



Trinity Washington University

Testimony to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia In Support of Plans for the Trinity Academic Center

March 24, 2014

President Patricia McGuire
Trinity Washington University

Trinity Washington University is pleased to present the case for the new Trinity Academic Center to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia. The project we present tonight has the full support of our Advisory Neighborhood Commission and our community. Because this is an academic center for science and healthcare education serving large numbers of D.C. residents, this project also has special merit for the District of Columbia's goals to enlarge the workforce pipeline particularly in the STEM disciplines, healthcare, early childhood education and related social service sectors.

[Slide Two: Trinity: A Century-long Tradition of Growing Academic Assets for D.C.]

As the nation's oldest Catholic women's college, Trinity is one of D.C.'s most important academic assets. Now a small university still enrolling women in daytime programs but also coeducational in evening graduate and professional programs, Trinity has a long track record of educating leaders for our city and nation. From former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to local Superior Court Judges Pat Broderick and Jeanette Clark, Trinity graduates have taken this mission in service and social justice to every community they inhabit. Today's Trinity students aim to follow in their footsteps.

[Slide Three: Trinity Enrollment Fall 1900 to 2013]

For the first sixty years of the college's life, Trinity was a very traditional residential college for undergraduate women. As the enrollment chart on page three illustrates, Trinity started to diversify into graduate and professional education starting in the 1960's with graduate programs in Education, and later in the 1980's and beyond with Business and other professional studies, and in 2010 with Nursing and health professions.

[Slide Four: Trinity's D.C. residents]

Trinity's 2,500 students today are largely local: more than half are residents of the District of Columbia, most living on the eastern half of the city where poverty is high and economic opportunity scarce. Fully one-third of Trinity's D.C. residents live "east of the river" in Wards 7 and 8; Trinity is the only university offering a full degree program east of the river at THEARC. Trinity's student body today is more than 90% African American and Latina.

More than 75% are on Pell Grants, with the median family income at just about \$25,000. Trinity's mission in social justice is evident every day in the classrooms and corridors of our campus.

[Slide Five: Building Trinity's First Century]

Trinity's passion for social justice comes from the Sisters of Notre Dame. They also imbued at Trinity their habits of frugality and disdain for ostentation. While the early sisters built monumental buildings, they were sparsely furnished with few creature comforts.

Main Hall, the first and still central college building, started in 1898 and was completed in 1910. At 225,000 square feet, this massive structure once housed the entire college including residence halls and the convent, classrooms and administrative offices, the dining room, chapel, laboratories and library. The building remains magnificent, and we do routine upgrades, but full renovation remains a future project.

Notre Dame Chapel, the second building started in 1922 and opened in 1924, is a monument to the faith of the sisters and Trinity's mission values.

A swimming pool, built from about 1918 to 1920, was supposed to be the foundation for a gymnasium; but finances put those plans on hold.

Alumnae Hall, opened in 1927, was the first "modern" residence hall in that it allowed students to live outside of the watchful eyes of the nuns in the convent.

In the 1930's, with the Depression, no buildings arose but Trinity worked closely with the city on re-routing of Lincoln Road and the extension of Franklin Street through Trinity's property; Trinity donated nearly 85,000 square feet of land to the city for the roadwork.

Finally, in 1940, Trinity began construction of the Science Building on top of the swimming pool; the gymnasium had to wait.

That was the last new academic building until 1963 when accreditation pressures required construction of the library; that was the last academic building constructed on Trinity's campus.

In the postwar years, as enrollment grew with the early Baby Boomers, Trinity built two residence halls, Cuvilly and Kerby, and purchased land from Soldier's Home in anticipation of a vastly expanded campus. The campus master plan in 1966 anticipated new buildings on both sides of Michigan Avenue.

But Georgetown went coed in 1968, followed by many other former men's colleges, and Trinity's enrollment plunged. All of the ambitious plans of the 1960's were mothballed as the future appeared grim.

[Slide 6: Enrollment and Campus Development 1900-2014]

The next slide shows quite graphically the plain fact that Trinity's academic infrastructure is modest and old; the slide shows the long period in which no new buildings arose on Trinity's campus.

Since the day I became Trinity's president 25 years ago, on August 1, 1989, I knew that developing modern academic facilities, and especially new science laboratories, had to be a top priority to ensure Trinity's academic quality and competitiveness in the 21st Century. But I also knew that such an ambitious project would also be very expensive, and would require significant long-term strategic achievements to convince investors of Trinity's academic and fiscal soundness. In 1989, Trinity was in a very precarious condition, suffering years of enrollment declines and mounting deficits. Before creating an academic building plan, we had to create a future for this great institution.

[Slide 7: Strategic Campus Development]

In the early 1990's Trinity's work in strategic planning led to the diversification of programs and enrollments, and, most significantly, the refocusing of Trinity's mission and programs on students in the District of Columbia and nearby counties. Consequently, enrollment began to grow again and finances began to stabilize with that growth.

Early in the 21st Century, the last time I came before the zoning commission to seek approval for a new building, we broke ground for the Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports, which opened in 2003. We chose to start the new century of Trinity's life with a sports and recreation center in order to build our capacity, drive enrollment and serve our community. The Trinity Sports Center has been a great success and our community enjoys the wellness, fitness and recreational opportunities of this center.

Trinity then launched a Nursing Program in 2007, and this truly propelled enrollment forward in ways that also put considerable pressure on the older academic facilities. Nursing required its own laboratories while also filling the Science Building far beyond capacity with demand for new courses and labs in Anatomy and Physiology, Genetics, Physiology and Pharmacology. Nursing also caused a boom in science majors as students came to Trinity and fell in love with Biology. A Forensic Science program attracted new chemistry students along with more Criminal Justice majors. Early Childhood Education became an important initiative for Trinity and for the city. Growth was outstripping capacity.

In 2010, with Trinity's financial health improving and enrollment booming, the Board of Trustees approved moving ahead with a concept design for a new academic center.

[Slide 8: The Case for the Trinity Academic Center]

The need for the new Trinity Academic Center is obvious:

- Trinity's academic quality, credibility and competitiveness depend on developing modern, safe, functional and comfortable spaces for teaching and learning;
- New populations of students require more accessibility;
- New forms of pedagogy and research require different kinds of lab and classroom configurations, and new technologies need a very different infrastructure;
- Renovation of the outmoded classrooms and instructional facilities in Main Hall requires some "swing space" that the new building will afford to do extensive renovations in that building.

[Slide 9: Trinity Students Need the New Academic Center]

As a matter of simple justice Trinity students today and in the future need and deserve this new academic center. Just because Trinity's students are largely from low income, marginalized communities does not mean they should get third rate facilities or instruction. They deserve modern, safe, accessible, functional learning spaces as much as students who attend larger, wealthier institutions.

The District of Columbia, itself, needs and deserves this new academic resource for its residents. Particularly with increased emphasis in DC on workforce development in STEM, healthcare and early childhood education, the new Trinity Academic Center should receive consideration as a project of very special merit in improving the academic assets of the city.

Trinity, itself, is not wealthy. The endowment is just \$13.4 million as of this month; the operating budget is just \$35 million, very small for the scope of the enterprise. Trinity provides significant financial aid to DC residents, more than \$5 million this year in discounts that make it possible for them to be in school. Trinity also keeps tuition very low --- more than \$10,000 lower than most area private universities.

So, undertaking a \$40 million building project is quite a large and risky task for Trinity. Trinity chose to do this project as design/build to keep the costs under control. Trinity has great confidence in the design/build team of Clark/EYP. They know that Trinity does not have a lot of margin for error or changes in the plans. They will create a beautiful, efficient academic center that will serve our students and the city well, and be a model for other universities.

[Slide 10: Trinity Academic Center Site, Cost, Timetable]

Trinity has planned this project with a large emphasis on the efficiency of the building to achieve a number of objectives.

First, the site locates the building in close proximity to Main Hall and the library so that students and faculty can travel among those three academic buildings easily.

Second, the building includes not only laboratories for science and nursing but also classrooms, offices, lounge and study spaces; this kind of "integrated academic center" is the most efficient use of money and space possible.

Third, the project envisions creating new traffic patterns on and around the campus to facilitate traffic flows on campus and to alleviate congestion on Michigan Avenue.

Demolition of the existing Science Building is central to the site plan for this project. Trinity did not come to that decision lightly. An engineering report conducted as part of the 2010 EYP concept design process convinced Trinity that renovation would be difficult and expensive, and would not produce an academic facility that could meet the university's academic needs.

Trinity cannot afford to do everything. The Academic Center project at \$40 million stretches Trinity's resources and borrowing capacity to the limit. Trinity has raised \$20 million from benefactors, will borrow \$15 million, and will cover the balance from savings. There is no room for additional costs.

In closing, let me stress again that the highest value for Trinity in this project is to provide credible, modern, safe and comfortable academic and instructional spaces for our students, the majority of whom are District of Columbia residents. We owe this building to the present and future students of Trinity. We only have so much money. We have measured out every dollar we need to spend on this project and we can't possibly do everything. We have to make choices, and our choice is in favor of the future academic quality and credibility of what we offer to our city and our students.