



Executive Summary

Assessing Trinity 2000 - Approaching Trinity 2010

Self-Study for Middle States Accreditation Review

Trinity in Washington is one of the more remarkable institutional stories in higher education today. Founded in 1897 by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur as one of the first Catholic women's colleges in the nation, Trinity today is a comprehensive university serving a broadly diverse student population with a rich mix of undergraduate and graduate programs, and extending many services to the larger D.C. and Washington regional community.

Even with the many changes that transformed Trinity in the last two decades, Trinity retains the essential characteristics of the Founders' vision: a primary mission commitment to the education of women, foundations in liberal learning, the Catholic belief in knowledge as the servant of faith (*Scientia Ancilla Fidei* is Trinity's motto).

Finding ways to remain faithful to tradition while moving with the vast transformation in its student body and programs has been Trinity's ongoing challenge and great strength. In 2006, even as Trinity sustains its mission commitment to women in the single-gender College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and in its sensitivity to women's professional development in the School of Education (EDU) and School of Professional Studies (SPS), Trinity also welcomes men into the programs of EDU and SPS with a strong belief that professional men can also benefit from a focus on gender in higher education. The presence of the two professional schools also reflects Trinity's contemporary embrace of professional education as fulfilling the theory of liberal learning in practice. Trinity's Catholic sensibilities, shaped by the mission and charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, have played a profound role in leading Trinity to embrace a large population of students who come from many races, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, religions and personal experiences. The Gospel imperative of social justice is an animating force in Trinity's daily life.

Trinity today educates a student body that is nearly 90% Black, Hispanic, Asian and international, reflecting the population of the District of Columbia and many communities in the Washington region. About 75% of Trinity's students are over the age of 25. 95% of the full-time undergraduates receive financial aid from Trinity, and virtually all students receive some form of federal and local financial aid. Nearly half of Trinity's undergraduate students are citizens of the District of Columbia.

In the ten years since the last Middle States team visited Trinity's campus, many positive changes have occurred that influence this report and that strengthen Trinity's overall profile in higher education. Among many accomplishments, these stand out:

- Adoption of a university structure with three distinct schools and faculties: the College of Arts and Sciences (Trinity's historic women's college); the School of Professional Studies and the School of Education, both coeducational;
- Achievement of NCATE provisional accreditation for the first time for the School of Education;
- Construction of the Trinity Center for Women and Girls in Sports, the first new building on Trinity's campus in nearly 40 years; achievement of the first investment-grade bond rating in Trinity's history (Bbb-) and successful completion of the \$12 million Centennial Campaign, the first complete campaign in Trinity's history;
- Securing major federal and private grants to build capacity in Academic and Instructional Technology; another major grant launched an Intelligence Studies program in response to the post-9/11 realities of Washington and the global community;
- Significant improvements in financial management systems and processes;
- Complete conversion of all administrative software --- financial management, financial aid, student information system, academic system, alumnae and development system --- to a state-of-the-art software package that will support Trinity's financial and enrollment management goals for years to come.

Many other successes appear throughout this report, perhaps none so important or pervasive as the success of Trinity's faculty in adapting curricula and pedagogy for the new populations of students attending Trinity today.

While acknowledging many successes, this report is also candid and direct in acknowledging the many challenges that Trinity continues to face. Chief among these challenges are:

- Enrollment in all three schools continues to lag seriously in relation to strategic goals;
- Because of the enrollment lag, revenues are stagnant while expenses are increasing;
- The financial need of the large majority of Trinity students is a serious institutional strain;
- Trinity's aging facilities need considerable investment to meet contemporary academic and social demands.

Many more challenges arise from the critical needs that Trinity students bring to the university today, and the costs inherent in meeting those challenges --- money, time, talent, support services. Without a large endowment, dependent mostly upon tuition, Trinity works hard to find

creative ways to develop and deliver the high quality programs and services for which the institution is known, and that are the reason why students seek a Trinity education.

Chapter 1 of this self-study discusses the paradigm shift that took Trinity from a highly traditional Catholic women's college to the complex institution it is today, with a majority of low income students of color. This transformation has had its moments of destabilization and confusion for Trinity, but as the institution emerged from the 1990's, and with the help of strategic planning, Trinity has been able to embrace this change and move forward with creativity, resourcefulness and a deep sense of purpose.

Obviously, in reading this story, the ability to ensure a successful educational enterprise in the midst of so much change depended heavily on the talent and dedication of faculty and staff whose hard work ensured that the adaptation to change did not sacrifice instructional quality and effective service to new populations. With new student needs, new measures of success became necessary, and Trinity learned how to focus more carefully on outcomes.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the academic assessment processes that are the core expectations of Middle States. Assessment at Trinity begins with the Admissions process and first enrollments, where entrance assessments in writing and mathematics help advisors to place students in appropriate courses during their first semester and first year at Trinity. These baseline assessment practices provide a foundation for future student growth and achievement. The faculty assess student learning in each course and in major programs, with the senior assessment as the final assessment process. Course syllabi and programs also tie their learning goals to Trinity's mission, so that the Middle States expectation of three levels for assessment --- institutional, programmatic and course --- can be fulfilled.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this self-study provide data and information on general education and the major programs. This is the heart of a Trinity education, and these are the places where the astute work of Trinity's faculty shines. Because many students come to Trinity from underperforming urban public schools, Trinity's faculty has a sizeable challenge in designing general education curricula and courses to meet the needs of under-prepared learners while also satisfying more advanced students. Related, the general education needs of adult learners in the School of Professional Studies are also different. As a result of this self-study, Trinity will undertake a comprehensive review of its general education curricula and course scheduling practices to ensure that all students at all levels have effective, appropriate opportunities to develop the platform of knowledge, skills and competencies that general education expects.

With regard to educational programs, both majors and related programs such as internships and service learning, the strength of Trinity's faculty is clear in the creative approaches to conventional disciplines and new content appealing to new populations. A more difficult issue appears in the low enrollments in some programs, and Trinity will need to address this issue effectively. Trinity also must address the problems posed by delays in the program review process. Faculty may well need additional professional development in the work of assessment, particularly program assessment.

Because Library and Information Resources are a vital part of Trinity's academic programs, *Chapter 4* also includes a synopsis of the Library assessment report.

Because the talent and dedication of Trinity's faculty is so essential to student success and institutional progress, this self-study devotes an entire chapter to the faculty, *Chapter 5*. In order to plan more effectively for the development of the faculty for the various schools and programs, and to develop policies more appropriate for the kinds of work that faculty do today, Trinity took an analytical look at the profile of faculty, deployment across the range of courses and programs, time and effort that could be measured through the course schedule as well as self-reported time and effort, compensation and professional development. With this analysis, Trinity now has a more comprehensive framework for planning future development of the size and scope of the faculty. Additionally, the analysis has raised important questions for personnel policy considerations in developing the new *Faculty Handbook*.

Chapter 6 discusses the assessment of student services including Academic Advising, Academic Support, Disabilities Services, Career Services and services for international students, along with Student Affairs and co-curricular life. The profile of Trinity's student body today requires more attention than ever before to the availability of broad-based student support services.

Chapters 7 and 8 are companion pieces focusing on other aspects of institutional assessment. *Chapter 7* addresses issues in Board and senior management assessment, Technology Services and Human Resources. *Chapter 8* focuses on Financial Resources, Fund Raising and Facilities.

Managing Trinity's finances is a considerable task, but one that Trinity has accomplished with great success thanks to the talent of the chief financial officer and her team, and the cooperation of all faculty and staff in the careful management of Trinity's resources. Developing new financial resources through fund raising and improved enrollments is obviously a major strategic goal for Trinity.

Chapter 9, the final chapter of the self-study, returns to the consideration of mission raised in the first chapter, and then develops the outline for the new strategic plan *Achieving Trinity 2010*. The plan is a draft, because the self-study and accreditation process are not complete. With the results of the visit team review and additional campus-wide discussion following the Middle States report, Trinity will complete the new strategic plan document even as the university prepares to launch the largest capital campaign in its history, the *Campaign for Trinity 2010*.

This accreditation moment truly lays the foundation for Trinity's future. If the task of accreditation is to ask an institution of higher learning to assess its present work with candor and rigor, and to articulate a future vision with confidence and conviction, Trinity believes it has more than fulfilled those expectations with this self-study report. Trinity looks forward to discussing this report with the Middle States visiting team, and expresses gratitude in advance for the time, talent and wisdom the team will share with Trinity.

A Note About the Self-Study Process

Many members of the Trinity community participated in myriad ways in the self-study process. In the Spring of 2004, President McGuire provided an overall charge to the faculty and administration for self-study preparation, and appointed Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Sue Blanshan and Associate Professor of Communication Dr. Brad Mello as co-chairs. The Self-Study Steering Committee consisted of the chairs of all faculty committees, members of the Senior Staff and other members of the administrative teams responsible for working groups for the self-study.

Early on in this process, Trinity established the “Middle States Clearinghouse” on Trinity’s website in order to have a central location for documents, reports and other materials essential to the self-study. This was the first time that Trinity could use technology effectively in the accreditation process, and the website proved to be an invaluable resource for research and communication among all those working on the self-study.

To access Trinity’s Middle States Clearinghouse website, team members should go to Trinity’s home page, www.trinitydc.edu Scroll to the bottom left-hand corner and click on the “Quick Links” dialogue box, where a popup menu will appear. Click on “Middle States Clearinghouse” to go to the home page of that section. Click on “here” at the top of that page, and when the popup box asks for the user ID and password, enter:

User ID - trinityweb Password: middlestates

From there the navigation should be intuitive.

Many reports from all departments and programs support this self-study. This report refers to documents that are available on the website and in the Document Room. Trinity has organized these documents in the sequence in which the references appear in the chapters. Should the review team need the documents in another format, or should additional documents be necessary, Trinity will be happy to provide them according to the team’s requests.

Trinity created the Design for Self-Study in Fall 2004, and Middle States reviewed and approved the Design. When the Self-Study draft emerged in October 2005, Trinity posted the draft publicly on the website and invited all students, faculty, staff and members of the campus community to read and respond to the draft. These comments were captured in a special “Middle States Mailbox” on the email system. Additionally, faculty and staff broadly reviewed the sections pertinent to their work and made significant additional contributions to the text.

The final self-study is the product of many different collaborators all of whom worked diligently to try to provide a ‘one voice’ document for the readers. Trinity acknowledges that this self-study is lengthy. However, the comprehensive nature of this review, combined with the very important issues that Trinity has analyzed, made brevity difficult.

The assessment and strategic planning work represented in this self-study are ongoing processes at Trinity. Hence, while this document captures data and reports as of January 2006, additional materials may emerge in the months leading up to the team visit in April 2006. Trinity will make every effort to update this report with addenda and additional data as necessary.

Trinity invites the Middle States Team to request any additional information at any time, including prior to the visit as the team may wish.

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