

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
Trinity (Washington) University
Washington, DC
by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Higher Education
of the
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Prepared after a study of the institution's self study report

And a visit to the campus on April 2 – 5, 2006

The members of the team are:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Trinity University. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

At the time of the visit

President: Patricia A. McGuire

Chief Academic Officer: Sue A. Blanshan

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Peggy O'Brien

I. Context and Nature of the Visit

A comprehensive university in Washington, D.C., offering a full range of courses and degree programs for students of all ages, with a special emphasis on women's education, founded in 1897 by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Trinity is one of the nation's first Catholic undergraduate colleges for women.

Trinity is empowered by charter to grant undergraduate and graduate degrees. Academic programs are divided into three areas: the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of Education. Undergraduates may earn a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree. Graduate students may choose from programs leading to the Master of Arts, the Master of Arts in Teaching, the Master of Business Administration, the Master of Education, the Master of Science, or the Master of Science in Administration degrees. Various certificate programs are also available.

Incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia in 1897, Trinity College was empowered by Act of Congress to confer degrees. Its legal title is "Trinity College, Washington D.C." In 2004, Trinity became a university.

The Middle States evaluation team conducted its visit to Trinity University from April 2 to April 5, 2006. The team found the visit to be an extremely pleasant and professionally rewarding experience. The team is grateful for the warm hospitality of the Trinity community and benefited from the thorough self-study process and document. The comprehensive self-study was candid and the preparation inclusive and participatory.

During the course of this visit, the evaluation team has conducted extensive interviews, toured the University facilities, reviewed the ample exhibits and collected data which substantiate the University's self-study conclusions and recommendations. As part of this visit, the team reviewed the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2004 and 2005. The team affirms that at the end of the audited period, Trinity has the resources necessary to fulfill its mission.

This visiting team commends the University for the quality of the self-study. The team deeply appreciates the honesty and forthrightness of the self-study, the acknowledgement of areas needing attention and the naming of the bold strategies to meet the University's challenges. The visiting team believes that the self-study experience has given the University a moment of special opportunities which will serve it well as it takes decisive actions for the future. The visiting team encourages Trinity University to continue its routine self-study efforts, maintaining its obvious culture of evaluation, with planning and evaluation intertwined to insure that the mission of Trinity is protected, preserved and promoted into the future.

II. Affirmation of continued compliance with Eligibility Requirements.

The institution meets all established eligibility requirements of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

III. Compliance with federal requirements, issues relative to state regulatory or other accrediting agency requirements.

The team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits.

IV. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals and objectives clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. These develop and shape the institution's programs and practices and are utilized to evaluate its effectiveness.

The institution meets this standard.

The team has experienced in Trinity, at every turn, a mission-driven institution. All constituencies understand the mission and appreciate it deeply. Board of Trustees, faculty and staff recognize that they hold it in trust and are passionately committed to it. The team commends the Trinity community for its remarkable clarity of understanding of mission and its unswerving devotion to living it out at all levels and in all units.

The team recognizes the impressive congruence of Trinity University in 2006 with the original vision of Trinity's founders in 1897. The team admires and commends the University's rejection of the notion that paradigm shift means abandonment of historic mission. Rather, we discover in the work and vitality of Trinity of 2006, a most obvious continuity with Trinity's 110 year old mission expressed with a renewed relevance and vigor.

There is a very demonstrable connection from mission to goals and objectives which themselves are subject to on-going outcomes assessment and revision. Mission, and accompanying goals and objectives, drive the work of the schools and are the subject of unit planning. Mission, goals and objectives are formally approve

publicized and widely known. Goals and objectives appropriately address student learning, other outcomes and institutional improvement.

The founding vision of the Sisters of Notre Dame appropriately and palpably animates the life of the University. The University community is deeply aware of its obligation to preserve the gift of that animating spirit and to move it into the future. This is clearly understood as a mission imperative.

The university model with three relatively autonomous schools united through carefully crafted governance structures and administratively through the Academic Vice President is a commendable and important illustration of creating new tools to serve a renewed historic mission.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made within its self-study. They appear to us as eminently consistent with and in faithful service to Trinity's mission. We encourage their implementation.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal.

The institution meets this standard.

For the prior ten years, Trinity has been committed to a sustained comprehensive planning process covering academics, finances, and facilities. The plan, Trinity Beyond 2000, has served as the guiding roadmap for its strategic objectives addressing: student enrollment; reorganization of academic structure; redesign of curriculum; employee recruitment and retention; financial stability; accelerated growth of fund raising; improved technology and facilities; and, expanded presence in the external local community.

As reported in the current self-study, "... with the help of strategic planning, Trinity has been able to embrace change and move forward with creativity, resourcefulness, and a deep sense of purpose."

Strategic thinking has been at the core of Trinity's adaptation and expanded educational focus. As it continues to embrace its historic commitment to "women's educational advancement and leadership," it is simultaneously "transforming into a multi-dimensional institution" offering coeducational curricular options. These strategic changes have been initiated to help ensure progress toward a stronger, more competitive and financially sustainable institution.

Since the mid-90's, several factors have combined to produce a more viable institution: visionary leadership; advanced planning; refined budget process; more sophisticated financial management reports with comparative benchmarks; a strengthening financial base; a supportive and engaged Board; and, greater fund-raising aspirations for annual fund, endowment, and plant.

Within the next ten year horizon, the institution plans to pursue a number of aggressive goals. Underpinning all of these aspirations is the achievement of a stronger financial capacity. Such being the case, an ongoing commitment to the principles of collaborative strategic planning simply must remain a central focus of the governance framework. This is especially relevant given this institution's ambitious agenda for its future. Trinity is well positioned to continue planning vigorously to expand its enrollment, academic programs, facilities, and financial base over the next ten year horizon.

Trinity has embraced the processes of strategic planning as a catalyst for "change, recovery, and renaissance." The campus community acknowledges the value and necessity of a strong planning component. Continuing efforts to include the whole community in planning will benefit acceptance and support of future

institutional strategies and resource allocations that, undoubtedly, will involve compromises.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made within its self-study and encourages their implementation, offering the following additional collegial suggestion:

A continuing assessment and monitoring of the enrollment plan that anticipates a doubling of the current enrollment, as well as a concurrent review of existing and proposed programs, will help target and identify the necessary resources, both fiscal and physical, needed to support this growth of enrollment, faculty, staff, and academic initiatives.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, physical facilities and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible.

The institution meets this standard.

Since this last Middle States visit, the financial health of Trinity has continuously improved. Fiscal restraints, productive fund raising and increased enrollment have produced positive financial results. These enhanced financial conditions have afforded Trinity the opportunity to invest resources that have strengthened its academic programs and facilities.

Recent financial progress has resulted in the disappearance of annual operating deficits and indeed has witnessed an increase in net assets over the last ten year period. This increase in net assets of approximately \$30 million can be attributed to: successful efforts to produce operating surpluses; impressive gains in gifts and grants; and the addition of a new plant asset --- the Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports.

During the same time, the endowment and "funds held by other" grew from \$4.5 million to over \$18 million. In addition, the annual fund has shown a steady accelerated growth to a current level of approximately \$1 million. Another sign of a healthier financial condition is the "available cash and cash on hand" increasing from \$650,000 to \$4.4 million in the prior ten year period.

The team found ample evidence of a sound financial accounting context within which the institution currently accomplishes its business. An independent audit firm evaluates the financial position at the end of each fiscal year. A management letter is provided as part of the audit. In addition, the audit committee of the Board reviews annually the audit results and management letter. The committee also meets independently with the auditors as part of the annual review. Trinity is to be commended for this high level of audit oversight.

Trinity does not have adequate financial strength or resources to support a management style that would be primarily "reactive" with limited plans and strategies for the future. Trinity's current management approach is far from "reactive" and indeed has demonstrated a strong "pro-active" leadership direction. For Trinity University, financial constraints hardly preclude the institution from being remarkably vital and assured.

Although the target of full fiscal equilibrium may be many years in the future, this awareness – the institution's financial limits – has not daunted or discouraged the university's faculty, administrators, staff or trustees who so fundamentally believe in its program and core mission. This extraordinary energy and commitment have

resulted in the institution making significant strides toward gaining a more sustained capacity to carry forth its mission.

That the institution has progressed over the past five years to establish strategies for self-sufficiency with promising success to date under the resourceful direction of a far-sighted financial team for the upcoming years is encouraging. Despite these recent improvements, rising expectations and an ambitious agenda will need to be guided by continued prudent financial leadership and management.

Maintaining a wise balance among investments in faculty and staff, operations and programs, technology and plant, and financial reserves, may well be the most critical decisions to be made by Trinity as it maps its future.

While the institution expects to ambitiously increase its enrolment on several academic fronts, the administration is keenly aware of the need to explore alternative revenue sources in order to achieve long-term financial equilibrium.

The University is wise in recognizing, supporting and nurturing alumnae/i relations. It has been equally wise in educating their graduates as to the role alumnae/i financial contributions must play in enabling Trinity to reach its goals. Much was focused on this alumnae/i agenda in preparation and execution of the institution's Centennial Campaign. A concerted focus to expand the annual fund will need to be the highest of priorities.

At this time in its history, Trinity has more and more need of the involvement of its Board of Trustees in fund-raising. More than ever, Members of the Board have a personal obligation to support the university's operations and strategic vision and to provide access to other individuals or sources of financial worth as well. This has to continue to be an initiative of high focus for the Board. The team believes this is an increasingly important part of Trinity's friend raising and fund raising goals.

Facilities issues have consumed much of the institution's efforts over recent years and much commendable progress has been achieved.

An allocation of close to \$9 million, toward deferred modernization and upkeep of the institutions' aging and heavily utilized facilities, has served to demonstrate a renewed commitment to providing quality living and learning experience for students, faculty and staff. The institution has successfully generated support from donors and other external sources for recent technology and facility upgrades, as well as construction of the new Women's Center which serves its athletic, conference and community outreach programs.

A major investment, occurring over the prior four years, has been in the information technology area. Upgrades of the administrative, instructional and web capabilities have been giant steps in revamping the university's computer systems and services. The information technology staff has impressively guided the

institution over the ever-changing and challenging landscape of technology. The campus continues to focus on a systematic plan to support and incorporate new and improved technology both within and outside the curriculum. The visiting team would urge that ongoing training of technology users be a top priority in order for the campus to benefit more fully from the technology dollars invested to date and to be invested in the future.

In the past, limited and uncertain funding hampered an on-going modernization, deferred and cycled maintenance program. Such a program is essential for the proper preservation of aging facilities. At Trinity, ninety percent of its buildings range in age from forty years to over a century old. Years of limited resources devoted to these facilities have resulted in the need to quicken the pace and timeline for properly addressing both new construction, as well as modernization and deferred items within existing facilities.

The plant and security staffs deserve special recognition for their fine work in maintaining a safe and attractive campus. The grounds are nicely groomed with several places serving students as campus gathering spots. The visiting team was most impressed with the well-maintained condition and cleanliness of the heavily used facilities. The institution is fortunate to have a most committed and dedicated maintenance staff.

Renovation of the science and library facilities and adding state-of-the-art instructional and study space will be achieved with the planned new Academic Center anticipated to be the central focus of the next capital campaign. These combined facilities enhancements will remain a challenge that will tax the institution's future financial resources.

Members of our team have found the institution to be both a realistically grounded and an imaginatively special place supported by a campus community dedicated to achieving its future vision. The team urges Trinity to continue to "celebrate yourselves" even as you acknowledge the financial, facilities, and resource realities with which you must deal.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study and encourages their implementation, offering this additional collegial suggestion:

Trinity is facing one of the negative effects of enrollment growth – limited space. The creation of a more systematic and multi-year facilities plan will help assure that adequate space is available as enrollment, faculty, staff and curricular offerings expand. In addition, a multi-year funding plan for deferred and cycled maintenance will address the infrastructure needs of aging facilities. If Trinity is to progress toward the goal of strengthened financial stability, and since facilities, equipment and technology are essential components, a fuller understanding of future plant liabilities need to be systematically addressed in order to plan effectively and shape the decade ahead.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active autonomous governing body with policy and resource development responsibility consistent with institutional mission.

The institution meets this standard.

Trinity University is appropriately governed by an autonomous Board of Trustees, now constituted at 17 members, who “hold the institution in trust” for the public and who have, in law and in practice, the authority over Trinity’s mission and the policies necessary to implement it. The Board is composed of laymen and women and Sisters of Notre Dame organized by the enabling congressional charter and carefully crafted by-laws. A variety of talents, interests, backgrounds and education are appropriately represented in the Board composition. The Board appears to contain generous men and women passionate about the mission of Trinity.

The Board delegates to and invests in the President the necessary authority to administer the University. Considerable attention is paid to the congruence of vision of Board and President for the welfare of the institution. The Board has engaged recently in its own assessment of its effectiveness. A review of constitutional documents and minutes verifies that the Board operates at the appropriate policy making level, consistent with its obligations to insure compliance with accreditation standards and governmental requirements. Correspondingly, the President appears to fulfill her responsibilities at the appropriate level of administration of policy.

A remarkably clear and thorough road-map of academic decision making responsibilities in the institution is provided in the Frame-work for Academic Decision Making, approved by the Faculty and the Board of Trustees. The document describes the varying roles, responsibilities and authority for decision-making in the institution in narrative form and again in a concise chart with definitions and guiding principles. The identification of the principles that inform the governance tree is particularly helpful. The team commends the University for the formulation of the Frame-work document and for its central role in shared governance, that is, in the process of contributing to decision-making at the University.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made within the self-study and encourages their implementation offering the following additional collegial suggestions:

The team believes that the imperatives of the strategic plan call for the highest level of engagement by the Board of Trustees. This may be the appropriate moment, therefore, to revisit the issues of Board size, availability and distribution of the talent and expertise needed at this time on the Board and individual member activities in support of essential fund raising.

Recognizing that long-range planning is necessary to ensure that Trinity will have a critical mass of faculty, staff and senior administrators who will be passionate about the mission, the team encourages discussions at the Board level to devise and/or strengthen policies aimed at the recruitment and retention of the next generation of personnel who will hold Trinity in trust.

The team believes that a university community can never remind itself too often of the governance structures and policies that operate in the institution. As the many major tasks are undertaken over the next years, the team suggests that a reminder of the governance structures to be utilized be made explicit to all constituents to minimize the potential for confusion, misunderstanding and inefficiency. We believe the perennial challenges of communication will be helped by regularly reminding all constituents of the avenues open to them for the constructive exchange of ideas and viewpoints as very significant moves into the future are being shaped.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

The institution meets this standard.

The self-study, consistent with Middle States expectations indicates that Trinity's executive and managerial personnel are appropriately credentialed and participate in decision-making processes appropriate for their areas of responsibility. After three days interacting in this community, the team concurs and, while recognizing the limitations imposed by the modesty of self-study, needs to say this is an understatement.

The leadership of Trinity is in the very capable hands of a chief executive officer who leads this community with exceptional gifts and enviable energy and makes a very significant contribution to American higher education and to the District and region. The team is gratified to see that the President is highly respected by the Board and University community and is appropriately credited with the vision and strategic sixth sense, as so many said, to have "saved" Trinity and to lead it to a new time of strength. In the inventory of University assets, this University President must rank very high on the list.

The President surrounds herself with a very talented and committed executive management team. Each member of the senior staff is responsible for a group of administrative or academic units and for their progress on unit or institutional goals. A larger management team, composed of the heads of the major subordinate units, meets on an occasional basis to review large cross-functional issues, to engage in planning and management training. The University seems very well served by this management structure. Trinity's strategic plan sets forth particular expectations for the Human Resources office whose leadership is appropriately integrated into the work of Senior management.

The team has experienced in the management style of this University, a high priority placed on honesty, respect for each member of the community and a remarkable student-centered motivation which seems to bring the senior staff and their unit teams to work every day. The visiting team commends the University for an administrative style which demonstrates these qualities.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made with its self-study. We encourage their implementation.

Standard 6: Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support to academic and intellectual freedom.

The institution meets this standard.

For its almost 100 year history, Trinity University has been a place of integrity honoring its commitments and representing itself truthfully. Evidence of this integrity today is in the fair and impartial processes, sound ethical practices and respect for individuals that characterize the comprehensive policies affecting students, faculty and staff of the Trinity community. These policies are published and widely distributed or notice of their availability is ample throughout the University.

Above and beyond this, however, is a climate, mission-driven, which fosters respect for all citizens of the Trinity community, with its special embrace of students of varying ages, race and ethnicity, religious, educational and personal backgrounds.

This is an institution which exemplifies in its own behavior those qualities which it wishes to impart to students. Drawing from its rich Catholic and Notre Dame Sisters heritage, the University unselfconsciously models justice, equity, and respect for diversity and human dignity. It is faithful in a university's commitment to academic and intellectual freedom.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made with its self-study and encourage their implementation.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation and renewal processes; assuring that resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

The institution meets this standard.

It was readily apparent to the team that a culture of assessment is effectively operative at Trinity. One of the prime pieces of evidence for this is the University's self-study document; assessment pervades it. As a result of the assessment approach used in it, the University has available a document that can serve as the basis for on-going strategic planning. The data and analysis it contains have enabled Trinity to identify its successes in achieving its goals and objectives and to identify areas to strengthen and further that success in carrying forward its mission.

While there is no institutional assessment plan per se, all units are required to have plans to fulfill Trinity's goals. These plans were available to the team. A review of them indicates that different programs are at different stages in the process. The team encourages Trinity to continue to develop effective plans in all departments and to use the assistance of those who have developed full plans to assist their colleagues in the process.

In developing plans in a decentralized fashion for assessing institutional effectiveness, departments are doing so according to their disciplinary/programmatic standards and in line with the goals of the University's strategic plan. An examination of these plans indicates a clear understanding on the part of the administrative unit leader that promotion of Trinity's goals for student enrollment/learning, financial stability, program enhancements, and quality service is a part of every staff member's responsibility.

Among the institutional changes that have been implemented as a result of assessment are: developing a plan for recruitment and retention of staff; maintaining and enhancing technology availability to enhance the learning, administrative, and business services environments; achieving a balanced operating budget for each of the last three years; creating the Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports using leverage from gifts to secure a \$19 million bond and creatively using center membership and leasing arrangements to pay for operational overhead; benchmarking its facilities management and allocating about \$9 million in 3 years to address facilities maintenance and repair; and, developing procedures to address student accounts receivable issues – a component of retention assessment.

Trinity University is to be commended for these and other programmatic changes in the institution that have been introduced in line with strategic planning, as a result of effective use of assessment.

The team endorses the recommendations the institution has made in the self-study, encourages their implementation and, offers these additional collegial suggestions:

Continue to develop assessment plans in all departments of the university which will serve as significant elements in developing Trinity's strategic planning and resource allocation in the coming years. Ascertain ways to share these plans/achievements internally and externally, using them to further Trinity's marketing, fundraising and visibility goals.

Standard 8: Student Admissions

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission.

The institution meets this standard.

The team congratulates the University for examining appropriate ways to increase enrollment and for its efforts to answer the demographic realities of Washington. Trinity's clearly defined mission – for women in CAS and for women and men in the professional schools – gives a solid sense of direction for each applicant's desire to undertake course of studies leading to a college degree. University publications clearly outline the admissions application process for first-year and graduate students, the mission of the college, academic standards and procedures, and educational program requirements. The Admissions process is a multi-level endeavor that includes a combination of procedures outlined in the Admissions Marketing Plan. The corporate web-site is designed to keep applicants current with accurate and comprehensive information on all aspects of academic and student life. Trinity clearly seeks to produce graduates who are able to serve effectively in a variety of careers. The office of student financial services works closely with the office of enrollment management while it seeks to increase scholarship moneys available for students.

Trinity University wholeheartedly supports the belief that diversity on campus is a great value to all stakeholders. The team also noted the institution's serious commitment to students from under-represented populations from initial outreach to completion of enrollment.

The stated mission of Trinity University and a commitment to prepare women and men for the future are key to the admissions policy and procedures as evidenced in scholarships recognizing academic achievement, leadership and community service.

The team commends the university for: the establishment of an Enrollment Management Team (EMT), chaired by the President, and which affords a high level of involvement of administrators and staff in recruiting students with a sense of purpose and direction in life; the EMT's ability to analyze responsibilities and to establish initial goals for retention; the invigorated recruiting/enrollment plan that was developed, funded, and populated for an increase in graduates in all degree programs; its continued dedication to the CAS degree offerings and for the growing professional degrees for all learners; an increase in the student body while also increasing the quality of the students; and, the variety of ways by which the institution identifies future students and monitors their successful application process.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study, encourages their implementation and offers these additional collegial suggestions.

Continue to focus on development of scholarship and financial aid resources to support the critical financial needs of low-income students from the District of Columbia and the Washington region. All members of the Trinity admissions staff receive ongoing computer training for PowerCampus in order to collect and analyze data about prospective and entering students, and larger trends across the college-bound sector. Continue to review and research all institutional scholarships and grants to evaluate their effectiveness in the recruitment and retention of students. Greater utilization of all outcome surveys for the benefit prospective students should be considered. Track and study current trends among various student groups as they relate to recruitment, retention and student services.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

The institution meets this standard.

Trinity University weaves a wonderful story as it serves as a collaborative model of higher education serving the D.C. community and its wider demographic area. The Student Handbook outlines policies and procedures as well as support services available to students. The handbook and other publications serve as guides to the institution's philosophy, policies and practices with respect to a learning and living environment. These guides are based on the commitment to the education of women through the liberal arts and professional preparation and grounded in the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the Catholic tradition.

The team found great strength and excellence in the broad-based student support services regardless of where they reported in the organizational structure. They are Academic Support and Career Services (including International Student services, Disability Support services and the Writing Center), Student Services, Residence Life, Student Activities, Health and Wellness Services, Campus Ministry, Athletics, Trinity Center, Security and Food Services. These services aid in the success stories of many Trinity students who have to overcome substantial barriers to achieve their academic and social goals.

The issues of outcomes assessment, student success and retention will continue to be priorities insofar as the institution creates more systematic data collection and stronger coordination of assessment among student support service units.

The team commends the college for: a genuine spirit of cooperation, compassion and creativity found in the administration and professional staff; the creative interaction between Student Support Services and the faculty to identify and support students who are having academic difficulties, with a focus on first-year students; the increased availability of medical and mental health services, health education, health promotion and disease prevention services that have led to an increase of 400 visits to the Health and Wellness Center over the past three years; the cooperation of Residence Life and Student Activities in working with students in pursuit of the goals of building leaders, creating community with peers and staff, enhancing academic experiences, and preparing students for life beyond their university experiences; for its ecumenical Campus Ministry program that seeks to nurture and deepen the spiritual life of its members, to enrich their appreciation of other religious traditions, and to help them express their faith through civic engagement, leadership, and the search for justice; the full accessibility for all students to the state-of-the-art Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports; years of commitment to athletic teams at the NCAA Division III level in the Atlantic Women's Colleges Conference and looking to the future for further engagement of the teams with different colleges; the

excellent opportunities that it offers students to experience the richness of the Nation's Capital; and, a dedication to the spiritual, physical and psychological growth of each student, reflecting deep respect for the dignity and worth of each person.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study, encourages their implementation and offers these additional collegial suggestions:

As the University closely examines the increasing level of services to students, it needs to create a more systematic data collection and stronger coordination of assessment among student support services units. Expand the effective advising for students in the School of Professional Studies. An easily accessible and effective assessment program for adult students in the School of Professional Studies can be achieved by a thorough review of its entrance placement program. Serious consideration might be given to curricular design and sequencing for all first-year students resulting in different models created through the cooperation of faculty and student support staff. Future assessment planning calls for a more systematic data collection for all components of Student Services, including Residence Life, Campus Ministry, Health and Wellness Services and Athletics.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The institution meets this standard.

Trinity University is fortunate to have a faculty that obviously embraces its mission and seeks to honor that mission in the day-to-day work of teaching, advising, and working with students.

The full and part-time faculty are exceptionally qualified: 100% of the full-time faculty have terminal degrees in their fields and many are widely respected as leaders in their professions. In addition, the University is able to draw on the substantial talent of the region to serve as highly-qualified adjunct faculty providing a wide variety of expertise.

Faculty give their greatest attention to teaching but also give substantial time and effort to advising, university service and scholarship/professional development.

The University provides faculty salaries that compare favorably with both AAUP cohorts IIA and IIB.

The faculty and administration are committed to continuous professional development for all faculty. This is evident in conversations with faculty about how they share their collective wisdom and experience, the catalog of recent seminars and workshops provided both in-house and with outside experts, and support for faculty participation in pedagogical and disciplinary conferences.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study and encourages their implementation with particular emphasis on the following:

The review of faculty composition should be clearly connected to the University's plan for program and enrollment growth and should articulate the process through which positions will be prioritized and allocated.

The review of the Faculty Handbook should be thorough and comprehensive both in scope and participation of relevant constituencies. We encourage the community to begin by redefining the roles and work of faculty members in light of the paradigm shift and the changes in educational content, delivery, and experiences. This redefinition should acknowledge the diversity of faculty work and activities across disciplines, schools, and contract types. The revisions of the Faculty Handbook might then identify new models of recognition for the full range and variety of faculty work including teaching, advising, service, scholarship, and professional development.

We encourage the University to enhance faculty assessment to include both evaluation and feedback for all full-time faculty (term and tenure/tenure track) in addition to the 3-year, tenure and promotion reviews. Explore how to build on the annual professional development summary in order to provide on-going assessment in a way that is both productive and meaningful for the University and individual faculty in a variety of disciplines and with various contact categories.

In light of the paradigm shift, we encourage the University to dedicate the resources needed to establish the Center for Teaching Excellence and engage the University community in its planning and implementation. Ideally this center will support a proactive, holistic approach to faculty development that acknowledges the full range of faculty work, honors differences between disciplines and schools, and meets the needs of faculty at different career stages.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

The institution meets this standard.

The College of Arts and Sciences helps women develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to become leaders through undergraduate programs that combine a strong foundation in the liberal arts with experiential learning. The School of Professional Studies supports the professional advancement of working men and women through liberal arts-grounded, career-focused programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The School of Education serves educators in all stages of their careers through co-educational teacher certification programs as well as graduate programs in counseling, teacher preparation, curriculum design, and administration.

The University has clearly identified student learning goals (writing, quantitative, and information literacy) for the various student constituencies it serves. The University's educational offerings are designed to give students a rich academic experience and to respond to the needs of the community it serves. The goals of the University educational offerings are linked to the University mission: reading and critical analysis, writing, speaking, understanding and application of methods and techniques of scientific inquiry, creative expressions, using quantitative analysis and reasoning, understanding social forces that shape our world, identifying and interpreting philosophical and religious traditions, developing respect and understanding of cultural, racial, and gender differences.

Learning assessment measures student progress from matriculation to graduation. The program review process across all programs is designed to ensure that expectations of student learning are clearly articulated at the program level and that those expectations are consistent with the mission of the university, while allowing programs the freedom to develop assessment strategies that are locally meaningful. Areas addressed are: writing proficiently, quantitative literacy, and information literacy. Structured data supports academic program review process which operates in a five-year cycle.

Learning resources, facilities, instructional services, and professional library staff are adequate to support the institution's educational programs, and there is collaboration between professional library staff and faculty in teaching and fostering information literacy skills relevant to the curriculum. Programs promote student use of information and leaning resources. As indicated in Chapters 3 and 4 of the self-study, the university is moving forward in implementing an "information literacy across the curriculum" approach in its programs. The Library and Information

Services has begun a concerted effort to tailor information literacy instructional services in ways relevant to specified disciplines, pedagogical approaches, and learning goals, making these available both onsite and online. The recent adoption of a Blackboard platform will also provide necessary foundation for distance learning. With a renewed model of library and information services, the university is poised to make great strides forward in these areas.

The Honors Program articulates program goals which are coherent with the University mission. The University provides a variety of educational experiences outside the traditional classroom setting which are coherent to the institution's curricular offerings and mission, including internships, service learning, and the Intelligence program. The School of Professional Studies and the School of Education Experiential Lifelong Learning program serves adult learners by recognizing their college level experiential learning. There is evidence that information literacy is infused across the curriculum. Full accreditation of the School of Education by NCATE reaffirms the rigor and breadth of their programs.

The Team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study and encourages their implementation. In particular, we encourage the University to move ahead with its plans to enhance the teaching/learning environments for students involving information technology and science laboratories.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

The institution meets this standard.

Trinity is committed to ongoing assessment and development of general education programs that best meet the needs of its distinct student populations within the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the School of Professional Studies, providing sufficient scope to enhance their students' intellectual growth and a foundation of skills and abilities which can be applied in their major programs. General Education requirements are clearly and accurately described in the official publications of the University. Trinity is to be commended for its decision, as a result of its self-study, to undertake a review and revision of its current general education programs in order to allow it to meet the needs of its students more effectively. Consistent with its mission, Trinity's general education programs contain a strong emphasis on the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives, and assure that students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, technological capabilities, information literacy, critical analysis and reasoning.

Trinity's ongoing assessment of general education outcomes is within the University's overall plan for assessing student learning, and there is clear evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement. The decision to undertake a review of the current programs is perhaps the clearest evidence on a global level of this ongoing assessment process, but evolving requirements in writing and quantitative reasoning skills, as well as a recent decision to require all first-year students to take a course in Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking provide ample proof that Trinity is utilizing assessment data on a continual basis to improve their general education program. The University is to be applauded for its decision to look closely at how it can improve its First Year Experience program in the College of Arts and Sciences and how it might use a more prescriptive sequencing of courses in the School of Professional Studies.

The Team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study, encourages their implementation, and in addition makes the following collegial suggestions:

Trinity is to be commended for its decision to focus in its revision of general education programs on the core skills of writing, quantitative reasoning, and information literacy. The team encourages the university to consider expanding this focus to include attention to critical reading skills as well, including appropriate

placement and monitoring instruments, and with careful attention to the differing needs of various student populations.

As indicated above, the Team strongly commends Trinity for its use of the self-study to formulate a plan for undertaking a review of its general education programs. We encourage the University to pursue this review in a timely thorough manner through a rich conversation on this important topic allowing all members of the community to feel that their voices have been heard. Clearly identified student needs should be addressed promptly and effectively.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

The institution meets this standard.

The integrity and credibility of the University's educational program for a significant segment of its population rest directly on its basic skills program. Consistent with its mission, Trinity offers programs and activities that are defined by the needs of its students.

The team commends the college for:

Its extensive offerings of programs and activities that include basic skills; its systematic procedures for identifying students who are not fully prepared for college level study; and its referral to relevant courses and support services for admitting under prepared students.

The team endorses the recommendations that the institution has made in its self-study, encourages their implementation and offers these additional collegial suggestions:

Re-examine the entering student assessment instruments and processes to improve the identification of students who need a basic skill program while ensuring that students are able to develop appropriate course schedules. Dynamic planning by the EMT to address basic skills programs needed for retention and completion, academic planning, advising and other services. Track and study current trends among various student groups who are served by basic skills programs. The Future Focus Academic Success Seminar should be given serious consideration as a retention improving course model for all of CAS students.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Demonstrates that the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that graduating students have achieved appropriate higher education goals.

The institution meets this standard.

Trinity has made significant headway in developing a solid outcome assessment program. It is well on its way to achieving the goal of developing a systematic way to measure the impact of its educational program on the lives of its students, in all three collegiate units. Learning assessment at Trinity measures student progress from matriculation to graduation, using qualitative and quantitative measures, using internal and external methods. This assessment of summative learning is mission-driven and is broadly defined, seeking to measure the totality of students' learning experiences – their development of foundational skills, mastery of advanced knowledge, cultivation of civic and professional experience, and integration of skills, knowledge, and experience into a unified whole.

On the undergraduate level, assessment is a work in progress and is strategically selective. Trinity has focused on student learning outcomes deemed most critical at present. Its plan presently focuses on a carefully selected area of the University's learning goals – those dealing with writing ability, quantitative ability, and information literacy. Recently, there has been a recognition that critical reading ability should be added to this list of competencies. Assessment takes place on the course, program, and institutional level and aims at institutional improvement. Changes and improvements that have been made recently through use of assessment data and analysis include: streamlining of the program review process by limiting the number of goals to be assessed, changing from a 5 to 3-year process and providing assistance with data aggregation for the process; determining to engage in a revision of the general education curriculum; introducing the Future Focus program as part of the first year program to address specific needs of students; revising the biology program to assist students in articulating their laboratory work findings; revising the English composition program to insure student preparedness to enroll in and successfully complete English 107; revising of the mathematics general education requirement; planning to establish a Center for Teaching and Learning to serve as an avenue for sharing faculty insights into student learning and best practices in general education and other scholarly pursuits; strengthening of the academic advising program.

The team endorses the recommendations the institution has made in the self-study, encourages their implementation and offers these additional collegial suggestions:

In addition to course and program evaluation, continue work on developing a broader, more integrated learning assessment program, evaluating the students'

cumulative experience; determine/develop assessment programs that will best enable SPS and the School of Education to continue developing curricular design and pedagogies appropriate to adult learners; provide support for faculty by providing correct key aggregate data, thus enabling them to focus on analysis and program development; and, support faculty assessment work through on-campus programs and participation on assessment-related conferences and workshops.

V. Summary of team recommendation and requirements.

The visiting team affirms the recommendations which are included in the self-study and encourage their implementation. The Team makes no recommendations and has no requirements. Collegial suggestions are incorporated into this report.

Conclusion

The Middle States' Visiting team is deeply impressed with the story of Trinity University. The self-study calls it "one of the more remarkable institutional stories in higher education today." We concur. Transformed over the last two decades by dramatic change and courageous and deliberate embracing of "paradigm shift," the University has remained remarkably faithful to its rich tradition, the founding vision of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur: the special commitment to women, to the primacy of the liberal arts and to the Catholic intellectual, moral and social justice tradition.

Gifted with a faculty and staff passionate about the University's mission, under visionary leadership which is envied in American higher education, the University has embraced a population of students coming from many races, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, religious and personal experiences. Trinity serves this diverse student population in a rich mix of undergraduate and graduate programs and has emerged as an increasingly recognized and appreciated resource for the District and the Washington regional community. Beyond such effective direct service to its students and region, the University has achieved an incalculable contribution to the American higher education enterprise and the American national scene by demonstrating ways to give new life to historic mission. The University's wisdom and courage in educating a majority of adult students and students of color renew its relevance and faithfulness to mission. The team congratulates the Trinity community in its rejection of the assertion that characteristics of age and race have changed the University's mission. Rather, with a mission which has always been to make higher education accessible to

women, as one member of the Board of Trustees told us, Trinity is today very close to its founding vision.

The Middle States' Characteristics of Excellence states that "an effective institution is one in which growth, development, and change are the result of a thoughtful and rational process of self-examination and planning"

The team admires the inclusive self-study process and the comprehensive and eminently readable self-study document. We find these to be models of assessment best practice, demonstrating Trinity's culture of assessment. Extensive data collection and forthright analysis have yielded impressive commitment to action. The team particularly commends the spirit of honesty and openness which characterizes not only the self-study but seems to characterize the various relationships between individuals and among groups constituting a palpable sense of community at the University. Such a spirit is not quickly achieved nor often enough readily available in higher education. We commend you for this great strength.

There is breath-taking achievement chronicled in the self-study: the move to University structure with three schools, the Trinity Center, dramatic improvement of financial results and the financial management systems and processes, NCATE accreditation, major government and private grants, the conversion and upgrading of administrative software. Above all, perhaps, is the success of Trinity faculty in curricular and pedagogical change serving the students of the "paradigm shift." The team recognizes that faculty and staff are passionate about the mission in a genuinely mission driven institution.

In the candor of the University's self-study, challenges are clearly identified and addressed. The very mission of Trinity brings with it financial needs and limitations which are significant. An enrollment driven institution which is serious about access and social justice will always have challenges of raising enrollment and fund raising revenue. The University has named its challenges and, through the discipline of strategic planning, has identified the actions required to meet those challenges. The team believes that Achieving Trinity 2010 is an ambitious but realizable plan for the University to insure its vital and vibrant future. We affirm it and urge you on with enthusiasm as very interested colleagues who recognize the great gift of Trinity University.

In your self-study you speak of Sister Mary Euphrasia Taylor and her certainty in 1897: "The project is so grand the incentives so great ... we shall succeed." You speak of today's Trinity community retaining "the Founders' great vision and conviction in the worth of this enterprise." Each person at Trinity, you tell us, in passionate commitment to the mission, pledges daily: "we shall succeed." The visiting team, after our three days with you, now has experienced this personally. We believe you will succeed, and, good for all of us, because the world has more need than ever of the work of Trinity University. The visiting team eagerly awaits your on-going success!