CONCEPT PLAN AND UPDATE, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

Location: Bryn Mawr, PA
Client: Bryn Mawr College
Size: 135 acres, 1205 undergraduate, 561 graduate students (1996); 1378 undergraduate, 431 graduate students (2007)
Completion: 1997; 2008 (update)

Bryn Mawr College’s campus core was shaped by Calvert Vaux, Frederick Law Olmsted, Ralph Adams Cram, Cope and Stewardson, Louis Kahn, and others. The orthogonal pattern of the early Collegiate Gothic campus is set in beautiful contrast to the undulating topography of the Romantic valley landscape to its west. Outside its planned core, the College has grown incrementally by annexing former private residences across peripheral streets. With this expansion of boundaries and changing of institutional needs over time, the patterns of use, circulation, and entrance on campus have shifted out of line with each other.

VSBA’s 1996 concept plan outlined several ways of considering the campus’s physical character and development, and provided a framework for making decisions on accommodating expansion and setting priorities among projects. The plan addressed a number of specific needs identified by the College, including:

- pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, particularly at campus entrance -- the need to adjust existing movement ways to activity patterns -- and the need for clear, coherent, imageful gateways to campus
- space allocations for offices and teaching in buildings that housed social sciences
- strategies for accommodating administrative offices, including admissions, financial aid, career planning, and facilities planning, as well as shops.

These specific concerns were related to broader development questions of access, linkage, growth, and conservation, as well as to needs the College has campus-wide for:

- modest, incremental short-term improvements based on the framework and understanding of the College’s long-term principles, priorities and options
- improved circulation to suit changed and changing relationships among College functions
- clear separation between pedestrian and service paths within an established pattern of vehicular access at the perimeter
- a plan for improving the physical condition and life safety provisions of certain buildings while providing for the continuous functioning of current occupants.

Photos of Bryn Mawr’s landscape & student life
Our 2008 update to the concept plan considered campus-wide strategies for sustainability and accessibility, as well as:

- improved facilities for the sciences.
- updated facilities for athletics and well-being
- ways of improving student and residential life, including new residence halls, as well as spaces for community activities and hanging out
- the potential impact of moving the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research to the campus core.

Relating the specific concerns to broader issues, we evolved general principles for campus development, then suggested options for subareas of the campus where specific concerns needed to be addressed. These options were then combined into alternatives for the campus as a whole. Recommendations for meeting present needs were related to long-range options; possible first increments of development were suggested along with ways to make these compatible in spirit and scale with the delicate, loosely-woven landscape of the campus “outside the walls.”
**Option 1: NEW FACE OF THE SCIENCES**

A new building on the southeast corner of Park connects programs in adjacent buildings and creates a new front door to the sciences — visible and accessible from campus. It provides a communal gathering space, where students and faculty pass on their way to their labs and classrooms. It also accommodates program options, including new labs and offices, classrooms, or a relocated department. This option does not rely on renovation of existing facilities, which will likely be required within the complex. Current wayfinding challenges and limited opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration within may not be addressed as comprehensively as in other options.

**Option 2: HEART OF THE SCIENCES**

Parts of the central, north/south building are renovated as a clear and easily visualized organizing spine for the complex, where interdisciplinary collaborations are encouraged and interior “front doors” to each department and Collier Library are located. This is the new heart of Park, where the main entries from campus as well as connections between floors and across disciplines will occur. An addition of classrooms, shared by all departments, could be added. As departmental programs need relocation to accommodate new functions, additions or other campus locations will need to be identified.

**Option 3: STREET OF THE SCIENCES**

In this option a new building is located along New Gulph Road, with capacity to accommodate incremental swing space and long term programmatic growth of labs, classroom and offices. Programs can be relocated and renovation of existing spaces within Park occur with the capacity provided by this new building. An interior atrium provides a linear organizing element to the complex, where students and faculty can gather, study, and interact, surrounded by science teaching and learning. Classrooms can occupy former lab space and new construction can accommodate new labs, with current demands for mechanical and support spaces.

**Option 4: FRAMEWORK OF THE SCIENCES**

This option is an incremental approach to Park, based on an overall framework plan for the complex. With episodic renovations throughout, they together help clarify wayfinding, provide access to exterior views and light, create amenities and encourage interdisciplinary interactions. To allow this work, new building would need to provide swing space and replace reassigned areas. A new addition at the southeast corner signals changes within Park to the campus community and provides a new entry and collective space.

- Understand and plan for upgrades, as needed, of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, life safety, accessibility and technology infrastructures.
- Strengthen connections to the broader campus context and programs.
- Think environmentally about building use and reuse, and integrate interior spaces with surrounding landscapes.

---

**Key**

- BUILDING ENTRANCE
- CIRCULATION
- BIOLOGY
- CHEMISTRY
- COMPUTER SCIENCE
- GEOLGY
- MATH
- PHYSICS
- NEW FACILITY

---

**Park Science Center Opportunities**

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

Campus Master Plan

Base Map Source: Information Source