posts. This would also more than likely peak the interest of more prospective students.

- School Visits

Bradley University sends out representatives to different high schools to meet with prospective students and answer any questions they may have. These representatives travel within their own areas and visit at different dates and times. These are great opportunities to bring Bradley into the awareness of target students and Bradley phones potential students they have identified and had some sort of email or phone response from. A good way to further utilize this would be to expand into more virtual school visits, in which representatives could speak to students in high schools outside of the average area over Zoom.

- Website Localization

Website localization would be for students that fit some of the aspects of the target market, but may sit outside of the average area. Website localization through online platforms is useful to garner attention from international students or students that may be more comfortable with another language. For example, students who may be more comfortable speaking Spanish may prefer a website that was localized in Spanish. This may also help with the issue of diversity in the institution.

### Availability

Being available to students will also be a major difficulty throughout this time, but it will be a major key to bringing awareness to students looking for a higher education.

- Representatives and Visit Days

Admissions Representatives have been a staple in becoming available to students, as they have brought awareness through calls and being the human face to the offering. They can continue to be leveraged and

may be used for online question and answer sessions, through Zoom or similar platforms. These methods have proven capable of attracting the target customers and help create positive brand imagery, both of which aim to complete Bradley University's monetary and strategic goals. How it is presented may have changed, but the message will not.

- Area businesses

Area businesses have supported Bradley in a variety of ways, as beforehand mentioned. Not only have they donated monetary funds, but they have also positively impacted Bradley's brand and have brought it into awareness. This has been done by either sporting Bradley gear or by involvement in programs with the university. For example, Caterpillar has held various workshops on logistics with APICs and has helped promote it to the area. This makes the information more readily available to students in the area or surrounding areas that are interested in Caterpillar. A possible way to further work with collaborators may be to host more online events with them over specific subjects and areas. Although many prospective students may not be clear on what they want to study, experienced professionals may provide more knowledge and further interest them in attending Bradley.

## ***Into Alignment***

### **Messaging**

- Pamphlets

Once the target customer has been attracted and made aware of what Bradley University is, pamphlets have been a great way to further let them know that the offering is for them. At this point, the students can determine if Bradley is a good fit for him or her. As long as the pamphlet properly lists the features and contact information for any questions and / or tour dates, it should be sufficient for helping the student determine if his or her needs will be met by Bradley University. A suggestion may be creating pamphlets specific to majors or programs and going more in-depth with it. For example, having a preliminary pamphlet with general information, but then including a specialized one based off of the major that students have chosen or their interests. If first contact, then possibly basing a pamphlet more on what has been popular with certain demographics on average from the past year may be a good way to catch trends on what is becoming important to students may help align more target customers.

- Content of copy / keywords slogans

Having consistent copy in messaging can further bring students into alignment. One of the most important aspects of integrated marketing communications is that the message be consistent across all mediums. Confusion over inconsistent messaging may lead to students not appreciating the value



proposition or may become overwhelmed with information. Creating copy that highlights the benefits and points of dominance and simply adapting it according to the medium would provide optimal alignment for students.

- Specific interests

As mentioned briefly in the pamphlet section, it is important to make sure that specific hedonistic interests are met for target customers. Although the functional aspect of Bradley includes the relationship with faculty and high quality education, there must be more features that attract attention as well. For example, there has been a move towards E-gaming, which Bradley has considered and began to become ahead on. Focusing on certain platforms in E-Gaming such as Twitch would prove beneficial because these are where a large number of prospective students spend a significant amount of time on.

Capitalizing on these platforms will require time and research, but should ultimately pay off in the 5 year period.

### Availability

- Transparency

Transparency towards prospective students will be extremely important in the context that we sit upon today. There should be a focus on providing as much information about steps that Bradley is taking to ride out the COVID-19 economic and societal hit. This will include providing timely information about steps that Bradley is taking, as well as information on how the product will be offered. Target customers that we have chosen are strong students, which means that they will prefer to have the information readily available when making their decision.

- Statistics

Providing information on percentages of students that typically get jobs post graduation is important, as is on how well students perform on benchmark exams like the MCAT or the GRE. Bradley has done well with this and should continue to provide this information.

### ***Into Action***

#### Messaging

- Emails

Emails will be important in bringing target customers into action, not just into awareness. Including information about how they can sign up for Visit Days or individual tours, upcoming events, and featured news may cause students to get the ball rolling and be polarized positively. Finding strategic times that

target customers are more likely to be receptive to taking action would be a good consideration for the future.

- Communicating dates

Bradley University has been very consistent with communicating important dates to target customers months in advance. Doing this helps give these customers the opportunity to do their own research into the offering, compare it to others, and possibly set up tours to see what they are buying. Communicating dates to students and their parents is ideal to giving customers time to make such a valuable investment. In the future continuing to do this will be important and attaching it to relevant media consistently will pay off with higher consideration and more recall from customers.

- Admissions Representatives - Communication

Admissions Representatives following up with students through phoning and email has been important to keeping target customers on track and providing human contact. This should continue in order to move target customers to action.

### Availability

- Plan tour at any time

The availability of being able to plan a tour of campus at any time during the week has been very important to target customers, as they are given the opportunity to explore for themselves and speak to collaborators like faculty and admissions representatives. Bradley has already stepped in the right direction by offering virtual tours while students are not allowed on campus. This will continue to be a strong capability that Bradley should build upon.

- Visit Days

The Admissions Office puts on a large number of Visit Days, whether it be at Bradley or in the cities of target customers (such as Oak Brook). These Visit Days are important to highlight the product offering and have gone virtual, which will be important as the effects of current context are felt.

- Online applications

Online applications make it easier and more readily available for students. This is the standard for higher education institutions, but including applications on the Common App has made it even more available. Making it easy to find through the website has been key and continuously looking for better ways to promote it virtually will lead to the net increase in profits in 5 ye

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

## ***Resource Development***

Key resources to implement the marketing plan are as follows:

- Capabilities
  - Increasing capabilities online, especially in platforms for video calling or messaging. For example, GroupMe has recently added on a Skype call feature and may be a good way to both relay information and video chat.
- Schedule
  - A planned schedule with all areas discussed within this marketing plan on how to successfully implement these changes or make changes
- Diversify Funding
  - Increase the allocation of funds towards social media platforms like Tik Tok and Youtube, as well as special interest platforms such as Twitch.
- Media
  - Consistent messaging across these new mediums, based off of what works best per site. This messaging should be consistent, should bring target customers through the benefits, and lead them to action.
- Employees
  - Continue training admissions representatives and other collaborators on how to best deal with the context Bradley University finds itself with. Whether that be by providing information on next steps or training on how to properly use certain platforms, it will be extremely important in the upcoming years.

## ***Offering Development***

Further developing the market offering would include adding the above mentioned platforms, increasing online capabilities, putting out consistent and transparent information based on benefits and sustainable advantage over competitors. Bradley should address how the offering will change and what steps will be next. The product and service provided to students should remain consistent, even with the difficulties faced and it should be worth the value that Bradley University is positioning itself as. This would include ensuring that faculty are well informed on changes, how to answer questions from prospective students, and prepare material for the worst case scenario of an extended hold on activity.

## ***Commercial Development***

Commercial Development will be significantly important in this process. Target customers may find it harder to find value during this time, for a variety of reasons. The first is the fact that they cannot visit campus or receive an in-person tour. Virtual tours will have to be refined as much as possible in order to make it feel like a “real experience”. An interesting concept here may be offering a click-by-click tour, such as the feature on Google Maps. The second reason it may be more difficult to find value is that the quality education may be more difficult to communicate across zoom calls where there is much less opportunity for those student-faculty relationships. Of course, these are issues that are being faced across the country but Bradley should aim to get ahead of this curve and be transparent in this area when marketing. Finally, leveraging its social media platforms and online resources to attract more attention and get target customers into the “awareness” stage will be important. While at home, many target customers will be mindlessly scrolling at home and capitalizing on this opportunity has never been greater.

## **CONTROL**

### ***Performance Evaluation***

Bradley University should be constantly monitoring performance, especially concerning financial health. As stated in the goal section, it is the ultimate outcome of coming out of this environment out of debt within 5 years. This will prove to be extremely difficult, but it is possible if the following indicators are monitored:

- Number of students who put down deposits for the upcoming year
- Quantifying the amount of interactions in correlation to the probability of attending a Visit Day and ultimately attending Bradley
- Running regressions on clicks per posts compared to the number of deposited students
- The experiences of recent alumni, financially, in their post-grad life to evaluate the offering and its results
- How changes in programs or brand image affects the number of deposits and retention rate of students across a yearly average. This may help for adjustments as time goes on.

### ***Analysis of the Environment***

The following metrics will prove useful in the current environment:

- Benchmarking deposits against other universities that are our close competitors
  - By percentage, not by number because of larger outliers such as the University of Illinois

- Changes in Bradley's core competencies and benefits, especially in the upcoming months or years
- Changes in what students value and what our target customers need
- Online education increasing in importance and usage in the current context

Bradley may monitor this in a variety of ways:

- Communication with students through surveys or actual interactions with admissions representatives and faculty
- Keeping up to date on technological advances, which are bound to increase exponentially by the end of the epidemic
- Attending virtual educational conferences and using what is learned to influence how future actions will impact Visit Days and IMC
- Monitoring social media for comments and trends amongst our target market

## **EXHIBITS**

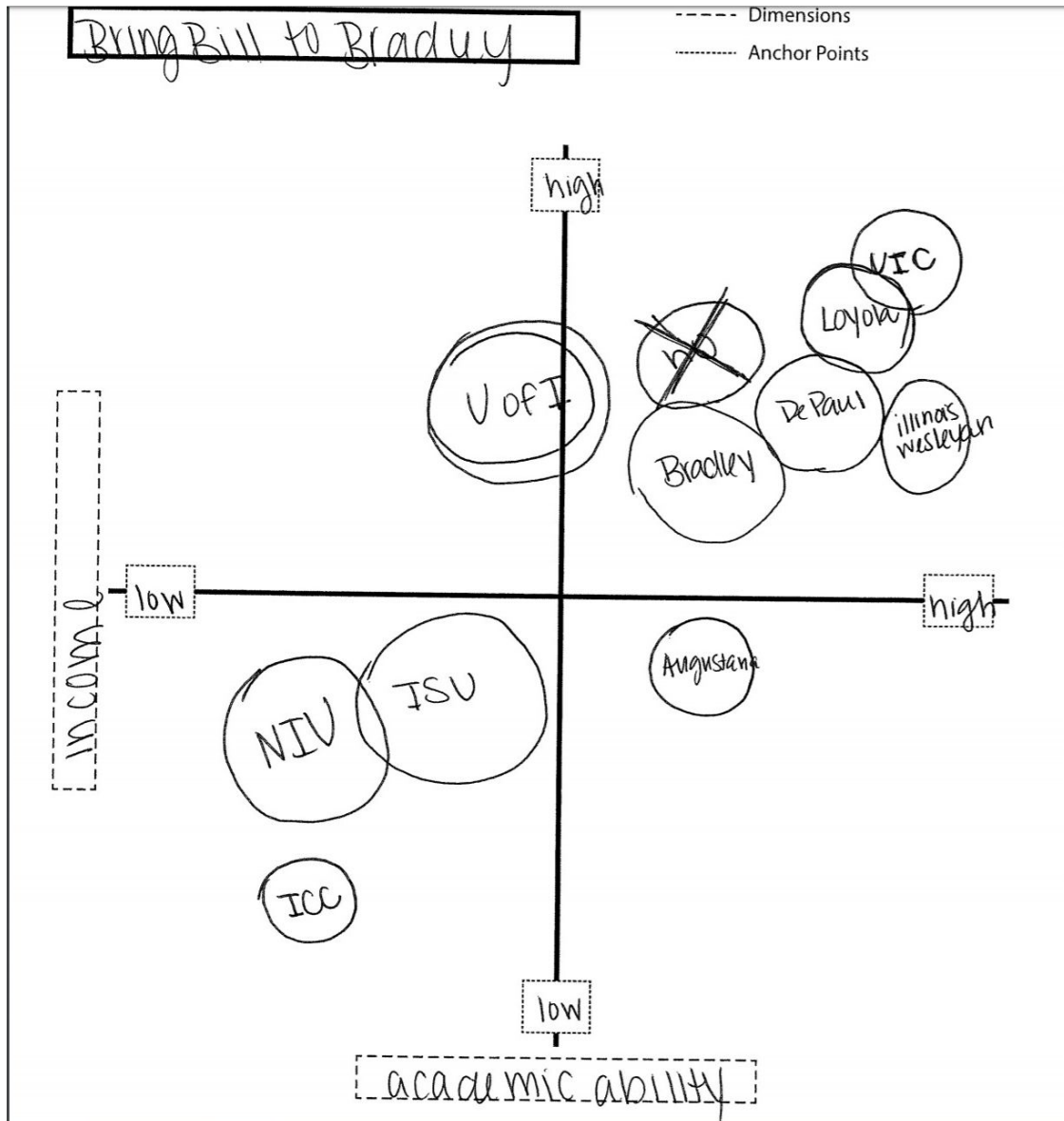


Exhibit 1: Positioning Map