

**Welcome to New Students in the College of Arts and Sciences
New Student Convocation
August 27, 2013**

“Daughters of the Dream”

President Patricia McGuire

Good morning! I am so pleased to welcome all of our new students to Trinity!

We gather today at Trinity on the eve of one of the most historic dates in American history. Tomorrow, August 28, is the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, the event at which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke so eloquently about his dream for our nation.

Today, as you embark on your new lives as college women, you are here as daughters of the dream. Your presence at Trinity today is the latest evidence of the powerful forces for social change and human advancement that Dr. King set in motion so long ago. None of us in this room today can claim to be untouched by his powerful vision. I was only ten years old when he gave his speech but the course of my life is surely radically different than it might have been had Dr. King not had the courage to dare America to change. Trinity was a different place in 1963, as she has been in each age, a standard and symbol of the culture she serves as an academic institution. Trinity's life also changed profoundly as a result of the tsunami of social change rippling forth from Dr. King's powerful message.

Now, you may shrug your shoulders and say, what's it to me? I was not even born until 25 or 30 years later. How can one speech given half a century ago have any real meaning for me today?

You are the daughters of the dream, the heirs to Dr. King's legacy. Your lives --- while absolutely beset with challenges and still suffering discrimination's evil effects in so many ways --- your lives are that much better, your horizons so much wider, your hopes and dreams that much richer and more likely to be fulfilled because of Dr. King's legacy to this nation.

The dream, of course, is far from fully realized. Racism and oppression abound in too many places. You are the latest generation called to be passionate advocates to continue his quest for justice, equality and freedom for all people on this earth.

You have the power to continue this change, to make your mark for good on the world even as Dr. King did so long ago.

Let me tell you a little bit about you, the daughters of the dream, the latest generation of proud Trinity Women to inhabit this campus.

Today we welcome more than 350 new students to the College of Arts and Sciences, including more than 270 new first year students and more than 90 new transfer students. Overall we are welcoming more than 600 new students in all Trinity programs.

Among our new students in CAS, 54% are residents of D.C., 36% are from Maryland, and others come from Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, Colorado, Texas, Illinois, Georgia and Florida.

This class also has a remarkable global range of immediate family backgrounds. We have students in this class from:

Ethiopia	Ivory Coast	El Salvador	Haiti	Sierra Leone	Nicaragua	Liberia	Colombia
Ghana	Cameroon	Pakistan	France	Guyana	Jamaica	Trinidad and Tobago	Argentina
Nigeria	Zimbabwe	Honduras	Congo	Senegal	Guatemala		Bolivia
							Panama

With such a remarkable diaspora of nationalities and cultures, it's no surprise that this is a multi-lingual class, speaking many languages including:

Amharic	Creole	Igbo	Tagalog
Arabic	French	Portugese	Spanish
Afaan			
Oromo	English	Shona	Hindi

You are predominantly Christian in your religious orientation, including Catholics, Baptists and other major denominations. You also are Muslim, Hindu and other religions of the world.

If I asked Jazmine to stand up, many of you would respond since that's the most popular name in this class.

73% of you indicate that you are African American, 17% are Hispanic, and many are multi-racial.

The top high schools in this class include:

Friendship Collegiate	12
Columbia Heights (Bell)	12
Cesar Chavez	8
Woodrow Wilson	11
Archbishop Carroll	11
HD Woodson	12

Wheaton	11
KIPP DC	9
Cristo Rey	9
Banneker	5

You chose Trinity for our strong academic reputation. The majority of you also chose Trinity because you want to pursue Nursing as your major program. Other strong major intentions in this class include Psychology, Biology, Criminal Justice, Business and Education.

We are pleased to welcome a number of new students from our partners. Will all graduates of KIPP schools please stand?

Will all graduates of Cristo Rey schools please stand?

We are very pleased to welcome our first class of Conway Scholars. These are very talented young women chosen through a rigorous competitive process to receive the prestigious Conway Scholarships for Nursing. Will the Conway Scholars please stand?

We have a number of D.C. Achievers Scholars in this class, please stand.

We also have Girl Scout Scholars --- stand and let us recognize you!

Why are you coming to Trinity? What do you hope to get out of this education? Every year at this opening convocation, I extract some ideas and quotes from the essays you wrote as part of the application process. Now, we haven't had time to talk much together so I have not asked your specific permission to quote you. Accordingly, where I use a quote, I do so anonymously and also I obscure identifying information like countries or school names to ensure your privacy.

You come to Trinity with a broad range of experiences. You have been Girl Scouts and Gold Award winners. Some of you have traveled from abroad. Some of you traveled as immigrant children. Some of you have served in the military. A few of you know the heartbreak of parents and friends who have been incarcerated. Several of you have suffered the almost unendurable tragedy of having parents and siblings murdered. You have conquered illness; you have proven people wrong who told you that you would be "just another statistic."

You have written that you believe your generation is not as responsible as your parents' generation, but you do see technology as a huge difference --- one of you wrote about the fact that your parents had to learn to "write things down" which was actually better, rather than just texting. But another warns that parents don't quite know how to do stuff, like uploading files, so that might give you an edge at work.

You are planning to throw some awesome big dinners. Among the guests you say you would like to invite to dinner in your home, we find Michelle Obama, Beyonce, Oprah, Mother Theresa, Niki Minaj ---- can you imagine Mother T. and Nikki sitting next to each other? --- Mahatma Ghandi, Malala Yousafzai, Dr. Ben Carson, Marilyn Monroe, Sojourner Truth and Bill Gates. Wow. I hope you invite me, too!

You are coming to Trinity today with big ambitions. You want to be heart surgeons, lawyers, teachers, psychologists, business entrepreneurs, nurses and lawyers. The hard experience of immigration makes some of you particularly determined to become immigration lawyers and advocates.

Many of you are young mothers. The experience of motherhood has made you more mature, more serious about your studies. Consider these reflections from classmates:

Student Essay: *“[My child] is the biggest reason for me wanting to go back to school. ... I went back to school to give her a life that I only experienced with my eyes closed. Every decision that I make, is decided with her in mind. My friends often tell me that I've changed in some way. I tell them that maturity goes hand and hand with motherhood.”*

Student Essay: *“I am motivated by my daughter. She makes me want to go to school and to do better. I stay focused and continue to excel so that I am able to provide for her and give her everything that she needs. I feel the best way to help her is by finishing school and staying focused. ...Some days are harder than other, but I know, no matter how many people want or expect me to fail, I am going to graduate from college. This life experience has allowed me to transform the negative words of others into motivation.”*

Student Essay: *“I set my standards high to show my son no matter what obstacles you face, you have to push for a better day. As a teen parent, my child changed me from my insecure ways to realizing that I have to use my talent as a gift ...My son impacted my personal and social life in ways that can't be explained. My life criteria became more sophisticated to make me want more for myself, I matured at a young age and materialistic things weren't a factor of success anymore.”*

For many of you, your mothers are role models, sources of inspiration and great admiration:

Student Essay: *“If it weren't for my mother [whose education stopped in second grade], my life would be different; I would possibly be a girl without an education like her, maybe even a high school dropout. I have learned from my mother how to be a positive thinker in the way that she never gives up-she is always there trying to get things right. ...She tells me that the reason she is always pushing me is because she wants a better future for me than the one she had.”*

Student Essay: *“Getting married at eighteen years old and starting a family at twenty-one years old did not stop my mom from reaching her dreams. She was very determined to make something out of herself. ... My mom has always put the job of a mother and wife first before her career. Although she had a lot on her plate at the time, she kept pressing forward. And in 1991 she received her associates' degree in nursing ... She could have stopped there but she kept on moving forward. Two more kids and eight years later my mother got her bachelors' in nursing ... And in the year of 2001 she got her master's degree.... Without the determination of my mother I would not be half the woman that I am today.”*

Some of you have had to grow up quickly, to take on family responsibilities because of illness or other family circumstances:

Student Essay: *“My mother's operation really impacted me because it taught me that life isn't easy. Stepping up as a sister and taking on a mother figure role was stressful, challenging, and overwhelming. Fortunately my mother walked me through it all. Throughout this experience I learned how to adapt to new situations and how to multi task. I learned that I was capable of handling three small children and managing my own school life. ...This experience helped me grow as a person, I learned I had abilities I never thought I had. Becoming an adult at fifteen was hectic, however I balanced my stress and adapted to my daily life; it can be done.”*

You have watched your parents struggle

Student Essay: *“I was able to experience first hand the struggles of not only my parents but of others. I have so much respect for those who struggle. My parent's greatest achievement was to be able to improve their credit score and buy a townhouse. The struggle still continues as financial hardships are still endured, even resulting with me needing to chip in for rent. Yet this struggle has only made me stronger. My responsibility now is to continue onward.”*

You want this education to help make life better for your mothers and families:

Student Essay: *“No one has a mother like mine. She is constantly reminding me about how important it is for me to go to college and to make something out of my life. Every day she reminds me that she doesn't want me to live a life like hers.... She came to the US (from Central America) for a better life. ... Now that she has her two daughters she works a thousand times harder than she did before. She doesn't want me to work under the same conditions as her. Working for someone who does not appreciate the hard work she gives. She is not appreciated because of her lack of background knowledge and inability to speak English. She is the one person who will give up everything she is doing to help anyone else out. ... I'm so proud of my mom. I'm so proud of her because she's such a hard worker.... She has made me realize that I can and will have a better life than she did. And I can achieve the better life by receiving all the education I can get. I won't only make a better life for me but also for my mom and that's all I ever want. She deserves better than what she currently has.”*

Coming to the United States from another country posed hardships for many of you, but you have conquered your fears, your frustrations, the language barriers and uncertainty:

Student Essay: *“...my mother had to support four kids on her own. We survived on her house cleaning salary. We had no family in the United States to help us and to top it off, the language barrier only made it worse. I had to make sure I fed myself, clothed myself, and succeeded on my own since I knew my mom wouldn't have time to deal with a misbehaved child. Still now, I have to prove to my mother that all those sleepless nights she worked, handing out newspapers, caring for children who weren't her own and cleaning after people who paid her far too little was worth it. I can't help my mom financially, but every time I bring home my report card, I know that instead of complaining to her friends about how much she works, she will be bragging about how well I do. Although my mother cares more about me than my grades, I realized early that I*

had to set my standards high in everything I do whether it's getting that GPA of 4.0 that will be hung on the refrigerator, or whether it's building healthy relationships with both my peers as well as teachers, every single thing shapes me into that person I want to be in the future.”

Student Essay: “ ‘Thump Knock Thump Knock,’ was all I heard at 3 a.m. on a Tuesday morning. I woke up speechless falling on the floor because I was still half asleep. I laughed but then my heart started pounding as I heard strange voices coming from the kitchen door through the living room. It was ICE (immigration) or as I like to put it the people who made me change who I was in the past to who I am now and who I will be in the future....During this hard moment, it made me realize that it was unfair for ICE to take away my father and wonder whether, if he was going to be deported or if I was going to have the chance to have him there for support. ...The need to know whether or not he would be leaving my life forever drove me to become involved in the fair justice for people. It made me passionate about becoming a lawyer, defending people who are wrongfully put through situations of having their family members deported...”

You have learned how to inspire others:

Student Essay: [This student became an instructor at a dance studio involving younger girls...] “Instructing at the studio has made a tremendous transformation in my life because I never envisioned being a role model to so many young women. It is uplifting to come to work where little girls show love towards you because they genuinely care for you. Many of the girls dream of careers as dancers, actresses and singers and I am privileged enough to be a part of molding them into what they want to be. We tell our girls that they will be successful, respectful and should want the best they are worth it.”

You see injustice every day, and have particularly strong opinions on the Trayvon Martin case:

Student Essay: “African Americans have been living on this earth as long as any other race and we deserve the exact same treatment any other race receives. I don't think it's fair that some people individualize and judge others based on the color of their skin. One thing that absolutely kills me are the stereotypes about young African Americans. I hear people say we are illiterate, ghetto, violent and we don't have any manners. ... I just pray that African Americans can find the voice to speak up to change the reputation of our culture. Otherwise, I worry that we, as a people, will become completely shattered into what society says or thinks.”

Several of you are somewhat older than the students just out of high school, and your life experience has shaped your determination to succeed in college:

Student Essay: “My first attempt at college didn't go well as I had an infant son with only minimal help from the foster care system and no family support. ... Entering college for the second time has affected me in such a positive and rewarding way. I have gained better self-esteem as I am working towards a personal goal and achieving that goal. I finally have the courage and understanding through education that I control my own destiny.”

Your college ambitions are fueled by the perspectives you bring from other countries:

Student Essay: *“My sister and I moved to the United States on January 2011. Being born and raised in an underdeveloped country ... one did not have the option to achieve much beyond looking for basic necessities. I was raised in a country where easily curable diseases are the most deadly due to the lack of basic safety precaution and scarce availability of medical services. I dreamed for the future career in the medical profession where I can one day play my part in improving the health of people.”*

Grandmothers also have played a huge role in your lives:

Student Essay: *“When I was 2 months old, my sister and I were brought to my grandmother’s house by child protective services. Bringing us to my grandmother’s house changed her life and mine as well. She could have easily said, “I don’t want those kids,” but she didn’t. My grandmother had to do what was right and give my sister and I a life she didn’t have when she was growing up.My grandmother inspired me to go to college and make something out of my life. My grandmother was 58 years old when she graduated from college. Anything is possible if you just put your mind to it.”*

Student Essay: *“My grandmother has always taken good care of me but she demonstrated what it means to be responsible as a leader by taking on a mother role in my life for years. When [my mother had to be out of my life for a while, my grandmother] assumed the role without ever having to be asked. She supported me financially and emotionally by providing for me in my mother’s absence. Witnessing her take on this responsibility showed me what it means to be reliable to others as a leader. It taught me as a leader one must assume the responsibility to be counted on when needed. Another way my grandmother influenced me was by teaching me what it means to be accountable. She always told me to respect myself and others because it was the right thing to do and it will get me far in life. In addition, she also told me to go to school and strive to make good grades, do the best I can, and to never give up. As a result, it taught me to always hold myself accountable and succeed in life even if it was challenging or overwhelming.”*

Michele Obama is one of your great role models:

Student Essay: *“Women are heroes and can have amazing leadership skills and goals. They are determined and organized and can be able to respond with positive ideas and outlooks for a number of different situations. Michelle Obama is a woman who has influenced me in many ways. She is a woman who holds high leadership and has many duties of responsibilities, not just as the First Lady, but as a mother. She is successful in encouraging healthy lifestyles of all ages, but mainly children. She has encouraged me to make sure, as a single mother, my children live active, healthy lives; that they eat properly and proportion their diets appropriately, and to become and endure an education. She has taught me that eating together as a family is important; that being and acting as a family as a whole is even more important.”*

Student Essay: *“It is with all sincerity that I say, “Michele Obama makes me proud to be a woman of color.” This pride is something that no other individual has ever been able to inspire in me. Our First Lady inspires me by lifting me up, making me proud of who I am, and showing*

me through her words and actions all I can be and will be. The first step in achieving my goals is acquiring the education I need to become a well rounded and well educated woman. This is why you have to let me in to your fine learning establishment. I could be the wife of our 46th or 47th President of the United States, or better yet, I could be President!”

Family issues are very important to you:

Student Essay: *“Being raised by a single parent who was a high school dropout and teenage mother was and still is a personal and life changing experience for me in numerous ways, but what I gained from it most was the value of education. ... Education has always been one of the most important things in my life it is the key to success, without an education, one cannot amount to anything, but with an education, the sky is the limit. Growing up in school I was always on the Honor Roll and I always maintained As and Bs on my report cards, which made me ecstatic and made my mother feel proud and accomplished as a parent. ...Seeing everything that my mother went through helped me to learn from her mistakes and find an alternate and better way of doing things in my life, push hard and set high goals for myself so that I would not have to fall under the stereotype that says a teenage females in D.C. will more than likely either get pregnant, drop out of high school or graduate with children.... In a sense I just want to be able to do all the things for my mother that she wish she could have done, but did not do. I love my mother and I am truly grateful of everything that she has done for me and I would not change any part of this personal experience because then I would not be the strong, driven, and dedicated woman that I am today.”*

Another older student observes:

Student Essay: *“I have become more conscious that purpose and action are essential to humanity. In other words, I now understand what it means to be a participant rather than a spectator. I have failed many times. Not having a clear purpose I started things with little conviction and therefore failed to finish them. Now I have a clear academic purpose, I know what I have to offer and I am well aware of my weaknesses. I am on the path to become a clinical psychologist. I can offer diversity, focus, and passion. I come from a humble lower-middle class family who migrated here [from a South American nation] in 1991. Brought up by a combination of the little time my parents had when they were not working and the public school system, I am the product of two distinct cultures and parents who believe in the American dream. I continue to make efforts to expand my knowledge and experiences to stay a part of both cultures. I will be the first in my family to graduate from college.”*

Many of you will be the first in your family to attend college, and you are aware of this momentous step forward for your family:

Student Essay: *“I will be the first person in my family to go to college. My father went in the army after high school and my mother went straight to work. I want to make difference; I want to show my family and myself that I can do whatever I put my mind. I might not have the support from my parents but I have the support from the people at my school, such as teachers, counselors, and my relative that surround me. My dream is to become a social worker and I am going to achieve that goal no matter how much hard work it takes me to get there.”*

Student Essay: *[This student describes some bad behaviors in her early life, then a transformative moment]: “Even though I put my mother through a lot, she did not give up on me. Although I often felt lonely but I knew she still loved me. I want to repay my mom by succeeding in life and always putting my best foot forward. This is why I have decided to pursue a college degree.... Now I have goals, and want to major in psychology. I have grown to become a stronger person who is more honest, reliable, independent, and respectful. I know what I want to be and where I want to go in life. I want to help people achieve their highest potential in life. ... When I am accepted into college I want to join the student government, I want to make a difference in the student body and allow my voice to be heard. I want to make my mark and when this is all over I want to be able to tell the next generation how I’ve grown and triumphed and that hard work pays off so I can inspire them to work hard, no matter their situation.”*

You are charitable and idealistic. You offer hope for the future:

Student Essay: *“I would like to make note of my contributions to my community, they have been very important to me. I am a regular volunteer at the community park in my area. On a family outing one day, we saw a large amount of debris along the shoreline. That day, I decided I wanted to make a difference. I have spent countless hours cleaning the park. My goal is that if one person sees me being active and taking charge, maybe they will too. [Trinity] will enable me to pursue my goals to make this a better world to live in for generations to come.”*

Student Essay: *[This student was a victim of a terrible accident, and writes of the inspiration she received from a good Samaritan ...] “... as a result of this accident, I have become a more responsible and caring person...The women who stood beside me gave me a better insight on what it means to be compassionate and selfless towards humankind. I have chosen nursing as my career goal because I see the need to help others who are sometimes alone and afraid. I want to be a productive member of society, and show others that human kindness is such a beautiful thing to share with others.”*

Student Essay: *[This student wants to be a business entrepreneur:] “I will represent the school with pride, honor, and dignity. ... I will bring motivation, dedication, hard work and faith into the student body environment. I want to be an instrument for change and tool for success. I will be a positive role model for others and a great representation of the model student for the institution. I know I can make a difference in the community and I know I can effectively impact the college or university that I am fortunate enough to attend in a positive way. All I desire is the opportunity and the belief that I can make a difference. This is my dream, my hope and my destiny.”*

Student Essay: *“I came from an impoverished and dangerous neighborhood in [another country]. ...The experience of coming to the United States and having so much help from my family and teachers has transformed me from a girl who thought she had no future to a confident young woman who dreams of a career in public health in the field of nursing-the first person in my family to dream and accomplish the American Dream.”*

Just like Dr. King, you, too, have a dream --- you have many dreams. You seek better lives for yourselves, your children, your families. You know that education will help you to reach your goals.

You join a community of women who have shared these dreams across the generations. 116 years ago, in a time when this part of northeast D.C. was considered the countryside, a few very brave, very determined women set about the task of starting the nation's first Catholic college for women founded specifically as a college, not evolving from a lower school.

The Sisters of Notre Dame who founded Trinity had almost no money, and their plans generated considerable opposition from --- guess who? --- the right wing who believed that women should not get a college education. But those courageous sisters believed quite differently. They believed that women had every right to attain the highest levels of education possible, that God's plan for women included the opportunity to achieve intellectual greatness as a matter of social advancement as well as salvation.

Those great religious women persisted in the face of opposition, of poverty, of disappointment and doubt. Trinity today is their great triumph, and we are all the daughters of their dreams. They could not have imagined you, my new Trinity sisters today, but everything they did so long ago was to ensure that you could be here at Trinity today. They are with us now, smiling upon you and thrilled with their wisdom in making it possible for you to pursue your dreams here at Trinity. And they are offering the great prayer of Trinity for you each day:

May you have the strength of the Trinity to persist in pursuing your dreams every single day.

May you know the wisdom of the Trinity in making good choices throughout your college years.

May the light and the love of the Trinity make your journey easier through the difficult terrain of your advanced studies.

May you always find here at Trinity the great mother, the *alma mater* who will challenge you, make you feel uncomfortable on many days, never let you rest with less than your best, but who will, in the end, embrace you with love and surround you with friends who you can count on for life.

May the blessings of the Trinity be yours as we welcome you now, our new Trinity Women!