



**Vice President for Advancement**  
**Leadership Profile**

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*WittKieffer*

## Executive Summary

Bradley University, a private institution located in Peoria, Illinois, is seeking a visionary Vice President for Advancement (VPA) to lead its philanthropic and alumni engagement efforts during a transformative period. With more than 4,000 students and a \$158 million operating budget, Bradley offers over 100 academic programs and maintains a strong Division I athletic presence alongside a vibrant student life. Under the leadership of newly appointed President James Shadid, the university is entering a new era marked by strategic campus enhancements and the launch of a comprehensive fundraising campaign.

Located in the historic West Bluff neighborhood, Bradley University is a mid-sized university offering students the opportunities and resources of a larger university and the personal attention and exceptional learning experiences of a smaller university. The University has programs in business, communications, education, engineering, fine arts, health sciences, liberal arts and sciences, and technology. A Bradley education emphasizes innovation and interdisciplinarity that gives students opportunities to be leaders. To promote these goals, in 2019 the University opened a new \$100 million-plus Business and Engineering Convergence Center. Bradley links academic excellence, experiential learning, and leadership development with an entrepreneurial spirit to provide a world-class education and a commitment to excellent teaching and student success.

The VPA reports to the President and will serve as a key member of the senior leadership team, overseeing a 20-member advancement staff and guiding the development and execution of a compelling advancement strategy. The VPA's overall mission is to increase meaningful philanthropic and engagement activities with prospects, donors, community leaders, and alumni community of more than 70,000 worldwide. Specific responsibilities include working collaboratively with partners across campus to increase affinity and cultivate major and principal gifts, growing and maintaining a portfolio of their own prospects, and developing a comprehensive talent management plan to attract and retain committed team members.

The next VPA will also be asked to undertake a number of larger, long-term initiatives to expand Bradley's advancement program. These will include developing a comprehensive and visionary advancement plan, creating and implementing the upcoming comprehensive campaign, expanding the donor pipeline, and strengthening alumni engagement through targeted outreach and programming.

This position presents a unique opportunity to leverage the momentum generated by President Shadid's leadership and the goodwill of the Bradley and Peoria communities. The ideal candidate will bring a proven track record in comprehensive campaigns, inspirational leadership, and exceptional communication skills, including the ability to clearly make the case for Bradley. A commitment to an inclusive and equitable environment is essential, as is demonstrated experience significantly elevating the performance of an advancement program. For this position, a bachelor's degree is required, and an advanced degree is preferred. In the end, the next Bradley Vice President for Advancement will play a pivotal role in shaping the university's future, amplifying its legacy, and driving a transformative advancement effort aligned with a bold institutional vision.

For information regarding how to apply, submit nominations, or inquire about the role, please see the section "Procedure for Candidacy" at the end of this document.

## Role of Vice President for Advancement

The Bradley University Vice President for Advancement provides strategic direction, mentorship, and inspiration to a team dedicated to increasing meaningful philanthropic and engagement activities with an alumni community of more than 70,000 and many other friends of the university. Below are the key duties and responsibilities of this role:

- Serve as a key member of the senior leadership team as a direct report to President Shadid, working closely with the university community and volunteer leaders in advancing Bradley's fundraising activities
- Oversee an alumni relations and development staff of 20 as well as partner with a committed alumni association board of directors.
- Implement a forward-leaning advancement program and build a strong team of frontline fundraisers and advancement support staff who are working toward common objectives and clear goals.
- Partner strategically, act proactively, and engage constituents meaningfully in a variety of settings and through a variety of mediums.
- Work collaboratively with partners across campus to increase affinity and inclination with donors and prospects in the best interest of the institution.
- Collaborate with other campus areas in major gift work to build long-term philanthropic relationships.
- Grow the capacity, reach, and success of the program.
- Shape and successfully lead Bradley's next major fundraising effort, collaborating with members of the senior leadership team in setting goals and priorities.
- Grow and maintain a portfolio of major gift prospects including institutions, supporting the advancement team in their work with donors, and shaping a long-term strategy for building a sustainable major gift pipeline.
- Develop and execute a multi-year and multi-level talent management plan to attract and retain committed team members.
- Make recommendations for team structure and financial investments that will best position the organization for success.



## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Bradley VPA is arriving at a critical and exciting time for the university. The tenure of President Jim Shadid began April 1, 2025, and he has moved quickly and intentionally since that day. President Shadid has an exciting vision for the future of Bradley centering on an enhanced student experience that includes university dorm renovation, updated recreation and athletics facilities, and a new entryway to the campus. Building on the passion that alumni feel for the institution, as well as its place in Peoria and the broader Illinois community, the next VPA will have the opportunity to develop and launch a comprehensive campaign and capitalize on the momentum created by new leadership. To accomplish these goals, the next VPA will be expected to undertake the following:

- Develop a compelling advancement vision for the future of Bradley.**

Bradley's storied history began with the dream of its founder, Lydia Moss Bradley, who envisioned a co-educational institution that provided training ranging from domestic arts to technical fields to ancient Greece and the humanities. The evolution of this singular institution into one of the best universities in the Midwest is a story worth telling, and the next Bradley VPA will have the chance to frame, develop, and deliver this narrative. The next VPA is able to create a new advancement vision that builds on the tradition and reputation of the university while partnering with an exciting new president to take it in an entirely new and positive direction. One consistent theme heard in conversations with Bradley constituents is opportunity. While the university has been the beneficiary of some very generous donors, there is a general consensus that the alumni base has much more potential and that the Peoria business community can also provide more support. In addition, there may be room for improvement in the advancement database and the office's approach to data. By implementing a clear, consistent, and ambitious vision, the next VPA can take advantage of these opportunities and lead Bradley to new heights.

- Develop and execute a new comprehensive campaign.**

Bradley is readying itself to launch a comprehensive campaign in the near future, and there is real urgency in this effort. The university's last campaign ended in 2011 and raised \$160 million (its goal was \$150 million). A numerical goal for the upcoming campaign is yet to be determined, but needs are significant. The vice president will collaborate with President Shadid and colleagues across campus in setting unit and institutional goals and priorities as this historic undertaking is imagined over the coming year. The VPA must bring experience with major campaigns, including planning, implementing, and assessing fundraising strategies that lead to successful outcomes. Ultimately, the campaign will provide the perfect opportunity to formulate the very compelling Bradley story and communicate it to a much wider audience.

- Forge an effective and prolific relationship with President Shadid.**

The enthusiasm for Bradley is widespread and deeply felt, and this enthusiasm can be seen in the strong support that President Shadid has received in his first few months in office. As a Braves Baseball player, a 1979 graduate, and Peoria native, President Shadid has a singular history with the institution and the Peoria community as well as an abiding commitment to the success of the university. Even more important for the VPA, the president is an eager and talented advancement partner who can connect with a wide range of constituents. Critical to the success of the next vice president is forging a relationship with President Shadid and leveraging the enormous reservoir of goodwill he brought to his role. If the VPA can do this, great achievements lie ahead.

- Build a deeper and more consistent donor pipeline.**

Critical to the success of the upcoming comprehensive campaign, as well as future advancement success, will be the expansion of the donor pipeline. Peoria is a thriving and energetic city well located between Chicago and Springfield. As part of a future advancement plan, it is essential to identify new prospects to qualify and cultivate in the alumni base, throughout the region and beyond. One essential element will be an expanded

corporate and foundation relations strategy exploring the largest employers of Bradley alumni, national and regional foundations supportive of the University's mission, and other philanthropists. Another area of growth that numerous Bradley stakeholders identified was the need for a more aggressive and targeted principal and transformational gift strategy. The relationships built with transformative donors can yield tremendous success, and the next VPA must build out a wider donor base with a particular emphasis on principal gift donors moving forward.

- **Partnering with the alumni association, create programming that more fully engages the alumni base.** Bradley has a long history as an institution and has more than 70,000 living alumni. Alumni passion for and dedication to the University, its mission, and its traditions are evident in virtually every conversation a newcomer has with individuals and groups associated with the campus. Alumni giving, however, does not reflect this enthusiasm. In addition, many alumni indicated that they and others would like to find ways to deepen their involvement with an institution they love. The next VPA should demonstrate an ability to identify connection points across a diverse alumni base spanning many generations. Specifically, the selected candidate must demonstrate leadership in alumni affairs and work closely with the Bradley University Alumni Association and the alumni relations team to ensure a more comprehensive level of engagement with alumni through programming and communications that leads to more generous levels of philanthropic support, especially in metropolitan areas like Chicago.
- **Support the growth and development of the advancement team.** To increase efforts and build a strong culture of philanthropy, the new Bradley Vice President for Advancement will need to develop a two-pronged approach to team management. First, the VP will need to create clear, consistent, realistic, and ambitious goals along with a plan to achieve those goals and the metrics to measure success. Second, the VPA must craft a long-term plan for supporting and mentoring advancement team members at various stages in their careers. This leader should develop the team's talent and abilities to implement an ambitious advancement plan and a comprehensive campaign. The VPA will make recommendations for team structure and financial investments that will best position the organization for success in a comprehensive campaign and support the growth of its team members. Turnover in the VPA role has weighed on staff, and the next advancement leader should recognize that clarity in communication, team objectives, and performance measures will be critical. The selected candidate should set high goals for advancement staff while also providing the tools, guidance, and inspiration to achieve those goals.



## Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The next Vice President for Advancement must have a record of successful and progressive advancement leadership with demonstrated success securing and stewarding major and principal gifts. The next VPA must also be well-versed in advancement best practices, particularly related to measuring the success and return on investment of fundraising and engagement activities. In addition, the successful VPA candidate should have the following qualifications and characteristics:

- Demonstrated success in planning and executing major campaigns, including planning, implementing and assessing fundraising strategies that lead to successful outcomes.
- Clear record of being driven leader with a record of setting high goals and meeting them. Experience building and developing strong teams of advancement professionals.
- The ability to successfully articulate that mission and generate excitement about the university among diverse constituents, and the desire to play a meaningful role in the life of the university.
- A commitment to listening to and engaging with donors in a manner that builds meaningful relationships and identifies opportunities to align donor interests with university objectives. A record of building lasting relationships and a proven ability to provide excellent donor stewardship.
- A leadership approach that engages team members in the broader work of the division, leverages their talents, invests in their development, sets high standards and goals, and supports the team in achieving those objectives.
- An understanding of and a commitment to creating an environment that is inclusive and equitable, and which allows individuals from all backgrounds with diverse perspectives to be engaged and successful.
- The ability to use sophisticated systems and research tools to find and analyze information that supports alumni and development activities.
- A collaborative approach that engages colleagues within the institution, alumni, other donors and community partners in articulating the potential impact of philanthropic gifts from donors to the university.
- A record of effectively and efficiently utilizing institutional resources so that the university realizes the greatest possible return on investment.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and oral, including a commitment to being proactive and forward-looking. The ability to speak effectively on behalf of the university, to tell Bradley's story well.
- The highest levels of professional and personal integrity.
- A bachelor's degree is required, and an advanced degree is preferred.

# About Bradley University

## Overview

Located in the historic West Bluff neighborhood, Bradley University is a mid-sized, private university in Peoria, Illinois, which offers students the opportunities and resources of a larger university and the personal attention and exceptional learning experiences of a smaller university. Bradley enrolls more than 4,000 students (approximately 3,300 undergrads and 1,000 graduate students) and employs approximately 900 people. The University has an annual operating budget of \$158 million and an endowment of \$380 million. Bradley has more than 200 student organizations, including the nation's best speech team, with 42 team national championships and 163 individual national titles. Bradley has a rich Division I athletic tradition within the Missouri Valley Conference with numerous championships. The University is home to 15 NCAA Division 1 sports teams and an active intramural and recreational sports program. Intercollegiate athletics is an important link to the Peoria community.

## Mission

Bradley University 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 its dedication to students, the University embraces the generation, application, and interpretation of knowledge.

Bradley delivers an engaging education that transcends traditional boundaries through scholarly and practical experience in a diverse, caring, and inclusive environment to prepare purpose-driven leaders who achieve success and build a better world.

## Values

At the heart of Bradley University is a community built upon valued relationships found among students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni. At the core of these relationships are the values of student success, knowledge and discovery, inclusiveness and connectivity, and excellence.

### Student Success

Bradley is a community that ensures student access to an individualized learning experience. This is characterized by broad opportunities for students to marry their passions and skills, by innovative academic programming, and by an exceptional level of engagement between students, staff, and faculty, such that all students acquire the skills and dispositions essential to purposeful and productive living.

### Knowledge and Discovery

Bradley is a community that prioritizes academic excellence by nurturing critical inquiry, research, creativity, and technical skills development. The University works collaboratively to engage learners in high-impact practices, in scholarship, and in leadership development opportunities to foster lives of purpose and advance a better world.

### Inclusivity and Connectivity

Bradley is a community that strives to contribute meaningfully to understanding and resolving the problems in its community and the world. By embracing servant leadership, purposeful civil discourse, and an inclusive identity whereby the Bradley community understands that its differences are its strengths, the University lends its passions and knowledge to build valued relationships with local, regional, and global partners.

## Excellence

Bradley is a dynamic community committed to the continuous pursuit of excellence. As individuals, as units, and across campus, the University community welcomes mutual accountability and is strengthened by its shared, collaborative efforts to ensure that its members are each exceptional and passionate stewards of Bradley University.

## History

Bradley Polytechnic Institute was founded in 1897 by Lydia Moss Bradley. Mrs. Bradley was one of the most successful women of her day as an entrepreneur, businesswoman, farmer, real estate investor, banker, and philanthropist. Later in her life, Mrs. Bradley began exploring ways to leave a legacy that would honor the values and the work ethic she and her late husband shared. Establishing a school open to all students, regardless of gender, race, or religion, was perhaps Mrs. Bradley's most remarkable and enduring action.



From its founding charter, Mrs. Bradley's aim for the Institute was "to furnish its students with the means of living independent, industrious, and useful lives by the aid of a practical knowledge of the useful arts and sciences." In founding Bradley University and in her impact throughout the Peoria community, Mrs. Bradley exhibited her value of a liberal education, desire to nurture and empower the whole person, and commitment to the community. President Shadid's inaugural address further articulated, "Lydia Moss Bradley founded and dedicated our University to attract and develop young people who are independent; who think critically; who are industrious, resilient, and determined; and useful; and in her words useful meant to serve their communities. This is our legacy."

Mrs. Bradley's foundational vision continues today, as noted expressly in the University's mission statement: "Bradley University 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."

## Leadership



James E. Shadid became Bradley University's 13th President on April 1, 2025.

Shadid, a 1979 Bradley graduate, served as a United States District Judge for the Central District of Illinois, appointed to that position by U.S. President Barack Obama and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on March 7, 2011. Along the way, he ascended to Chief Judge during his federal stint on the bench. Prior to that, he was a state judge for 10 years, serving in the five-county 10th Judicial Circuit.

After graduating from John Marshall Law School (now University of Illinois at Chicago School of Law) in 1983, he became an attorney in private practice in the Peoria area.

Shadid has long given back to his alma mater, both as an Adjunct Professor and as a former Chair of the University's Board of Trustees. His roots at Bradley run deep, from his own experience as a student and baseball player on the Hilltop to other family members who became Braves, including his late brother George, son Jim, niece Lauren, and more than a dozen other cousins and their children. Shadid and his wife, Jane, are the proud parents of three adult children: Jim, Joe, and Maggie.



## Peoria, Illinois

Located halfway between Chicago and St. Louis in the heart of Illinois, a first glimpse of Peoria includes a scenic skyline that follows the banks of the Illinois River. Along this vibrant riverfront you can enjoy a concert, take in one of the city's many festivals, grab a bite to eat, or take a stroll up and down Peoria's breathtaking trails. A hub for travel and business that reflects both a wealth of industry and broad cross-section of American life, Peoria has a rich array of healthcare resources and employers and is quickly becoming one of the Midwest's largest centers for biotechnical research and development.

Peoria is home to a metropolitan community of approximately 400,000, offering big-city amenities with a small-town feel. Head to a minor-league baseball or hockey game, attend a nationally touring concert or musical, or enjoy a show from the ballet or symphony. Play a round at one of many golf courses, visit the Peoria Zoo, or go to Wildlife Prairie Park to see native Illinois buffalo and elk. If you prefer to be indoors, you could visit the Caterpillar Visitor Center, which pays tribute to the Fortune 500 company's history. You might explore one of the many exhibits at the Peoria Riverfront Museum, where visitors can also gaze at the stars in the museum's Planetarium or watch a movie in the digital Giant Screen theater. Through a generous donation, all Bradley students, faculty, and staff are provided free access to the Riverfront Museum.

Many surrounding communities add to the vibrancy of the area and a blend from rural to metropolitan life. Local shopping, festivals, outdoor activities, and entertainment opportunities enhance the quality of life within Central Illinois.

Learn more about [Peoria](#).



## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile and a CV or resume. WittKieffer is assisting Bradley University in this search, which will remain open until an appointment is made. Application materials should be submitted using [WittKieffer's candidate portal](#). Nominations and inquiries can be directed to Greg Duyck and Jevon Walton at [BradleyVPAadvancement@wittkieffer.com](mailto:BradleyVPAadvancement@wittkieffer.com).

*The salary range for this position is \$225,000–\$240,000 with a [competitive benefits package](#) and relocation assistance.*

*Bradley University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. The administration, faculty, and staff are committed to attracting qualified candidates from underrepresented groups.*