

**Institutional Change and Transformation:
Remarks for Academic Leadership in the 21st Century**

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20 years ago, when I began as Trinity's president, higher education was still a relatively secure industry in which the notion of institutional transformation was a topic largely reserved for weak institutions on the verge of closing. Today, with the full impact of the recession still unknown, even Harvard is worried about the need to make some profound changes in its business model. Moreover, our industry is beset with a plethora of massive drivers of change --- not only the economy, but rapidly changing demographics; industry demands for new kinds of workforce preparation (and the very idea of accepting 'workforce development' as what we might be doing is a game changer on some campuses); catastrophic events in industries from banking to intelligence have been change drivers for educating executives and managers throughout corporate America; and of course, our old friends in the regulatory sector keep coming up with new and more elaborate oversight devices, impacting accreditation and financial aid management and campus security and financial reporting.

[The last page of this presentation is a model I created two years ago for presentations I gave at the Association of Governing Boards, and then at a client conference for our auditors Brown Edwards. This one-pager captures many of the issues present in the change dynamic for higher education today --- I won't discuss them here, but will use the paper as a marker for the range of issues that will drive institutional transformation across all sectors.]

Higher education often has a hard time with change and transformation. Far from being boldly creative and forward-thinking --- which is what visitors to this planet think a college or university should be --- most institutions of higher education are deeply conservative places when it comes to their own stuff --- whether curricula and programs, or faculty prerogatives and the order of march at commencement, or student traditions and the name of the football team. The slightest change --- elimination of a major program that no one has declared for years, or the addition of more diverse voices in general education, or making the words to the *alma mater* gender neutral --- is likely to evoke a firestorm of criticism, mad blogging, threats from alums to withhold money, rumbles from the faculty lounge about votes of no confidence.

Change, I have learned, is the most reviled word in our language, the most feared act of any that a good leader must accomplish. Change awakens the inter-galactic Flat Earth Society --- cells exist on every single campus in America. These are the colleagues who gather on the shore wailing like a Greek Chorus of doom as you launch your small vessel into the large sea of change ---- "You will fall off the edge!" they cry, chaining themselves to the dock, "You will lead us into disaster!" But you are the leader, and you must set sail. Don't worry about the naysayers. Leave them on the beach. Send them postcards from the edge. And when you bring riches back from the new territories you have conquered, they will be eager to tell tales of the times when they were on the beach helping to launch your journey.

When I became Trinity's president at age 36 after a career in public interest law and some fund raising for Georgetown law school, but no real executive experience, a friend of mine cheered me on with this pithy observation, "It's good they picked you," she said, "since you don't know enough to know what to be afraid of." Indeed. Fearlessness is an essential quality for leading institutional change and transformation, one of four essential characteristics of what it takes to lead this process, including:

1. Passionate Vision for a Remarkable Future
2. Audacious Innovative Planning
3. Deep and Persistent Execution
4. Fearless Leadership

Leadership is, of course, the *sine qua non* for any successful change dynamic, and the theme of leadership will flow through my discussion of vision, plan and execution, and then I will conclude with several more reflections on leadership.

1. A Passionate Vision for a Remarkable Future

Let's start with "the vision thing." A passionate vision for a future that might never have been imagined before, a remarkable future is essential to achieve true transformation --- not just change on the margins, but real transformation. Such vision also requires fearless leadership.

Just yesterday, I was at a meeting of the board of the National Defense Intelligence College, the accredited academic institution that belongs to the Defense Intelligence Agency. We were talking about the new strategic plan for the school, aligned with Middle States accreditation standards, but I grew impatient with what I felt was a somewhat bureaucratically-correct-but-soulless discussion, and I said to the president and other directors: with all of the problems the intelligence community has faced in recent years, let's not tinker at the margins of the one place that should own the intellectual solutions --- what is the vision for this college that is *transformative* not only for the school but for the community? How will this institution use the power of education, research and scholarship to make a dramatic impact for necessary and sustained change in the work of intelligence? I could give the same speech to an elite business school preparing bankers and financiers. My colleagues, including a number of retired generals and admirals, grew animated and excited about the possibilities, even while reminding me of the often-perilous consequences of challenging the status quo within the intersecting communities of military and intelligence. But we left that meeting with a real passion for substantial change --- in the most unlikely of academic places, we find an object lesson about institutional transformation arising from an industry crisis.

The late, great Bart Giamatti, president of Yale University and later Commissioner of Baseball once wrote about the difference between mere management and great leadership:

Management is the capacity to handle multiple problems, neutralize various constituencies, motivate personnel... Leadership, on the other hand, is an essentially moral act, not --- as in most management --- an essentially protective act. It is the assertion of a vision, not simply the exercise of a style: the moral courage to assert a vision of the institution in the future and the intellectual energy to persuade the community or the culture of the wisdom and validity of the vision. It is to make the vision practicable, and compelling. (A. Bartlett Giamatti, A Free and Ordered Space, p. 36)

The leader must assert the vision, and convince the people to come along for the ride.

At Trinity, early in my presidency, we developed a vision for the place that would move it from being a small Catholic liberal arts college serving a handful of students to an increasingly robust university with programs serving a broad range of students --- men as well as women in many programs --- with an emphasis on serving students who once were excluded from educational opportunities. We refocused our vision away from traditional Catholic enclaves on the east coast to the women of the Washington region who really could profit from this empowering education. Turning the face of the institution outward, we realized that our Catholicism was not about a closed loop of serving only Catholic students, but rather, how we would take the inspiration of our faith, our sense of social justice, into the world that needed the liberating force of our educational endeavor. This realization and bold new vision of serving our community set the stage for true institutional transformation.

2. Audacious Innovative Planning

If there is one phrase in all of higher education that can put a room full of smart people to sleep in nanoseconds, it is “strategic planning.” There! You have all fallen asleep! I can see your eyelids closing!

You will sail your boat right off the edge of this flat earth if you don’t have a plan! The plan shows you where the channels are to the parts of the planet you can’t see. Stay awake!

The problem with planning, in addition to being eye-glazing when done incorrectly, is that it can also be hijacked by process groupies who have no incentive to produce results other than having been “at the table” and in the process. Participation, at the expense of productivity, can sabotage the best planning process. The leader must be a strong captain, understanding that everyone needs to have a say, but knowing when to weigh anchor and sail on. The leader also needs a very strong board of trustees --- thankfully, I’ve been blessed with one throughout my tenure --- who will insist on results in a real timetable.

I learned some of this through trial and error --- mostly error in the early days. In the first week of my presidency, so full of my naïve idea that everyone wanted to be on the boat sailing toward that bright horizon, I appointed a committee of some of the most senior faculty to create a strategic plan for Trinity. For the balance of the year, I eagerly awaited the results of their work. Every so often, the dean would say to me, “Pat, they keep asking, ‘what does she want?’” I would respond, “It’s not what I want, it’s what the faculty wants.” Finally, at the end of the first year, the report came in: in a nutshell, it said, “What does she want?”

I learned my first rule of vision and planning: group process, left to its own devices, will row that boat around in circles without even leaving port. You cannot so exalt process that you never get to results. A good captain keeps a firm hand on that tiller.

I also learned that people crave leadership, and while they want to be involved in the process, they really do want the president to set the tone and direction. Not that they will admit this when the president does just that.

In the summer between my first and second year, therefore, I drafted the vision statement and outline for the strategic plan. I presented this to the faculty for discussion when they returned that August.

And, as might be expected, most of the second year was devoted to this battle cry: “The president is dictating the plan to us!”

Note to leaders: you can’t win this argument, so stop trying to do so. Instead, focus on your job, which is to lead the institution through transformative change. I learned that it’s far better to accept criticism for articulating the vision and direction than to waste time allowing the process to drift in circles.

From articulating the vision, we set about the real work of strategic planning. Our first major plan established the principle that Trinity would accept the reality of diversity --- diversity in our student body, in our range of academic programs, and in our organizational model. From an old single-college model, we evolved two academic units in 1991 --- the College of Arts & Sciences, and the School of Professional Studies --- and laid the foundation for the university that would emerge ten years later. We said the words “professional studies” out loud, the first time that this proud liberal arts college acknowledged that business and education had a place in the curriculum --- indeed, those two disciplines were floating our boat economically.

We embraced the workforce needs of our community in the Washington region, and agreed that we needed to explore new disciplines. Middle States affirmed our plan in 1996, and our next plan in the Year 2000 created our university with three academic schools, and now four --- the College of Arts & Sciences remained our historic undergraduate women’s college; the School of Professional Studies offers everything from the associate degree through bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and includes a location east of the river in Anacostia; the School of Education provides graduate education and certification for teachers, principals and counselors; and our new School of Nursing and Health Professions is responding to some of the greatest workforce needs in this region. Along the way, as we focused on the educational needs of our community, always placing women’s education at the center of our focus, we began to grow again --- our women’s college that had only 280 students when I started now has more than 800; our entire university today has more than 2,000 students, and more will come. About 90% of our students are African American, Latina and international, reflecting Trinity’s wide embrace of our region.

In the course of the two decades I’ve been at Trinity, we’ve had three strategic plans, each built upon the other, and now we’re starting work on the fourth version. Each plan has been the essential driver of our budgeting, program development, fund raising and accreditation. The

plans have given us the basis for all assessments. [Page 10 of this document includes Trinity's planning design and strategic organizational paradigm.]

Here are a few other "tried and true" tips about strategic planning:

- a) don't get bogged down in vocabulary; you and colleagues will waste valuable hours debating the nuances of strategic, tactical, operational, annual, cyclical, vernal, diurnal planning. Nobody will care if what you accomplished was a tactic or a goal. Draw a map. Get going.
- b) "own" your own plan --- you can use consultants and specialists, certainly, but for the plan to be a great one that you can really live with each day, you must do a lot of the hard work of planning yourself; don't outsource things that you need to own.
- c) keep the board fully engaged --- you will need the board to set the deadlines, make ultimate decisions, keep it real financially.
- d) educate the participants --- most faculty and staff do not have any expertise in planning, so rather than putting them in small groups in airless rooms with lots of butcher block paper and magic markers --- does any good come of that other than a lot of scribbles to transcribe? --- create a learning process for the community that engages their time, talent and interest prudently and productively; use technological tools when possible;
- e) benchmark continuously --- how does your institution stack up against peer institutions? Do you know who your peers are?

Here's another piece of our story at Trinity. Overcoming mythology was a real challenge in our early planning process. A persistent piece of Trinity's sense of itself was that we were the "Catholic Wellesley" --- we aspired to be seen as the intellectual and cultural peer of the best women's colleges. We often referred to Trinity as "the eighth sister." And it is true that, at our founding, the ivy sisters were very helpful to Trinity, including Bryn Mawr, Vassar and Wellesley, and intellectually, we were among the best. But financially, we were no match, and over time, our financial mis-match widened the gap between our aspirational models and our reality.

By 1989, the "Catholic Wellesley" ideal was impossible at so many levels. In order to create a more realistic and achievable future for Trinity, we had to study institutions that were already on the way to transformation. Instead of wishfully thinking that we could amass Wellesley's wealth, I created a cohort of similarly-sized institutions with similar histories and missions: historic Catholic women's colleges in urban centers, places like the College of New Rochelle, Chestnut Hill, Immaculata, College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Ursuline in Cleveland and Mt. St. Mary's in Los Angeles. These were our real peer institutions, and they were doing smart, creative things to refocus mission on new populations.

What I discovered, when diving deeply into the benchmark data from this comparison group, was that institutions like Trinity had surpassed us in bringing new programs to market that could attract important new populations of students. For a period of time during Trinity's serious

years of planning and transformation, I made it my business to study these other institutions carefully. I participated in the work of accreditation as well because I could learn so much by visiting other institutions. I became a student of how other smaller private colleges had learned to change in order to adapt to the new realities of the marketplace.

[A word about data: IPEDS permits all kinds of data pulls and analysis for whatever institutions you want to examine, and it's all on the web for free. IPEDS already provides a peer comparison report each year, but you can also create your own. I urge you to investigate the ready availability of this data for whatever planning processes you choose.]

As I studied the benchmark institutions and soaked up as much as I possibly could learn, something else was happening to Trinity that was profoundly important and essential to incorporate into our planning framework: we were undergoing a paradigm shift in our student population.

Trinity's demographic paradigm shift --- from a relatively small, mostly white Catholic female population enrolled in undergraduate programs to a campus of several thousand undergraduate and graduate students, mostly African American and Hispanic students from DC and the Washington region, was not something we actually planned, but it was, somewhat ironically, a result of aligning our vision for the future with our historic purpose in a mission to serve women who were otherwise excluded from higher education.

The changing face of our campus opened new ideas for strategic planning as well as academic planning. We began to understand even more clearly that Trinity's future would be inextricably linked to our city and community, and that this could be life-giving for both. Community leaders in Washington began to notice that more and more of the women of Washington were attending Trinity, and this began to open the opportunities for new partnerships.

As I realized the opportunities that could emerge through the articulation of a more distinctive focus on the educational needs of the Washington region, I became even more involved with our local business community, particularly through working with the Greater Washington Board of Trade, our regional chamber of commerce. The Girl Scouts reached out to Trinity and formed a partnership that is one of our most vital relationships today.

I was invited to serve on numerous boards --- that's an occupational hazard for presidents --- but through joining boards as diverse as the Washington Hospital Center, National Defense Intelligence College, and Goodwill of Greater Washington, I developed even more insight into workforce needs and the ways in which Trinity could develop programs that would meet the real needs of our community. I brought back to campus ideas about intelligence studies, nursing and health professions, technology training and workforce development. This kind of program development, a specific component of our strategic plan, was a far cry from the historic undergraduate liberal arts college --- and coming to understand how a broad range of new programs ("products") could attract enrollment became a central theme in our planning process.

As the leader, attending to your own continuing education is imperative. I learned so much --- and continue to learn --- from participating on boards and engaging with outside organizations.

3. Deep and Persistent Execution

There's a book by a management guru Larry Bossidy called *Execution*. I bought copies and gave it to my entire senior staff. The book's essential premise is that great management must attend to the details. Bossidy writes in the opening paragraph, "Many people regard execution as detail work that's beneath the dignity of a business leader. That's wrong. To the contrary, it's a leader's most important job." Agreed! I confess that I am sometimes accused of being a micromanager -- and I always disagree with the negative inference in that bad label. I just call it 'management' --- and if I'm into the details, that means (a) I'm trying to understand something, (b) something has gone wrong, or (c) I need to be darn sure we get the result we paid for. I make no apologies about that. I'd rather be called a name than have Trinity fail at the initiatives we had to take in order to do this transformation. If the results are positive, everyone will take credit, and if the results are a failure, the bad names will be much worse.

Executing Trinity's ambitious plans was a large undertaking --- especially since, remember, we didn't have much money.

Our #1 goal was to increase enrollment. To do that, we had to develop new programs, enlarge staff, acquire technology, build some buildings, reorganize into a university. All of that cost money. How did we manage to execute our plan with such scarce resources?

First --- and foremost, still --- we had to believe that this enterprise was well worth it, and we had to do our basic work in teaching and learning even better. Most students choose us through word of mouth, not fancy advertising campaigns. We had to convey a positive, appealing message --- the planning process along with a very successful Middle States report in 1996 and again in 2006 helped the Trinity community collectively begin to tell a much more positive story. Believing in ourselves also meant that we could raise more money than we ever thought possible, more than Trinity had ever tried to raise in the past. Passion and self-confidence count for a lot when you're trying to convince people to part with millions of dollars for the best cause ever.

Along the way, we received help from some very important sources. Employers liked the newly pragmatic Trinity and encouraged their employees to enroll. We formed partnerships with the new raft of collegiate gateway programs that were coming into DC in the late 1990s, and soon those college access providers were channeling students to us. We joined forces with the Girl Scouts, one of our most enduring partnerships, and we created scholarships for Girl Scouts to choose Trinity. We worked with our area school systems, with the Catholic schools, with AmericaOnline (back-in-the-day!) and with many other organizations for whom Trinity was an ideal partner. Partnership leveraged both enrollment and fund raising. Local corporations and foundations who had never supported Trinity in the past opened their doors and contributed resources to us. All of these might seem like simple steps, but collectively they contributed mightily to a sense of progress.

We also knew that we had to address our venerable old campus with its many old buildings --- that was strategic goal #10. But I believed we had to start with a spectacular new idea, not just an old renovation. Trinity never had a real sports program, yet we claimed we were a first rate women's college. I knew that we had to get serious about women's sports. But the board was

very reluctant, given all of our needs. Fortunately, I was able to persuade an alumna and her husband --- Class of 1941, no less --- that building a sports center was an essential part of Trinity's renaissance. With a \$1 million challenge gift to start, we launched our \$12 million Centennial Campaign to build the Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports, opening in 2003. We never looked back. It was the most successful capital campaign in our history. Today we get 30,000 people a year at the Trinity Center. We built it as a community center and auxiliary enterprise. The community was overjoyed --- unlike most universities in DC, our building plans received zoning approval within one hour of our presentation. The Women's Sports Foundation joined in as a program partner. The Trinity Center is a very successful part of our business, and it channels enrollment and program opportunities back into the university. It set the gold standard for campus development --- this week, we have begun a process that will eventually select architects to help us conceptualize the next great project, the new Trinity Academic Center, a much larger project that is now possible to conceive of because the Trinity Sports Center became such a success for us institutionally. It was a game changer, a transformative project arising from our strategic plan.

The new academic center is now essential because the success of our planning and execution has reaped many benefits, including an enrollment that has pushed our current buildings beyond their limits, and popular new programs --- Nursing, soon Allied Health professions, Criminal Justice, Communications and others have created new demands for new kinds of spaces for teaching and learning. The ultimate result of successful planning is the need for more planning!

4. Fearless Leadership

Let me close by talking a little bit about leadership, and specifically, the development of an effective "leadership persona" for a college president.

If you are going to manage change and transformation, you have to have a very healthy sense of yourself. That doesn't mean an impossibly arrogant ego or a messiah complex, but it does mean enough self-confidence to be able to ignore the critics, who grow in number in direct proportion to how dramatic the changes are that you are sparking.

I have a saying: if you don't hear any noise, you're not doing your job. I've heard a lot of noise over the years, and some of it has been pretty interesting. One day that noise came from a few alumnae marching out front of Main Hall carrying signs that said, "Fire McGuire." My only regret is that I didn't snag one of those signs for posterity. Yes, there was opposition to all of these changes at Trinity, and as a result some people may never friend me on Facebook. Darn.

Seriously, you have to develop a very disciplined persona when it comes to moving past criticism and opposition to action. You cannot force anyone to get on that boat you are launching from the shore; leave the laggards and don't look back. You may pick up a letter or newspaper and read a paragraph that has your name in it but you don't recognize the person who is the focus of the rant. I've been compared to Hitler and Satan on certain blogs. It's good to be noticed.

A great leader takes nothing for herself. I've developed that very firm philosophy, and it's helped me through some very rough patches, believe me. In this day and age, I am still stunned to read of huge presidential salaries and perks. I know that there are consultants who tell boards that "you can't get anybody good" for less than, say, a half million dollars. I think I'm pretty good. I'm less than half that. I don't have a president's house, my orange parking cone is perk enough for me. Not because I'm a martyr at all, and not because I'm a weak negotiator. I believe that we do our institutions and ourselves --- and our authority --- a huge disservice when we accept out-sized compensation packages, or when we live like minor potentates. A president is another co-worker on campus; yes, we have greater authority and responsibility, but we should beware of abusing the position. A little humility can be great political leverage in tough times.

Finally, remember that the greatest success stories are those of great risk and high adventure. You cannot merely manage your way through transformation --- only real leadership will make it possible for your institution to succeed on that long and perilous journey. Sometimes you will be far out front; sometimes you will be at the back of the pack shepherding the lost souls who are not sure they like this new road. You will always be visible, and you will not ask the members of the community to take even one step that you are not willing to take yourself.

I have a sign in my office: When reform become impossible, revolution becomes imperative.

True transformation requires a full embrace of the revolutionary imperative of great leadership. We educators have within our grasp the solutions to poverty through economic empowerment; the weapons to combat the ignorance that fosters terrorism and violence; the clear and strong voices to confront oppression and demand justice; the personal and intellectual freedom that is the basis for any hope to achieve a lasting peace. The great John Gardner once wrote that "the first, and last, task of a leader is to keep hope alive." (*No Easy Victories*)

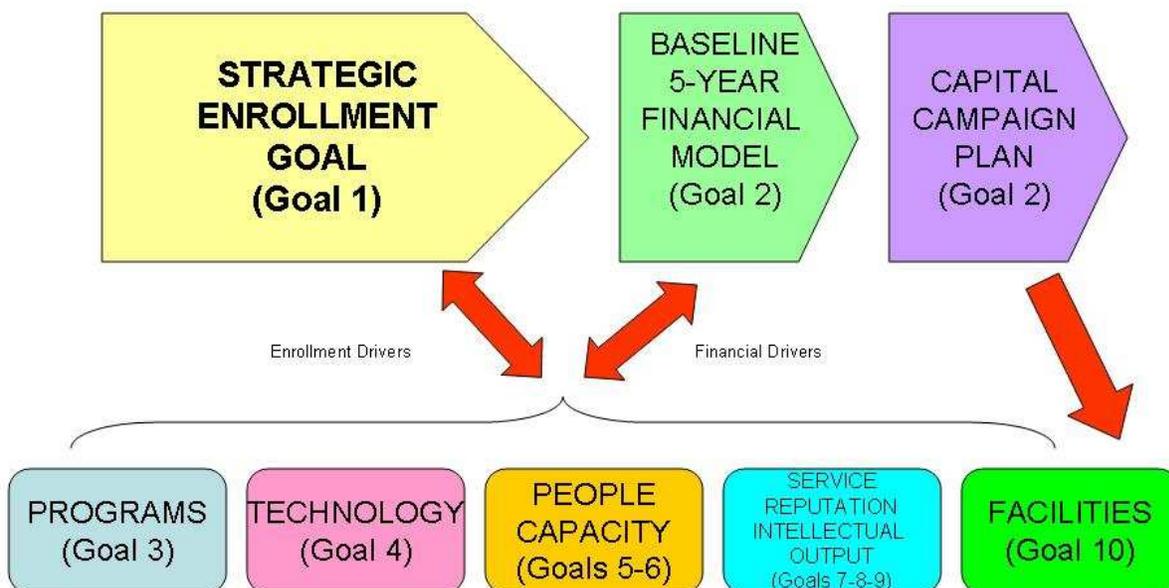
We leaders must always be people of hope.

Conservatism, complacency, contentment with the academy's past and present diminishes our stewardship of higher education's power to create lasting social change, the ultimate hope for future generations.

The privilege of leadership comes with the expectation of courage for the sake of all who will benefit from the brief moment of your impact.

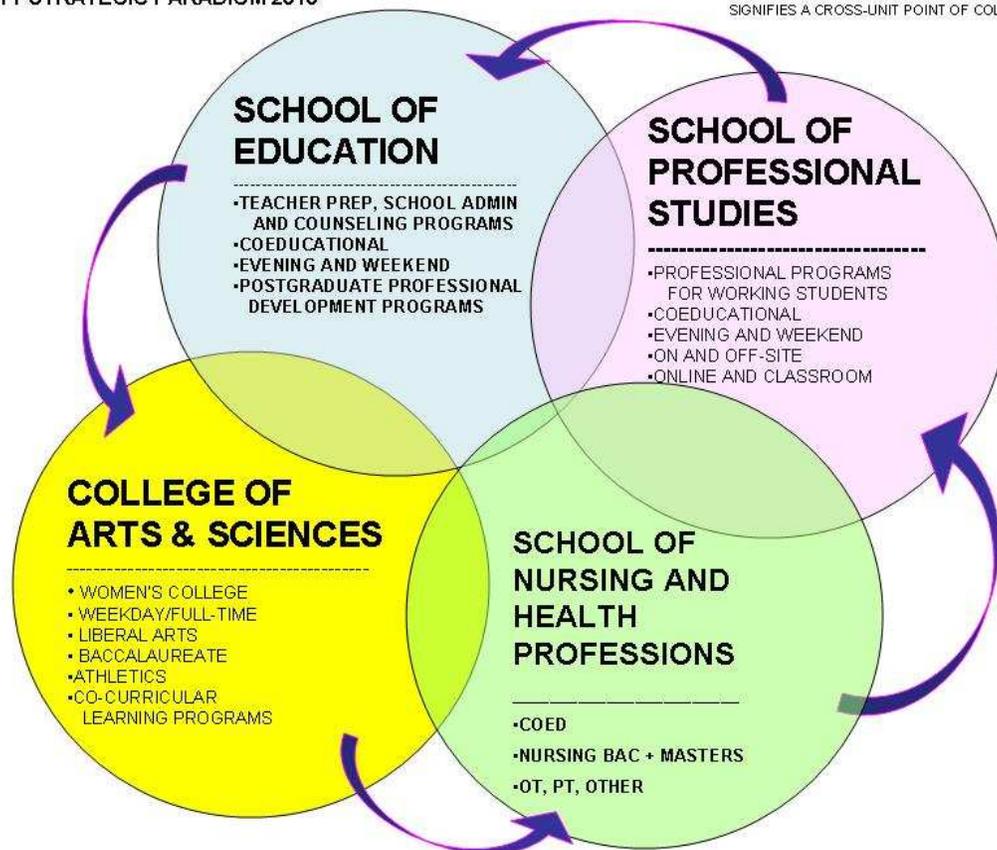
Do not settle for mere change when you must lead the revolution.

STRATEGIC PLANNING DESIGN



TRINITY STRATEGIC PARADIGM 2010

EACH POINT OF INTERSECTION ON THE VENN DIAGRAM SIGNIFIES A CROSS-UNIT POINT OF COLLABORATION



With so many self-reflexive issues, how does American Higher Education look beyond its own concerns to understand and respond to global needs and expectations?

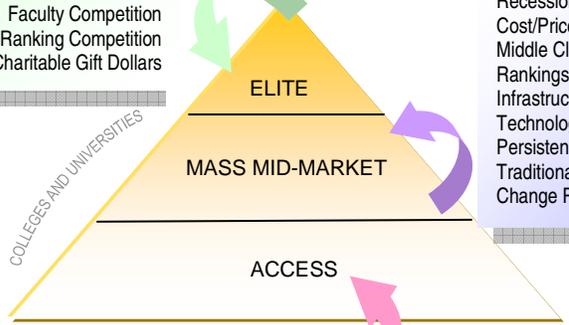


Key Global Issues for Higher Education:
 Economy, Recession, Recovery, Rebuilding Workforce, especially STEM Workforce
 Intellectual Competitiveness
 R&D Productivity/Innovation
 Economic Development
 Environmental Sustainability
 Diplomacy, Intelligence, Security, Defense
 Language and Cultural Competencies
 American Students Abroad
 International Students in America
 Sites Abroad for US Universities

Elite Institution Concerns:
 Recession, Economy, Endowments
 Threats to tax exemption
 Regulation
 Research Productivity
 Tuition Price
 Access
 Faculty Competition
 Ranking Competition
 Absorption of Charitable Gift Dollars

Mid-Market Concerns:
 Recession
 Cost/Price
 Middle Class
 Rankings and Competition
 Infrastructure
 Technology
 Persistence/Completion
 Traditionalism
 Change Resistance

Higher Ed Industry Concerns:
 Economy
 Regulation
 Risk Management
 Security
 Environmental Issues
 Loss of Autonomy
 Political Interference
 Shrinking Trad. Market
 Changing Student Body
 Demographics
 Cost of Remediation
 K-12 Chaos
 Public Perception
 Change Management



Access Institution Concerns:
 Funding/Affordability
 Remediation
 Social Services
 Persistence
 Completion
 Race/Social Class
 Infrastructure
 Credibility
 Competitiveness
 New Models
 Technology
 Non-Traditional

WHAT WE'RE SPENDING TIME ON:

1. Retrenching for economic downturn
2. Struggling with Governance
3. Concerned about Risk Management
4. Dealing with Conflicts of Interest
5. Explaining Endowment Management
6. Lobbying to reduce regulation
7. Trying to manage Athletics
8. Replacing and Upgrading Infrastructure
9. Obsessing about rankings
10. Responding to Accreditation and compliance imperatives

WHAT OTHERS WANT US TO BE FOCUSED ON:

1. Proof of Great Learning Outcomes
2. Accessible and Affordable
3. Investments for Public Good
4. Solutions for K-12 Crisis
5. Workforce, esp. STEM workforce
6. Global Perspective of Students + Faculty
7. Environmental Sustainability
8. Effective Results of R&D Investments
9. Spirit of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
10. High Ethical Standards

