

Chapter Four: Assessment of Educational Offerings

Characteristics of Excellence:

This chapter demonstrates Trinity's fulfillment of these Middle States standards:

- Standard 11: Educational Offerings
- Standard 13: Related Educational Offerings
- Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
- Standard 7: Institutional Assessment
- Standard 1: Mission and Goals

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic programs are the backbone of Trinity's academic experience; therefore, program review is essential to ensuring the quality and excellence of a Trinity education. The goal of program assessment is to identify programs' strengths and weaknesses in serving Trinity's mission and meeting student needs, and to stimulate mission-driven improvements in the learning outcomes of an evolving student population.

The implementation of a systematic and rigorous approach to program assessment has been an ongoing priority at Trinity. Middle States Standard 7 emphasizes that an effective institution-wide program of outcomes assessment requires faculty and administrators to work together on design and implementation. In keeping with this standard, Trinity's program assessment process relies on collaborative faculty/administration work and peer review. The University Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee (UCAP), which supervises programs' progress through the five-year assessment cycle, includes faculty and administrators from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), the School of Professional Studies (SPS), and the School of Education (EDU). UCAP is responsible for designing the protocols that guide assessment activities and evaluating the annual progress reports and final reports of the individual academic programs.

The effectiveness of program assessment depends on four factors. First, the conceptual design for assessment must be sound, providing a clear and sufficient structure to guide programs' assessment activities. Secondly, assessment activities themselves must be well-executed, resulting in thorough data collection and analysis. Thirdly, evaluation mechanisms must provide programs with timely and relevant feedback, facilitating programs' development of coherent and feasible plans for change. Finally, implementation must be robust, ensuring that strategies for improvement are actually carried out.

Judged according to these criteria, Trinity's program review process has had some success and faces some challenges. The findings obtained through program assessment have enabled many programs to make improvements in their curricular offerings. At the same time, delays in the submission and evaluation of programs' assessment reports compromise the effectiveness of the process. Trinity is addressing these challenges through the redesign of its assessment protocols and the strengthening of its evaluation mechanisms.

Section II of this chapter, below, provides an overall profile of Trinity’s major programs. Subsequent sections provide more details on the design and implementation of the program assessment process.

II. PROFILE OF TRINITY’S ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

As of 2005-2006, Trinity offers these academic programs among the three schools:

College of Arts and Sciences

Sciences

Biology*
 Chemistry*
 Biochemistry*
 Physics
 Physical Science*
 Engineering**
 Mathematics*
 Environmental Sci.*

Social and Behavior Sciences

Political Science*
 Sociology*
 Human Relations*+
 Communication*+
 Psychology*
 Economics*+ /Business Economics*
 History*
 International Affairs*+
 Criminal Justice*+
 Education ***

Arts and Humanities

English*+
 Fine Arts*
 Theology/Religious Studies
 Spanish
 Language/Cultural Studies*
 Philosophy

- * Major Programs
- ** Engineering is a dual degree program with George Washington University
- *** Education is offered in cooperation with the School of Education
- *+ These majors are also offered in the School of Professional Studies

School of Professional Studies

Undergraduate

Business Administration – B.S.
 Communication – B.A.
 Computer Info. Systems – B.S.
 Criminal Justice – B.A.
 Economics – B.A.
 English – B.A.
 Entrepreneurship and Small Business – B.S.
 Human Relations – B.A.
 International Affairs – B.A.
 Liberal Studies – B.A.
 Management of Human Resources – B.S.
 Public Affairs – B.A.

Graduate

M.B.A.
 M.A. in Communication
 M.S. in Information Security
 M.S. A. in Organizational Mgmt.

School of Education

Teacher Education – M.A.T.
 Curriculum and Instruction – M.Ed.
 Educational Administration – M.S.A.
 Counseling – M.A.

Chart 4.1 below shows the total census of all enrollments in all courses by discipline in Fall 2005. The largest enrollment, Educational Administration, on the left-hand side of the chart, includes year-long enrollments for required internships.

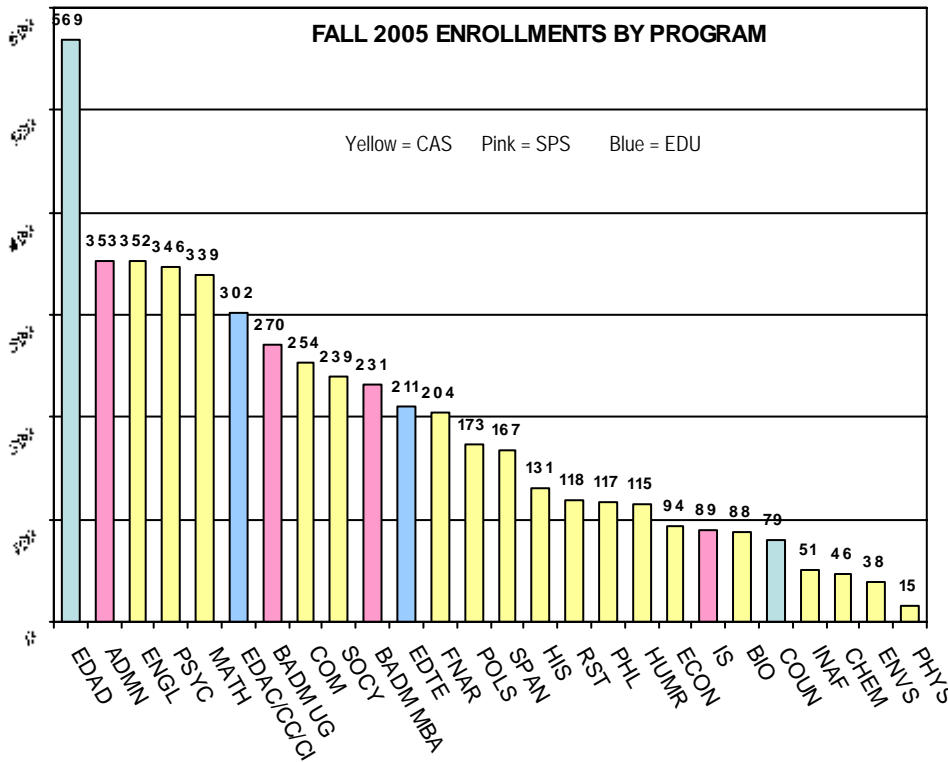


CHART 4.1:
Fall 2005 Total Course Enrollments By Program

- Left to Right:
- EDAD = Master's in Educational Administration
 - ADMN = Master's in Administration
 - ENGL = English
 - PSYC = Psychology
 - MATH = Mathematics
 - EDAC/CC/CI = Master's in Education
 - BADM UG = Business Undergraduate
 - COM = Communication BA and MA
 - SOCY = Sociology (includes Criminal Justice)
 - BADM MBA = Master's in Business Admin.
 - EDTE = Master of Arts in Teaching
 - FNAR = Fine Arts
 - POLS = Political Science
 - SPAN = Spanish
 - HIS = History
 - RST = Religious Studies and Theology
 - PHL = Philosophy
 - HUMR = Human Relations
 - ECON = Economics
 - IS = Information Systems
 - BIO = Biology
 - COUN = Counseling
 - INAF = International Affairs
 - CHEM = Chemistry
 - ENVS = Environmental Science
 - PHYS = Physics

Chart 4.2 below shows the relative proportion of undergraduate (the two yellow slices, darker yellow for CAS, lighter yellow for SPS undergrad) and graduate (reds for SPS, blue for EDU) enrollments in the Fall of 2005. In total, undergraduate enrollments account for about 66% of Trinity's total enrollment, and graduate enrollments are about one-third.

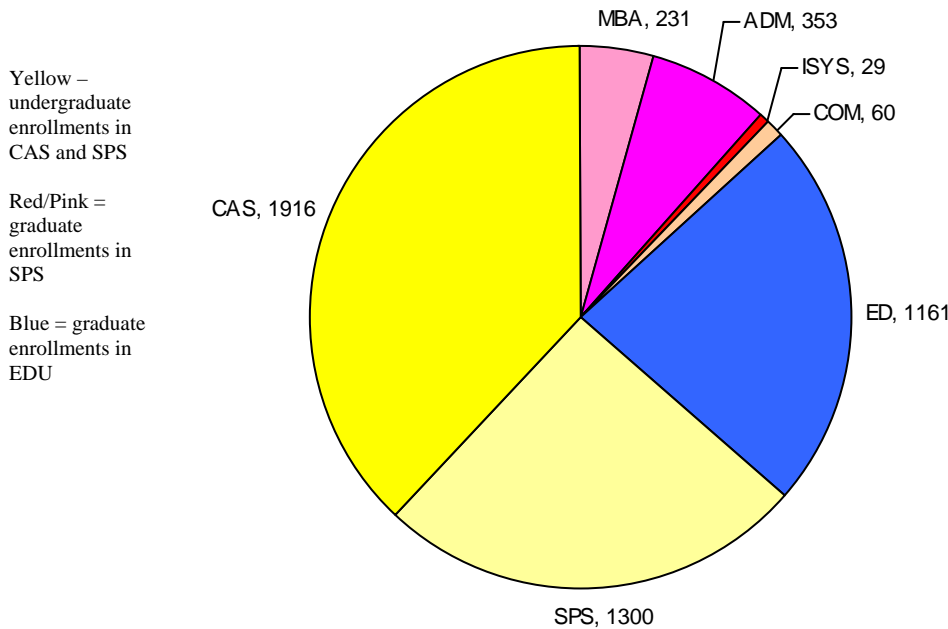
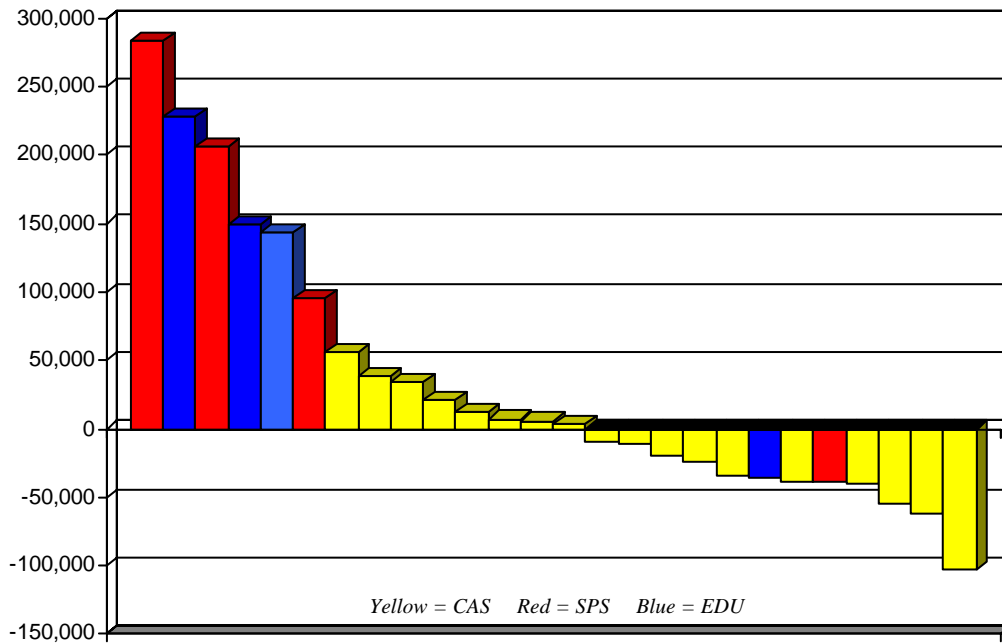


CHART 4.2
Fall 2005 Proportion of undergraduate and graduate course enrollments

- Yellow – undergraduate enrollments in CAS and SPS
- Red/Pink = graduate enrollments in SPS
- Blue = graduate enrollments in EDU

Undergraduate education continues to be the largest part of Trinity’s academic programming. However, enrollments in graduate programs tend to be the most economically productive for Trinity. **Chart 4.3** below shows what happens when all revenues and expenses, including indirect costs, are assessed to the programs. The red and blue bars above the line, (red for SPS programs, blue for EDU programs) are all graduate programs *except* undergraduate Business Administration. The yellow columns are all CAS programs.

CHART 4.3: Fall 2005 Net Earnings By Program



Graduate Programs in SPS and EDU provide more positive net revenue for several reasons. First, they tend to use significantly more adjunct faculty. Second, they do not have to account for the discount rate that applies to CAS undergraduate tuition. Third, enrollment in graduate programs is highly concentrated in a few specific programs, whereas in undergraduate education in CAS the enrollments are spread through 18 programs.

The detailed analysis including identification of programs represented by columns on the graph is available in the Document Room.

Trinity conducted the net revenue analysis, above, to try to understand more about how programs contribute to Trinity’s overall financial picture. This kind of assessment is consistent with recommendations among financial analysts and enrollment planners in higher education (See, among other sources: *The Small College Guide to Financial Health: Beating the Odds* by Michael K. Townsley, a NACUBO publication; and *Connecting Enrollment and Fiscal Management* on the University Business website, a paper prepared by Noel/Levitz, January 2006). Such analysis is particularly necessary for a small institution like Trinity with thin margins and large challenges to plan for alignment of faculty and programs to meet student needs.

The net revenue analysis is not intended to suggest that all programs below the line should not exist --- indeed, some of the most important academic disciplines, such as English and Math, do not turn a profit but are essential to the university. Moreover, the analysis also helps to point out other critical issues, such as the volume of adjunct faculty in some programs, and the impact of the discount rate for CAS programs. Of course, the analysis also raises questions about the future of some programs in their current format. Most of the disciplines are necessary for the intellectual integrity of the curriculum, and can play substantial roles in general education, but not all disciplines can support major programs with small enrollments.

The complete enrollment and fiscal analysis of the programs will be available to the team in the Document Room.

In examining its academic programs, Trinity has also considered enrollment trends within the cohort group of institutions. **Chart 4.4** illustrates Trinity's 2004 completions by program compared to the completions of other institutions in the cohort.

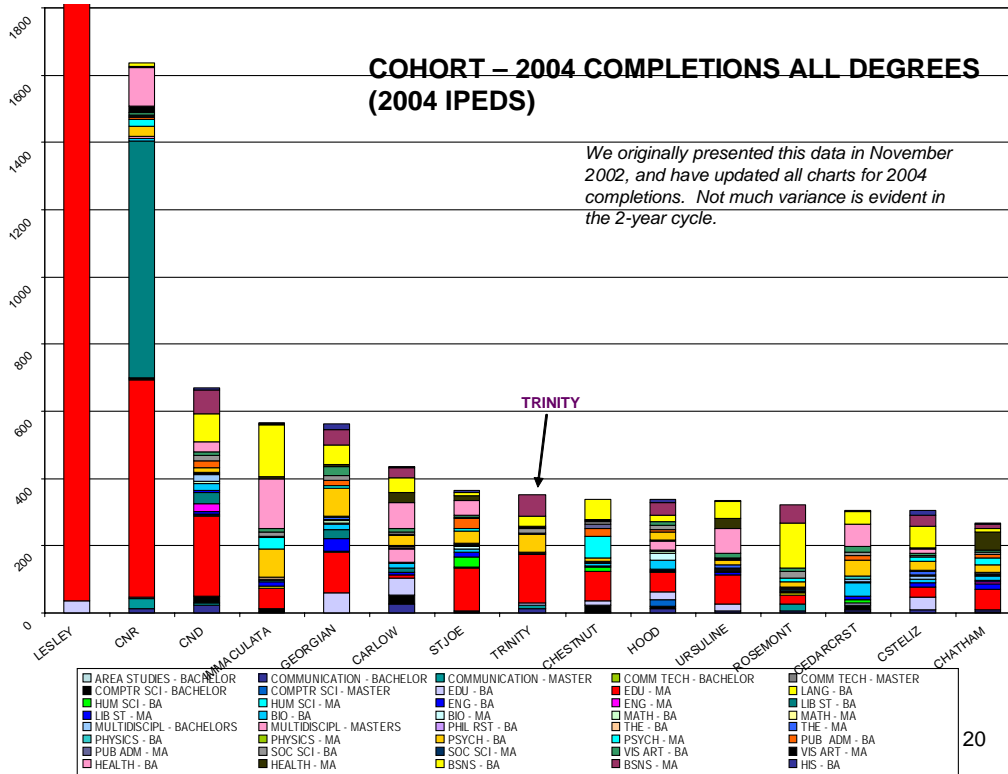


CHART 4.4
2004
Completions
(IPEDS) for
Trinity's
Cohort

The original data will be in the Document Room. While the various sandwich lines in the chart above may be hard to see on this smaller illustration, the key parts are these: the largest volume of degrees are Education Masters, which are the red parts of the above columns. The second largest volume are Business degrees --- yellow are undergraduate and purple are graduate. The third largest volume are Nursing and Health Professions – pink part above.

Trinity's largest groups of completers are in the Education Masters and Business, consistent with the cohort. However, Trinity's volume of completions is very small compared to the top end of

the cohort. Moreover, Trinity does not currently offer programs in the Health Professions, which renders Trinity significantly smaller than other members of the cohort. Starting in Fall 2006, Trinity intends to add the RN-to-BSN, followed in subsequent years by a larger nursing program and various allied health programs.

As **Chart 4.5** below illustrates, for the last two years, completions of master’s degrees have far outstripped baccalaureates at Trinity.

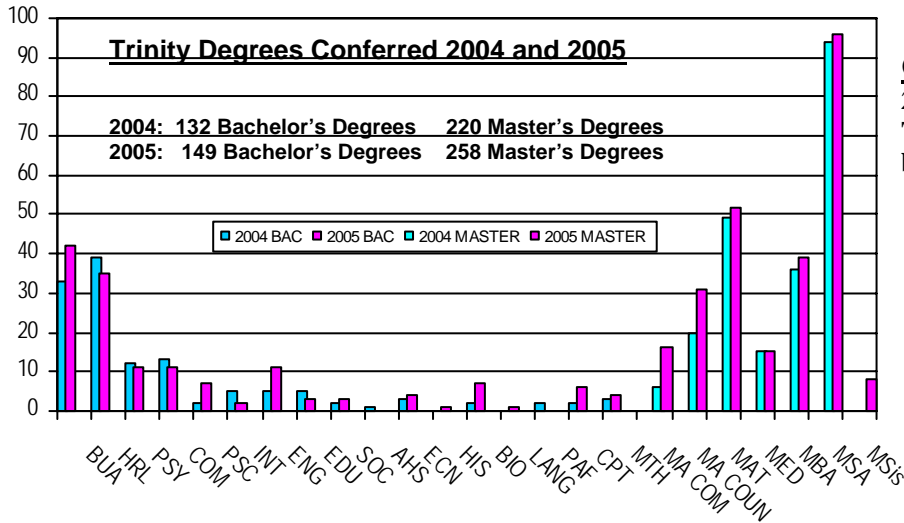


CHART 4.5
 2004 and 2005
 Trinity Completions
 by Degree and Level

Trinity has also considered how its degree productivity among the disciplines compares to the cohort trends by subject matter. **Chart 4.6** below shows the total cohort degree productivity in 2004 by volume, and shows Trinity’s awards (red dots).

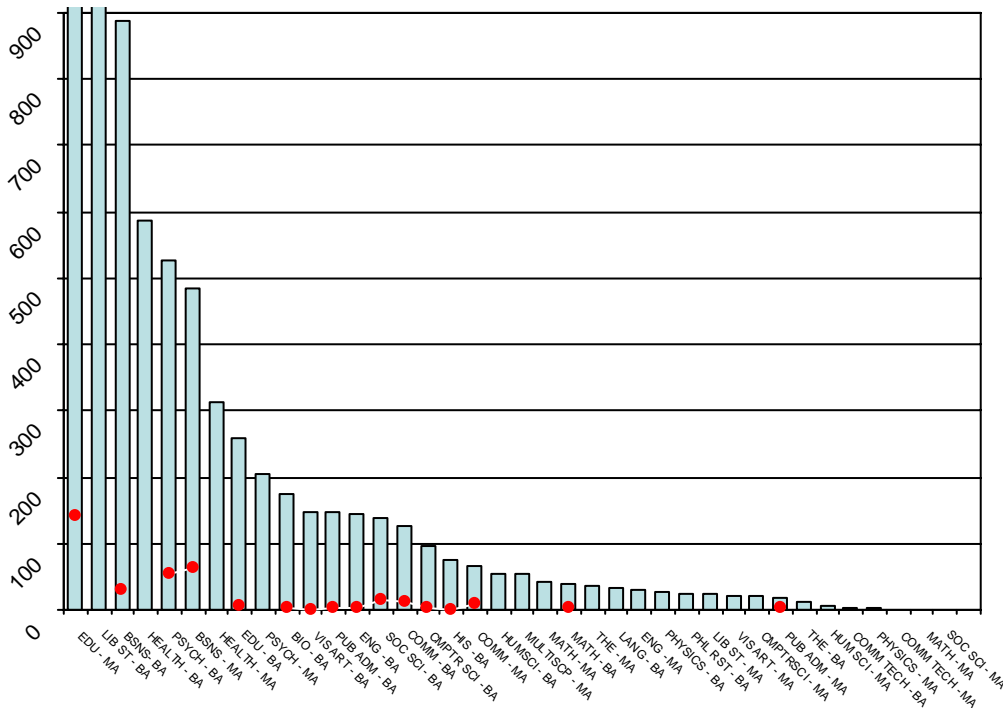
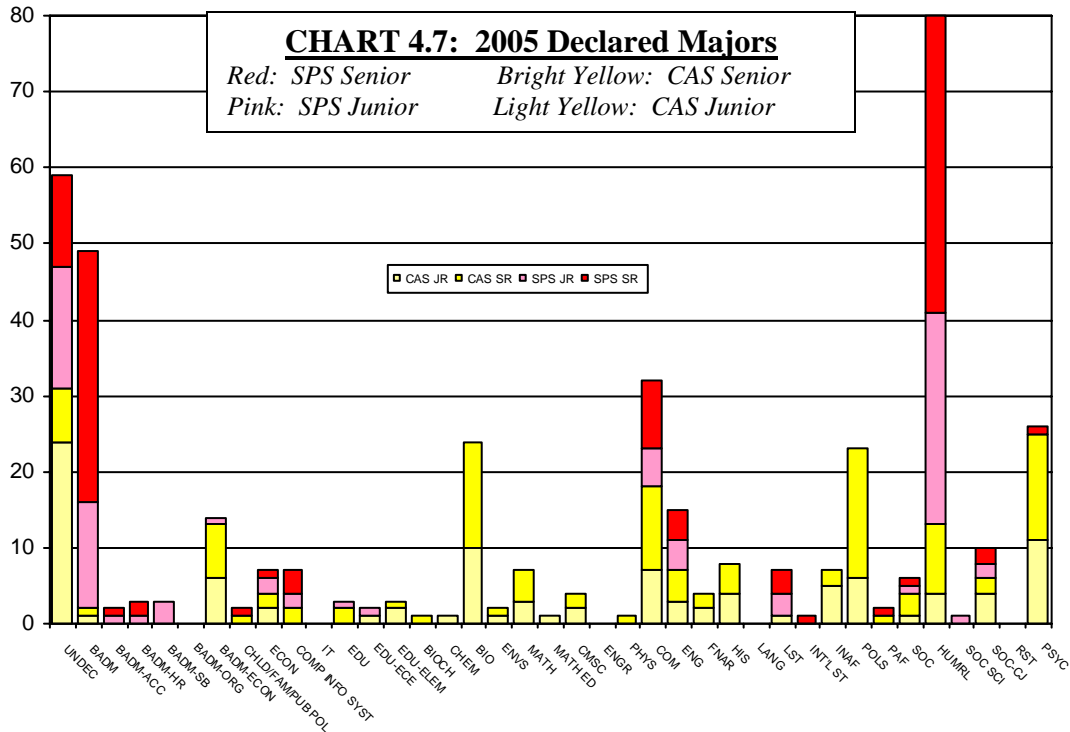


CHART 4.6
 2004 Cohort
 Completions

Against this backdrop, Trinity has also considered current declared undergraduate majors. **Chart 4.7** illustrates the majors that juniors and seniors in both SPS and EDU have declared as of December 2005.



In light of the preceding analysis of cohort trends, Trinity’s enrollment trends, net revenues and analysis later in this chapter of program review data, as well as Chapter 5 on faculty resources, Trinity must give careful consideration to the roster of undergraduate major offerings going forward. In particular, given the demands of general education and the need for reforms in that program in both schools (see Chapter 3) and the current spread of CAS faculty between CAS and SPS in servicing liberal arts majors and general education (see Chapter 5), Trinity must consider the possibility of consolidating the lightly enrolled liberal arts majors in SPS into a Liberal Studies program that would mirror similar kinds of major programs for adult students at other institutions in Trinity’s cohort, and among other large providers of adult undergraduate education.

Proceeding from this context of the overall slate of Trinity’s academic programs, the following sections will detail Trinity’s progress and challenges in academic program assessment.

NOTE TO READERS: Except where the School of Education is specifically cited, the following material applies *only* to programs in the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Professional Studies. The program reviews for the School of Education are all captured in the NCATE accreditation materials, which are available online and in the Document Room.

III. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT DESIGN

A. The Program Assessment Cycle

Programs in Trinity's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and School of Professional Studies (SPS) participate in a five-year assessment cycle. In the first year of the cycle, UCAP (the University-wide Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee) instructs programs to develop goals and construct a data collection plan for assessing goal achievement. In year two, programs collect the data specified in their plans. In the third year, programs analyze the data and write a final assessment report, including recommendations for change arising from the assessment results. The final two years are reserved for implementation of the recommendations.

The assessment cycle is staggered so that a limited number of programs are in the same year; each program is in a cohort of programs engaged in similar assessment activities. The cohort approach has several advantages. It allows cohort programs to collaborate, learn from each others' experiences, and participate in workshops tailored to their specific assessment tasks. It also facilitates mentoring, as programs in more advanced stages of the cycle provide guidance to less-advanced cohorts.

B. Program Assessment Protocols

Trinity's design for program assessment has become increasingly specific and directive in recent years. In recent years, UCAP designed a set of protocols, each establishing formal expectations for assessment activities in a particular year. The current versions of the first, second, and third year protocols (which are available in the Document Room) direct programs to undertake a progression of tasks essential to effective assessment, including:

- Developing assessment goals that are clearly linked to the mission of the university (required task; addresses Middle States Standard 1 and 11)
- Setting measurable objectives for student learning outcomes (required task; addresses Middle States Standards 1, 11, and 14)
- Developing a variety of assessment methods and instruments to measure the achievement of programmatic and student learning goals (required task; addresses Middle States Standard 14)
- Constructing and implementing a plan to collect quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and from all course types (FLC/Core, major, elective, capstone). (required task; addresses Middle States Standard 14)
- Analyzing collected data to measure the achievement of programmatic and student learning goals (required task; addresses Middle States Standards 7 and 11)
- Articulating a plan for implementing program changes based upon the conclusions of the analysis (required task; addresses Middle States Standards 7 and 14)

- Specifying how program goals will meet the needs of diverse student constituencies (recommended task; addresses Middle States Standard 11)
- Assessing whether individual course design is linked to program goals and institutional mission (recommended task; addresses Middle States Standard 1)
- Assessing the extent to which non-majors master general education goals, and majors master and synthesize disciplinary knowledge (recommended task; addresses Middle States standard 11)

C. Program Assessment Activities

Since 2000, 22 programs have taken part in the program review process. Their efforts to set mission-driven assessment goals, specify expected learning outcomes, develop assessment instruments, collect and analyze data, and articulate plans for improvement have become increasingly focused and rigorous. All programs realize the necessity of developing both quantitative and qualitative assessment instruments and of collecting data from multiple, carefully-selected sources.

1. Ensuring Timeliness

While Trinity has made much progress in launching a systematic program review process, certain challenges are obvious. The most significant challenge is the gap between planned and actual completion of the five-year program assessment cycle. Between 2000 and 2005, 11 of the 22 programs involved in the assessment cycle (50%) did not submit yearly assessment reports on schedule, delaying completion of their final third year reports by a year or more. Furthermore, programs delayed their re-entry into the program assessment cycle after finishing their final reports. Consequently, between 2000 and 2005, only 10 (45%) of participating programs completed a program assessment.

In response to these delays, UCAP has intensified its interactions with programs, requesting more regular progress updates, offering advice when programs get stuck, and urging them to submit annual assessment reports on schedule. In 2005, program compliance reached an all-time high, with fifteen programs submitting reports, and only three programs failing to turn in scheduled assessment materials. Further improvements in the timeliness of submission will be a UCAP priority in coming years.

2. Assessing Student Learning

Middle States Standard 11 calls for “program goals that are stated in terms of student learning outcomes,” while its Standard 14 notes that “assessment of student learning is essential whatever the nature of the institution.” Trinity’s programs have made major progress in recognizing the centrality of student learning outcomes to assessment. Between 2000 and 2005, 77% of programs specified student learning goals in their assessment reports. The emphasis on

student learning has grown during this period; since 2003, every program assessment report has included expected student learning outcomes.

UCAP recommends that programs specify learning goals for the various student constituencies they serve. Since majors, minors, and general education students are expected to acquire different levels of knowledge and master different skills, it makes sense to establish separate (though overlapping) learning expectations for these groups of students. For example, the Mathematics 2005 First Year Assessment Report provides a strong example of how programs can set suitable goals for their own majors, related program majors, and non-majors; and select appropriate data sources for measuring learning outcomes for each group (see Math Assessment Report in Document Room).

Between 2000 and 2005, 16 of 17 (94%) of programs that listed student learning goals in their assessment reports established discipline-specific knowledge goals relevant for majors and minors. Additionally, all 17 of these programs established student learning goals congruent with the goals of Trinity's general education curriculum. In other words, these programs set out to measure their contribution to student mastery of general education goals. (Details are available in the Document Room).

Setting student learning goals does not guarantee that they will be assessed. In fact, one of the challenges of program review has been follow-through. Proliferation of goals was one reason for inadequate follow-through. Programs often set more goals than they could realistically assess. Difficulty in designing appropriate instruments was another problem. Programs stated student learning goals without considering whether they could collect and analyze the data to evaluate their achievement. As a result, data collection was often partial, and the instruments used were not sufficient to demonstrate student learning outcomes.

A frequent shortcoming, at least in earlier years, involved extrapolating conclusions from insufficient data. For example, 77% of the 17 major-offering programs that participated in assessment since 2000 collected and analyzed data on their majors' learning experiences. Of these programs, four (29%) assessed majors' learning experiences solely by conducting student surveys. Meanwhile, 70% of programs that participated in assessment since 2000 collected and analyze data on student mastery of general education goals. Of these programs, five (25%) assessed general education only through student surveys (see the Document Room for details). All surveys yielded very positive responses from students, who reported confidence in their mastery of disciplinary and general education knowledge. On this basis, programs claimed success in meeting student learning goals for majors and non-majors. However, self-reported data is not sufficient to establish student learning outcomes.

Some programs also attempted to assess student learning outcomes through syllabus analysis. Forty-five percent of programs involved in assessment since 2000 evaluated (or are evaluating) their syllabi. Syllabus analysis is certainly a useful assessment tool. Indeed, Middle States Standards 11 and 14 stipulate that "course syllabi should include expected learning outcomes." Syllabus analysis can gauge whether student learning expectations are clearly stated. It can also reveal the extent to which student learning goals are covered through course content, and measured through course assignments and tests. The Economics 2005 Second Year Assessment

Report provides an example of the effective use of syllabus analysis to demonstrate coverage and measurement of expected student learning in key courses (See Economics assessment report in Document Room). But like student surveys, syllabus analysis does not provide direct evidence of student learning outcomes. It must be supplemented (as the Economics program does) with data from instruments that directly measure student achievement.

Responding to the incompleteness of some programs' assessment efforts, UCAP made the improvement of student learning assessment a major goal in 2004-5. To address the problem of goal proliferation, it revised the first year protocol to stipulate that programs should set only three to five goals for assessment. To ensure that programs framed their goals in ways amenable to assessment, UCAP required programs to specify measurable objectives for each goal, and to develop a data collection plan specifying data sources for every objective. Finally, UCAP worked with programs to help programs construct more thorough data collection plans and identify more valid and appropriate data analysis methods.

Following these changes, programs' assessment reports became more focused and feasible. Now, all programs subdivide their student learning goals into concrete, measurable objectives. Furthermore, programs have developed detailed rubrics and course-embedded assessments to measure student learning outcomes, supplementing the grade distribution analyses which were frequently the sole source of student outcome data in earlier years. These improvements in the specification of goals and collection of data will make assessment and demonstration of outcomes more straightforward.

3. Assessing Programmatic Goals

Not all assessment directly measures student learning. Programs set additional objectives that are crucial to fulfilling their goals and contributing to Trinity's mission. These programmatic objectives include resource adequacy, curricular innovation, and service to non-traditional students (see program goals matrix in the Document Room). As in the area of student learning, Trinity is still working to improve the effectiveness of its assessment of programmatic goals. Programs are collaborating with UCAP to increase the diversity and validity of their assessment instruments, and to strengthen the thoroughness of their data collection efforts.

One key programmatic goal involves resources. Programs must have adequate resources—in the form of faculty, facilities, information resources, and technology—to support their teaching, learning, research, and service responsibilities. From 2000-2005, 60% of programs involved in assessment set goals involving resource adequacy. Faculty sufficiency (in the sense of both numbers and quality) has been the top concern with 40% of programs setting goals related to new faculty hires or stronger faculty credentials. In past years, programs have not always provided sufficient data and analysis to support their conclusions about resource adequacy. Recently, programs have developed more sophisticated instruments, such as the MSA program's faculty sufficiency matrix, which measures the alignment of faculty credentials and experiences with the level and content of the courses they are expected to deliver.

Another crucial program function involves ensuring connections between course design, program goals, and institutional mission. As Middle States Standard 11 states, "the design of

individual courses, programs, and learning activities should be linked to clearly-articulated goals of the specific programs of which they are a part and to the overarching mission of the institution.” UCAP requires programs, as part of their assessment reports, to link their goals to Trinity’s mission. All programs have complied with this requirement. UCAP also encourages programs to assess whether their goals are reflected in the design and content of individual courses. Since 2000, 32% of programs have chosen to assess whether individual courses are appropriately designed to serve program goals as well as Trinity’s mission. This percentage should increase in the future, as Trinity places greater priority upon aligning course with program and institutional goals. The Philosophy program’s initiative to link the objectives in every course it offers to the program’s goals and to the university’s mission is a comprehensive exemplar (see Philosophy program assessment in the Document Room).

Since 2000, 32% of programs involved in assessment have stated goals involving responsiveness to new methods and findings in their disciplines. Middle States Standard 11 recognizes the importance of such curricular innovation, requiring that “individual courses, programs, and sequences of study are dynamic and responsive to new research findings and methods of inquiry.” Appropriately given Trinity’s teaching-centered mission, its programs set curricular innovation goals that focus on the improvement of student learning experiences. The development of new courses or the adoption of new pedagogies are common programmatic goals. For example, Trinity’s Sociology program incorporated recommendations from the American Sociological Association’s Task Force on Undergraduate Curriculum into its assessment activities. It set the goal of creating new courses, and redesigning existing courses, to better reflect current disciplinary emphases on interdisciplinary studies and the study of race, class, and gender. More detail on the Sociology Program’s curricular goals is provided in the Document Room.

Given Trinity’s large population of adult students, a surprisingly small percentage of programs have articulated assessment goals concerning such students. Middle States Standard 11 makes clear that “institutions with a focus on adult learning” must develop “policies and practices that are appropriate to and supportive of adult learners.” Several Trinity programs have noted that their mission includes service to adult students. But few programs have put forward specific plans to assess these students’ needs or determine whether they were being met.

In conclusion, Trinity has made significant progress in the sophistication of its assessment activities since 2000. Since 2003, almost all programs involved in assessment have collected both quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources, including written assignments, oral presentations, field-based learning experiences, portfolios, syllabi and other instructional materials. Furthermore, since 2003, almost all programs have used multiple assessment instruments, including criterion-based rubrics, course-embedded assessments, grade distribution analyses, surveys, evaluations, syllabus reviews, and course sequence and distribution analyses. Progress is still needed in the thoroughness of data collection and analysis.

D. Evaluation Of Program Assessments

Consultative evaluation is essential to the health and integrity of program assessment. At Trinity, UCAP manages the evaluation process. It reviews the assessment reports submitted by

programs at each stage in the program review cycle, and provides recommendations on how programs should proceed to the next stage. In recent years, UCAP has worked to strengthen its evaluation role by providing more detailed guidance to programs engaged in assessment, and to enhance formal and informal communication with programs. UCAP members now consult with program faculty before and after programs submit their reports, to review UCAP expectations and discuss UCAP recommendations. UCAP also asks programs to submit preliminary drafts of their annual assessment reports, and gives suggestions for refining the reports. Finally, UCAP now requests written responses to its recommendations, and encourages programs to resubmit revised reports.

Consultation can be productive, but it can also be time-consuming. Programs and UCAP members alike feel burdened by the intense workload of assessing, reporting, evaluating, reassessing, rewriting, and re-evaluating. Ideally, UCAP and the programs it evaluates will find ways to work smarter rather than harder. Stabilizing assessment expectations, focusing assessment and evaluation on a manageable number of key tasks, and streamlining report submission and evaluation can lead to improved results with less effort.

E. The Results of Program Assessment: Implementation

Middle States Standards 7 and 14 both emphasize that assessment activities are only meaningful if programs develop and implement recommendations for the improvement of curricula, instruction, and student learning based on the results of assessment. Programs at Trinity have done an exemplary job of including recommendations in their final assessment reports. Since 2000, every program submitting a final report has made recommendations for change.

These recommendations have often—but not always—produced results. A review of what programs have recommended, and what they have actually accomplished, since 2000 provides insight into how to craft feasible and productive recommendations. Generally, recommendations have been most successful when they:

- Are based upon the collection and analysis of valid, relevant, and thorough data. For example, programs have successfully used enrollment data, along with student surveys and evaluations, to restructure course offerings in ways that produce fuller classes and fewer cancellations.
- Are specific and focused. For example, a recommendation to introduce a new composition skills course is more likely to be implemented than a recommendation to strengthen writing across the curriculum.
- Do not involve additional resources. There is no institutional link between assessment and budgetary decisions at Trinity; UCAP does not grant, or recommend that programs receive, resources as part of its evaluation. Program assessments sometimes generate evidence that becomes the basis for successful resource requests. But programs that build resource assumptions into their recommendations run the risk of being unable to realize their goals.

- Address root causes rather than symptoms. For example, programs that respond to low enrollment by analyzing its sources and restructuring their curricular offerings are more likely to be successful than programs that respond by recommending that courses run despite low enrollments.

A summary of each program's recommendations and implementation record can be found in the Document Room. The following narrative focuses on several illustrative examples of effective and successful programmatic change in response to findings in the review process.

In its most recent completed assessment, the Human Relations program set a clear goal of assessing whether its majors were completing their studies with the ability to synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge, methods, and theories. This goal addresses Middle States Standard 11, which calls on programs to “foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning.” To measure student learning outcomes, the program collected data on senior student portfolios over two years. Analyzing the data, the Human Relations program found deficiencies in students' expected learning outcomes. In response, the program recommended and implemented several important programmatic changes.

Most importantly, the assessment of student portfolios contributed to a reworking of the senior seminar in Human Relations. Before the program assessment, the senior seminar had not been an integrative learning experience. Each student worked separately on his or her own project, and reported occasionally to other seminar participants on findings. Student portfolio assessment revealed that the weakest aspect of students' performance was their ability to integrate psychology and sociology concepts. The senior seminar was not serving as a true interdisciplinary capstone experience. In response, the Human Relations program redesigned the senior seminar. Now, group assignments help students hone their collaboration, oral presentation, and research skills. Also, assignments require students to conduct inter-disciplinary research and to frame their analysis in inter-disciplinary terms.

The Human Relations senior seminar redesign has been very successful. Student evaluations show that students feel much better prepared, after taking the senior seminar, to complete their senior portfolio. Students report greater confidence in their ability to integrate the fields of psychology and sociology. Furthermore, students' performance on the senior portfolios has improved, with strong advancements in the quality of submitted work.

The assessment process has also helped programs evaluate ongoing changes in the learning levels, and learning styles, of their students. As part of the “paradigm shift” in Trinity's student population, a growing percentage of the student body is coming to Trinity with limited subject matter preparation and significant needs in basic skill-building. Programs have used the assessment process to better understand students' preparation, knowledge levels, and academic needs. This improved understanding has led to beneficial adjustments in pedagogy and testing methods.

For example, the Biology program's assessment revealed that incoming students were contending with growing study skill deficits. In response, the Biology program increased its use of weekly quizzes to monitor student performance and reinforce learning. Similarly, the

Language and Cultural Studies program discovered through its assessment that a growing percentage of students was struggling with language acquisition skills and with the level of assigned reading. The program accordingly adjusted its pedagogy. For instance, it began to incorporate more visual learning aids, and to select texts more appropriate to the reading level of incoming students.

Programs have also used the assessment process to help them bring their course objectives and student learning goals into greater harmony with Trinity's mission goals. As part of its program review, for example, the Language and Cultural Studies program strengthened the link between its course objectives and university-wide goals as articulated in the Trinity mission. In keeping with the mission's emphasis on respect for diversity, the program explicitly incorporated into course design the goal of using language and cultural study as a way to dispel prejudice and promote tolerance and respect among different cultures. Additionally, the Language and Cultural Studies program placed increasing emphasis on preparing students for leadership and citizenship roles, another key component of Trinity's mission. Many program courses now emphasize student preparation for professional success in private and public service careers that require cultural sensitivity and knowledge.

Assessment findings have also helped programs restructure their scheduling and course offerings to better serve evolving student needs and interests. For example, the Fine Arts program assessment led to a significant realignment in the program's mission and course offerings. Data indicated a long-term trend towards dwindling numbers of Fine Arts majors and minors, as well as problems filling both introductory and upper-level courses. In response, the Fine Arts program reoriented its mission to a primarily service role within the institution, and concentrated on streamlining and rationalizing its course offerings. It focused its course rotation on a smaller number of courses chosen to reflect the interests and general education needs of the evolving student population. Since then, the program has succeeded in maintaining enrollment while filling more seats in offered courses (see detailed analysis in the Document Room).

Many of the benefits of program assessment are intangible. Rather than effecting direct or immediate improvements in student success, they help create the programmatic conditions that promote success over time. For example, one program described assessment as a 'coalescing process' that enabled faculty to review the program's current condition and envision a future shape for the program. It was an opportunity to reflect, synthesize, and plan for the future.

Furthermore, the program review process has helped faculty learn how to conduct assessment in a more systematic, precise way. When Trinity initiated program assessment in the 1990s, faculty had little knowledge about how to assess student learning outcomes, or even what to look for. Through the ongoing assessment process, faculty members have sharpened their assessment skills. They have learned how to develop rubrics and other instruments that yield detailed information about specific student learning outcomes. They have come to understand the need for multiple measures and methods of assessment. Most fundamentally, they have gained an understanding of how to embed assessment in every aspect of course development and delivery, ensuring that assessment is a continuous process rather than an occasional event.

An assessment plan that relies heavily on faculty-led, course-embedded evaluation is both a pragmatic necessity and a reflection of Trinity's mission and priorities. Given Trinity's small size and limited resources, a large institutional assessment staff is not realistic. Instead, assessment of student learning must be built upon what faculty members discover, measure, and innovate in their classrooms. Furthermore, course and program-embedded assessment, in which the faculty members "own" the process, develop the instruments, collect and analyze the data, and implement their own recommendations for improvement in their own classrooms, is in keeping with Trinity's educational philosophy. It ensures that the locus of assessment efforts remains as close as possible to the students whom the process is designed to serve.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Trinity provides a variety of educational experiences outside the traditional classroom setting. These experiences conform to the expectations articulated in Middle States Standard 11, which states that "There should be coherence between an institution's curricular offerings and the other experiences that contribute to the total educational environment and promote the development of life skills. The mission of the institution and the characteristics of its students determine the appropriateness of co-curricular activities."

As a small institution, Trinity has focused on developing selected educational experiences that are integrally connected to its mission and consistent with the needs and interests of its evolving student population. To fulfill its mission while serving the needs of its students, Trinity strongly promotes educational activities such as internships, community-based research, and experiential learning. These activities combine academic and professional development, build on prior or concurrent work experience, and encourage students to explore the extensive array of career, service, and enrichment opportunities in the Washington, D.C. area. These activities also help Trinity students develop civic awareness and citizenship skills that are rooted in an integration of classroom learning and community service.

A. Internships and Practica

Trinity's mission statement calls for "applied and experiential learning opportunities in all programs." In fulfillment of this directive, more than two-thirds of Trinity's degree granting programs, as well as two of its minor programs, regularly offer for-credit internships and/or practica. Internships or practica are required for all programs in the School of Education. Five programs in CAS/SPS require majors to participate in internships, and another four require majors to complete either an internship or some other applied research project.

1. Internships

Internships play a particularly important role in the curricula of the undergraduate Communications, English, Political Science, and Psychology programs. Taken together, these programs accounted for 87% of all internships taken for credit through CAS and SPS between 2003 and 2005 (Details available in Document Room).

Since internships (or related experiences) are required in these programs, faculty members are committed to helping their majors secure internships. They work intensively with students to set up internships that offer exceptional career and academic development potential. In recent years, Trinity students have interned for credit at a variety of non-governmental organizations, including Amnesty International, American Red Cross, the Legal Aid Society, and the Children's Defense Fund. Many students have completed internships in government and politics, including internships with the Department of State, the Department of Labor, Congressional offices, Democratic National Headquarters, and the Republican National Committee. Area radio, television, and print journalism companies are also popular internship sites, as are local social service agencies and community-based organizations. For a selected listing of recent internship sites, see data in the Document Room.

While internship participation is strong in the undergraduate Communications, English, Psychology, and Political Science programs, fewer undergraduates pursue internships in other disciplines. Several other CAS programs do require their majors to complete internships or related experiences. Since internship enrollments in these programs are low, the programs may need to do more to promote internship opportunities for their students.

2. Internship Regulations and Requirements: CAS and SPS

If internships are to make a valuable contribution to students' educational experiences, then internship regulations must be clear and consistently enforced. Furthermore, students must be adequately advised on internship regulations and requirements. Trinity meets these obligations to its students through school-wide and program-level internship policies. Since 2000, Trinity has implemented significant changes in the design and implementation of internship regulations for CAS and SPS students. (School of Education internships are regulated through separate policies; that material is available with the EDU NCATE report in the Document Room). As a result of these changes, the regulations now require more specific information on student learning objectives and evaluation methods via the Internship Learning Agreement, which all students taking credit internships must submit. Furthermore, monitoring of compliance with internship regulations has become more thorough. A more complete description of internship regulations is in the Document Room.

3. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in Internships: CAS and SPS

While the Internship Learning Agreement ensures that student learning goals will be stated for all internships, it is up to individual programs to assess actual student learning outcomes. Most programs that require their majors to take internships have detailed policies governing internship academic requirements and assessment. These policies are distributed to students every semester, and help ensure that internship learning expectations are clear and consistently applied.

In CAS and SPS, the Communications, Psychology, and Political Science programs have developed thorough statements of internship requirements. All three programs require students to complete written analyses that integrate theories and knowledge gained through course work with insights and skills gained through internship work. All three programs also specify

assessment methods for measuring student learning (see Document Room for programs' internship requirement guidelines). Criteria for assessing student work include grasp of theoretical concepts; ability to relate academic knowledge to real-world situations; and ability to synthesize academic and applied knowledge into a coherent statement of what was learned. Trinity faculty supervisors evaluate student learning outcomes, with input from internship site supervisors. These faculty supervisors are fully qualified to assess internship outcomes; they are "knowledgeable about the subject matter and about the institution's criteria for the granting of college credit," as Middle States Standard 13 stipulates.

Trinity's internship requirements and assessment procedures fully comply with the expectations outlined in Middle States standards for experiential learning. The substantive analytical requirements of internship written assignments, along with the assessment standards, ensure that students do not receive academic credit simply for work experience. Thus, "credit awarded for experiential learning...is supported by evidence the form of an evaluation of the level, quality, and quantity of that learning" (Middle States Standard 13).

4. Internships in the School of Education

Each program in the School of Education establishes and enforces its own set of internship regulations. All students in all programs are required to participate in internships, which play an integral role in professional preparation. Given the centrality of internships, it is crucial that internship regulations and policies be clear and detailed, and that students have access to information and advising on internships. Each School of Education program publishes and distributes detailed internship guidebooks, which lay out student responsibilities and learning expectations; university supervisor responsibilities; site supervisor responsibilities; evaluation standards and rubrics; and all other policies and regulations governing internships. (Guidebooks are available in the Document Room). Students work closely with their advisors and internship supervisors to plan their internships, monitor their progress, and prepare their final portfolios.

B. Service Learning

Middle States Standard 11 endorses "opportunities to integrate community service with educational programs, enhancing the effectiveness with which an institution fulfills both its education mission and its responsibility to society." In keeping with this endorsement, Trinity has embraced community-based learning, also known as service learning, as an avenue for enriching students' educational experiences. Since 2003, community-based learning components have been integrated into several courses.

Most notably, faculty incorporated community-based learning into the First Year Seminar, an interdisciplinary course required for all first year CAS students. The decision to incorporate community-based learning into a required course was groundbreaking, making Trinity the only area university that mandates student participation in this active pedagogy. All First Year Seminar students now contribute at least twenty hours of service to a community organization. Several Sociology courses have also incorporated community-based learning, and more faculty members plan to add community-based learning and/or research components to their courses. As

of August 2005, more than 250 students had participated in community-based learning experiences through their courses.

Because the community-based learning program at Trinity is new, assessment of the program is in its initial phase. Individual student outcomes in community-based learning courses are evaluated through community-based learning portfolios and other coursework. In addition, students self-assess their community-based learning experiences through course evaluations and through pre- and post- surveys administered by Trinity's partner, the Community Research and Learning Network (CoRAL).

A major report assessing Trinity' Service Learning Program is available online and in the Document Room.

C. Intelligence Center for Academic Excellence

With a major federal grant, Trinity established an Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence in 2004-2005. The grant provides funding for faculty development, colloquia, curriculum development, and student study abroad.

Trinity's participation in this program is a direct result of Trinity's strong reputation in Washington for the preparation of highly skilled, deeply ethical, publicly-minded citizen leaders. With the collaboration of many faculty, and the leadership of a senior political scientist, Trinity's first year with the Intelligence Program was a success.

An evaluation of the program was conducted by the Mitre Corporation for the federal funder. This report is available in the Document Room.

D. Other Educational Activities

The Document Room contains additional assessment reports on these activities and programs:

1. The Honors Program
2. The TELL Program

V. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Given the Library's central role in Trinity's educational programs, Trinity believes that the Library report is most relevant as part of this chapter on Educational Offerings.

At the same time that Trinity has undertaken a paradigm shift in its educational programming, there has been an accelerating paradigm shift in academic library environments in the past ten years. The rapid development of information and communication technologies, web-based services and content availability, powerful search engines that increasingly complement databases and full-text services, electronic learning environments, federated searching of multiple information and knowledge resources, increasingly sophisticated distance education

tools and programs, powerful content management software, and the digitization of scholarly communication and publishing are only a few examples of the paradigm shift toward a new kind of academic library.

Today's academic library environment is very different from that of the 1996 Self Study. Yet Trinity was not always quick to adapt to this changing environment and the challenges and opportunities it presented. Indeed, in many ways the Library maintained the status quo in terms of its service model for the past ten years.

With the arrival in September 2005 of a new Director of the Library and Information Services deeply experienced in the application of emerging technologies, the Library was positioned to respond in new ways to the university's paradigm shift. It developed a new student- and faculty-centered model that strongly supports the University's evolving academic programs. The premise of the new model is that the Library's primary goal is to add value to Trinity and its students and faculty members as they conduct their academic work of teaching, learning, research and service in the context of rapidly evolving technologies, information management, knowledge development, decision-making, and critical thinking.

Along with this new model comes a need for new approach to assessment. In periods of rapid technological change, regular value-added assessment that is robust and sophisticated is crucial to developing customized library content, services and access. Fortunately, there are tools available today that provide new ways of assessing decisions, investments, and outcomes for the academic library. So, in addition to considering the potential and impact of rapidly evolving technologies, academic librarians are able to apply a set of assessment tools that focus on the Library as a value-adding system from the users' perspective, in the context of understanding information-seeking and use patterns. These assessment tools provide a framework for strategic decision-making and outcomes assessment.

The full text of the Sheehan Library report, which presents a new way of thinking about and assessing the academic library and its contributions to the campus community, is available in the Document Room and the Middle States website. The Library Report also details strategic analyses that will enable the Library to make timing and funding decisions to support new directions, examine new approaches to efficiency and effectiveness, and understand more clearly how the Library adds value to the Trinity community. The following section highlights new directions and new assessment tools in place in the Sheehan Library.

Trinity's Sheehan Library, as an information, communication, and collaboration system, aims to add value in six categories:

- **Ease of use** — reducing the difficulty of use for students and faculty members
- **Relevance** — selecting and filtering to focus on the needed and remove the extraneous
- **Adaptability** – responsiveness to student and faculty information seeking and use behavior patterns that change over time.
- **Quality** — excellence and the assurance of accuracy.

- **Time savings** — reduce student and faculty time and effort to obtain relevant library information, communication and services
- **Cost savings** — information system design and operating decisions that save dollars for the students and faculty members

Beginning in the fall of 2005, Library staff members assessed current Library operations and then, moved to explore a new model of library service for each Library program area. The program areas assessed included information and reference literacy, the Library website and collections, WRLC and OCLC database access and discipline coverage, and Library staffing, plant, technology adoption, and innovation diffusion. In addition, Library staff members initiated a project to interview Trinity students and faculty members about their information seeking and use behaviors. Findings from the interviews will help Library staff members develop a new model of Library service that reflects where the Library needs to add value to move into the future. Trinity's emerging technology and information literacy needs and priorities, as identified in the Middle States self study, will also guide the Library's development of its new service model.

A new model of Library information literacy service is particularly crucial to Trinity's strategy for the assessment of student learning, which identifies information literacy as one of three key outcomes to promote and assess. In September 2005, the Library was asked to take part in a university-wide project to develop an integrated information literacy initiative across the curriculum at Trinity. By helping develop and implement this information literacy initiative, the Library will explore new ways to add value in the categories noted above.

For example, in terms of ease of use and relevance, the Library's information literacy instructional services have previously been offered through one-time, fairly generic classroom sessions led by a Librarian. By contrast, in the new information literacy across the curriculum model, the Library's information literacy instructional services would be designed by library staff members, but would be tailored to be relevant to specific disciplines, pedagogical approaches, and learning goals, and would be available both onsite and online. Similarly, in terms of adaptability, the Library's current service model is limited by staff time for design and classroom delivery.

In the new model for information literacy, adaptability would be enhanced through multiple modes of delivery; through easier correction and presentation of online literacy programs; and through feedback over time from students using the online programs. The new model would also result in time and cost savings. The current practice of face-to-face service delivery is labor-intensive for library staff members, limiting the ability to multiply efforts and results. Once the time and resource investment in design of online information literacy programming has been made, time and cost savings in delivery would be substantial. For students, time savings would be gained as information literacy resources become readily available online, and students would get a significantly higher benefit for their educational dollar.

Drawing upon their initial assessments of Library services and their knowledge of emerging information resources, the Library Director and her staff have developed recommendations for next steps in information literacy and reference service delivery. These next steps include:

- Begin to design librarian skills into the web-based information literacy initiative
- Use reference questions as case studies for understanding information literacy
- Use faculty assignments as case studies for reference and information literacy
- Create a web-based delivery capability for the Library's currently-offered reference and information literacy services
- Develop online delivery of new, integrated reference and information literacy services that incorporate self-directed student information literacy learning and addressing of reference questions
- Create and maintain an information literacy and reference blog for interactive communications
- Design and deliver online support for academic programming, including Blackboard, instructional design, and podcasting services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this self-study, Trinity will consider the following actions with regard to academic programs:

- Trinity will review undergraduate major programs in light of enrollment and cohort institution trends. This review will include consideration of consolidating lightly-enrolled liberal arts majors in the School of Professional Studies into a Liberal Studies program comparable to those offered for adult learners at cohort institutions.
- Trinity will incorporate the results of program reviews more fully and systematically into university-wide assessment activities. Individual programs' findings can feed into and enrich the development of institutional plans for improving student learning.
- Trinity will strengthen the timeliness, consistency, and rigor of the program assessment process. Several changes could be considered, including:
 - Vest responsibility for overseeing programs' compliance with assessment cycle timelines in the Office of Academic Affairs. This change would relieve UCAP of the task of enforcing deadlines, and allow it to focus on the analytical and conceptual work of evaluating programs' assessment reports.
 - Regularly provide programs with aggregate data on enrollments, teaching loads, majors, and other key indicators. This data, which could be supplied by the Office of Academic Affairs, would reduce the data collection burden on programs; help programs frame their assessment activities in light of full and accurate data; and allow programs to concentrate their efforts on the assessment of student learning outcomes.

- Tighten the assessment cycle timeline from five to three years, with the first year spent on data collection and analysis and the second two years spent on implementation of changes arising from assessment findings.
- Support the development of faculty expertise in assessment through promoting faculty participation in assessment-related conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- Focus program reviews on goals and outcomes that are integrally connected to Trinity's mission and institutional assessment plan. For example,
 - Use program reviews to ensure that programs align course-level objectives with program and institutional goals for student learning.
 - Use program reviews to assess how curricular offerings and policies can be improved to best meet the needs of adult learners.
 - Use program reviews to guide the development of predictable, regular, structured, and appropriate course rotations.