



Testimony for the Education Committee of the Council of the District of Columbia

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Trinity Washington University proudly serves more District of Columbia residents than any private university in the nation. One of this city's historic institutions of higher learning, Trinity was founded 115 years ago as Trinity College to meet the higher education needs of women who were excluded from the men's universities of that time. Inspired by the commitment of our founding congregation of Catholic religious women, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, to pursue action for social justice in all the communities we serve, Trinity has sustained its core values as a university that offers access to educational opportunity to people once excluded from higher education.

While Trinity maintains the historic women's college in our full-time daytime undergraduate program (also known as the College of Arts and Sciences, or CAS), Trinity offers fully coeducational programs at all degree levels in the School of Professional Studies (SPS), School of Nursing and Health Professions (NHP) and graduate School of Education (EDU). Virtually all Trinity students, regardless of age, have "non-traditional" characteristics such as working full-time while going to school, raising their own children even as very young mothers, being self-supporting and not dependent on parents to pay the tuition bills, switching from full-time to part-time status in different semesters in order to juggle family, work and financial obligations.

About 90% of Trinity's 2,600 students today are African American and Latina; 64% receive Pell Grants. Nearly 50%, more than 1,200, are residents of the District of Columbia, most from the eastern half of the city where poverty rates are high. Fully one-third of Trinity's D.C. students hail from the neighborhoods east of the river. Trinity is the only university offering a degree program east of the river, at THEARC, and many students who complete their associates' degrees at that location matriculate into baccalaureate and master's programs on our main campus. 85% of Trinity students at THEARC receive Pell Grants.

See more on [Trinity and our commitment to D.C.](#) in the appendix to this testimony.

All Trinity students have high financial need --- 64% of our total student population receive Pell Grants. Among D.C. students, about 60% of Trinity's full-time undergraduate D.C. residents have zero "expected family contribution" (EFC) in the federal financial aid analysis.

Last Monday, I testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Higher Education as part of their preliminary work on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The members of Congress were particularly eager to hear about the importance of federal financial aid for the low income students that Trinity serves, and I made a special point about the need for this support for D.C. residents. In preparation for that testimony I asked Trinity students to submit their own statements about the critical importance of financial aid in making their college dreams a reality. [Those comments](#) are available on Trinity's website at www.trinitydc.edu. Our D.C. residents would make very similar comments about the importance of the Mayor's Scholars grants, D.C. TAG and other sources of local support.

With an institutional budget of just \$35 million in Fiscal 2013, Trinity operates with a high degree of efficiency while also delivering highly effective academic programs and related services. Trinity's tuition of \$20,550 in 2013 is the lowest among the private colleges and universities in the Washington region, and Trinity returns on average 40% of that tuition price to full-time students in the form of institutional grants based on student need. Part-time tuition rates are also deeply discounted. Trinity's total volume of institutional aid is more than \$8.5 million, almost all of which is simply tuition forgiveness since Trinity's endowment is quite small, just about \$10 million.

D.C. residents receive nearly \$5 million in aid directly from Trinity in the form of grants and tuition discounts. In addition to Trinity's financial aid, D.C. residents at Trinity last year received nearly \$20 million total in financial aid from all sources, including federal student loans and Pell Grants, D.C. Tuition Assistance Grants and other state aid, and outside private scholarships like the D.C. CAP and D.C. Achievers Scholarships.

We are deeply grateful to OSSE's Postsecondary Division for working closely with Trinity and the other colleges and universities in the District to ensure the most effective financial aid support for our D.C. students and to help us find additional ways to keep our most impoverished students in school and making progress toward their degrees.

Despite all of the financial aid already available, the most acutely impoverished D.C. students need even more. For this reason our students are so grateful to Mayor Gray and OSSE for establishing the Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Fund.

This year alone, 68 of Trinity students with the greatest financial need received over \$450,000 in tuition support through the Mayor's Scholars Fund. These awards have allowed these students to accrue less student loan debt, and, in some cases, to avoid stopping out or dropping out due to their financial need.

The Mayor's Scholars Fund has helped our students to stay enrolled instead of stopping out for financial reasons, and to stay enrolled full-time which helps them to earn their degrees more quickly. Earning the degree greatly increases every student's long-term earning power, which

means that our D.C. students who complete degrees on time have greater capacity to provide economic security for their children and families while also participating in the city's burgeoning professional workforce.

Let me tell you a little bit about just one of our Mayor's Scholars Fund recipients who very much wanted to be here today to share her story with you. Zataunia Heard is a lifelong resident of Ward 8, and a student in our Nursing program. She is a single mother, and has worked tirelessly over the past few years to juggle her studies, her parenting responsibilities, and a part-time job at Metro Teen AIDS center, where she works as a peer educator. She embodies grit and persistence, and commitment to bettering herself and her family, and she makes me very proud.

This year, Zataunia received an award from the Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Fund. It arrived to her at the perfect time - she had maxed out on her Federal aid, and would have otherwise needed to take out private loans to cover the cost of her tuition. Instead, she has been able to complete this year of her college education without accruing more debt, and she feels even closer than ever to graduating and pursuing a career in nursing.

Given the tremendous impact the Mayor's Scholars Fund has had on our students and many others, I am very grateful that it has been renewed at current levels. However, I would like to say that there is a real need for this fund to be expanded. As it stands, only our very poorest students can receive Mayor's Scholars Funds, and we have many, many low-income students who struggle to make ends meet who could really benefit from a program like this. With that in mind, I challenge the Council to consider doubling or even tripling this Fund in future years – and guarantee you that you will see an outstanding return such an investment.

Thank you again for your continued partnership and support of District students in pursuing their college and career goals. I see every day what a great difference it makes for so many.