

A Eulogy for Bradley's Academic Excellence, Fall, 2023

We are gathered here today to mourn the loss of Bradley University's academic excellence.

At only 125 years old, her impeccable quality of scholarship was strangled by the men in Swords Hall in such a painful manner no one could have anticipated. The resulting devastation threatens to leave a permanent vacancy in the fabric **our** founder, Lydia Moss Bradley, hand wove herself so many years ago.

This death was not the result of natural causes. A murderous crime against academia was committed behind closed doors in our very presence. It does not take a well trained detective to identify the culprit as Bradley University's Administration and Board of Trustees.

You failed to support our beloved faculty. You targeted them for termination. You deliberately ignored the principle of shared governance, a dynamic that is critical to building an educational environment that allows our professors to focus on their main objectives—being our teachers, our supporters, our cheerleaders, our mentors, our family away from home.

Since the early August shockwave email and forum broke the news, our faculty has consistently endured intense anxiety and premature grief over the loss of their livelihoods. Additionally, they exhibit a deep concern about the loss of learning opportunities for our students. Their stress understandably bled through into our classrooms and impacted the quality of instruction faculty are able to deliver. I do not blame them.

On behalf of our school family, I thank everyone who has engaged in advocacy to support every Bradley student and every Bradley faculty member who will be inevitably burdened by these proposed cuts. To those who are hurt right now, I see you and I extend my empathy towards you.

Overextended professors and affiliated instructors, many of whom have been non-renewed for the Spring of 2024, will not be able to sustain the most treasured parts of our educational institution.

The greatest asset of Bradley University is the opportunity each student has to develop personal connections with consistent, accessible, and dependable educators. Those connections originate with first, the small course sizes that provide each student with the individualized attention they deserve and second, with the support staff who ease the allocation of responsibilities for our professors. Killing these assets is equivalent to killing Bradley's legacy of academic excellence.

The President and his cabinet have tarnished Lydia's legacy by consistently offering us dishonest and misleading justifications for deep cuts to the academic side of the house. Such intentional lack of transparency is not a good look for Bradley. It flies in the face of our founder's last will and testament which stated -- and I quote -- that "executors and trustees... keep full and accurate books of account of all funds, property, receipts and disbursements, and financial transactions concerning said Institute and its funds..."

Throughout academic restructuring, our president has often used the callous phrase "we just need to rip off the bandaid." An expectation that a wound will heal when the bandage is prematurely torn off is utterly foolish. Infectious consequences will quickly fester without careful and informed consideration.

Business backgrounds should not make decisions for non-profit educational institutions. She is named Bradley University, not Bradley Incorporated.

Students do not "vote with our feet," although if we did, our feet would have taken us to a university like ISU or the U of I. We are not numbers on a spreadsheet. The lives of real individuals will be altered by the decisions of wealthy robber barons with whom we have never interacted—because our administrators do not teach students nor do they mentor students. We put our trust into you to transform our life-long dreams into reality. Students are not replaceable customers in your business scheme.

Each student and faculty member will be hurt by these decisions to target academic affairs.

The President repeatedly argues falsely that only 3.5% of students are affected by the cuts. This claim is not based on facts and it belies the evidence. The

expiring faculty teach required courses for everyone for BCC requirements in addition to the classes specialized for major programs. More than 3.5% of students will be hurt deeply by the cuts being proposed. Your “directional data” analysis claims only around 150 Bradley students will be impacted by your proposal. There are more than 150 Bradley students confused and fearful from your announcement alone. Even if your estimate is true, that is 150 students too many. Those are 150 intelligent hearts whose destiny is directed by their undergraduate and graduate studies.

Even if an individual’s program is not slated for termination, all students will be in larger classes; all students will be hard pressed to find BCC classes that fit their schedules and align with their academic interests.

Perhaps before the Statistics program is removed, our big shots could enroll in a course to recalculate their figures using accurate data. Also, the removal of legal programs will not prevent us from seeing the faults of your uninformed decisions.

I hope you feel proud to pay off the debt of the Business and Engineering Convergence Center and the Avantis building in addition to the other reckless financial decision by **sacrificing** the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Education and Health Sciences, who, by the way, are the colleges with the most enrolled students in major and minor programs and are the colleges who offer the most Bradley Core Curriculum Courses.

With the elimination of the humanities, a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment is impossible to achieve. The reduction and elimination of liberal arts programs will kill Bradley’s potential and progress to be a better campus for historically oppressed and mistreated identity groups, including but not limited to, students of color and LGBTQIA+ students.

Do not subject students from marginalized communities to a harmfully ignorant campus atmosphere. Do not send a thousand graduates each year into society without an accurate understanding of cultural competency.

In July of 2021, a “student-centric” strategic plan was implemented at Bradley University.

Let's look at the five strategic imperatives from the plan's Vision Statement
Welcoming, Caring, Diverse and Inclusive - that's impossible with these proposed academic cuts

Personalized Life Path - that's impossible with these proposed academic cuts

Return on Educational Investment - that's impossible with these proposed academic cuts

Boundary-Breaking Innovations - that's impossible with these proposed academic cuts

Financial Strength and Operational Excellence - that's funny!

You are not meeting the standards you set for yourself. We will never forget the great university of academic excellence Bradley once was. Now, her legacy is only a memory.

“At Bradley University, we applaud and welcome the unique personalities, styles, beliefs, and perspectives you bring to our dynamic campus. You can design your education to suit your future life path knowing you'll be prepared. Whatever you do, Be You.” Rest in Peace.

My advice for you is to stop avoiding and ignoring our voices.