# Access, Value and Innovation in the Academy: A College President's Perspectives On What Institutions Can Do to Increase their Quality and Success

Remarks to the Council on Undergraduate Research
February 22, 2013

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Trinity Washington University

This is the second talk I've given in the last two days about the need to run with change while not losing what's most important about our work in higher education. Yesterday's talk at the USA Funds Symposium in Tampa focused on how institutions can sustain their "soul" while driving innovation.

Today, let me be less theological and more pragmatic: if we all become MOOCs what is left of any of us that is unique, distinctive and useful to future students? What's left of real collegiate learning? In the current environment, we are witnessing some spectacles of true lemming-like behavior among some very elite institutions rushing to engage the competition like medieval jousters with laser beams. I recently asked a university president of whom I am quite fond why he was rushing his school into the MOOC race and smiled ruefully and said, "I have to, everyone else is in that space already." Lord help the president who chooses to stay in his or her own space --- Teresa Sullivan and UVA provide morality tale enough about the dangers of incrementalism.

We worry incessantly that we may not be any good any more. A stead drumbeat of media criticism tells us that mediocrity is a sin worse than scandal, and we all are at grave risk of succumbing to mediocrity every day.

New York Times writer Tom Friedman opined last year on the idea that just good is not good enough today. "Average is over," he declared. Here's his full quote:

[Slide 2]

*In the past, workers with average skills, doing an average job, could earn an average lifestyle. But, today, average is officially over. Being average just won't earn you what it used to. It*

*can't when so many more employers have so much more access to so much more above average cheap foreign labor, cheap robotics, cheap software, cheap automation and cheap genius. Therefore, everyone needs to find their extra — their unique value contribution that makes them stand out in whatever is their field of employment. Average is over.*
*- Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times, January 12, 2012*

I don't think any of us have ever accepted "average" in our work in higher education, but we find ourselves assailed over poor outcomes and high costs on all sides right now. The turmoil, indeed, the madness we are experiencing in some places in higher education is driven by the perception that our critics may have it right, that we are in the denouement of the great age of higher education, that our industry is sliding into just average, that mediocrity abounds, that we live in a bubble about to burst as messily as the sub-prime mortgage market. We can argue that's a bit harsh, but as a starting point today, I want to take a few minutes to review the notion of "the bubble" --- actually, several bubbles converging, and then we'll talk about where the real challenges are.

The original "higher education bubble" concept arises from a perception that the tuition price spiral is driving up student debt to levels that are not sustainable in light of the realities of the job market --- we see all the sad stories of unemployed college graduates with six figure debt loads. (Let's remember, by the way, that higher ed did not cause the recession, unless you want to blame the b-schools who educated the bankers....) Whether we agree or not with the doomsday scenario --- and many of us believe the "worst case scenario" stories are fewer and more random than media present --- the fact is that we are facing a number of issues in higher education that are putting real stress on our industry.

[Slide 3: Bubble slide]

Consider these issues:

1. College Cost
2. Job Market
3. Student Loans
4. Graduation Rates
5. Athletics
6. Pell Grants
7. Demographics
8. MOOCs
9. "Academically Adrift"
10. Economy
11. Technology
12. Access
13. Aging Faculty
14. Scandals
15. Moody's

With Moody's downgrading the entire sector, the White House reducing our value to five random data points on a scorecard, a few philanthropists even giving scholarships to stay away from college and the Gates Foundation suggesting that MOOCs might replace the whole thing some day, no wonder that the wealthiest, most elite institutions in the nation with the most investment capital to risk are experimenting with new educational formats that may or may not reap substantial benefits in the future. Good for them.

But just like the invention of the Segway did not really revolutionize human transportation in spite of the original hype, MOOCs are unlikely to do more than provide interesting new ways for people to gain knowledge and for some institutions (and their corporate partners) to make even more money. MOOCs may well hasten the spread of knowledge and the deterioration of true learning. For some students, MOOCs will be great ways to amass credit, but for previously marginalized people, often lacking in the skills and knowledge that lower education failed to provide, to say nothing of the lack of computers and data plans, the MOOC concept will not suddenly open pathways to real academic success. A report released just this week from the Community College Research Center underscores this point quite well.

On a much larger scale, however, the real disruption we are facing in higher education is not about delivery systems, but rather, about human beings. The most disruptive force in the immediate future is the wave of new students who are Hispanic and African American, students hungry for knowledge and eager to succeed but who, too often, lack the preparatory foundation for college because of the well known deficiencies of K-12 education particularly among marginalized populations.

The most recent trends report from the National Center for Education Statistics states the following:

(Section below from my blog "Shifting the Higher Ed Paradigm" 1/15/2013 Huffington Post

*Also, slide illustrations from the [NCES report] that forecasts these critical changes ahead for colleges and universities:*

*[Slide 4: Overall enrollment growth]*

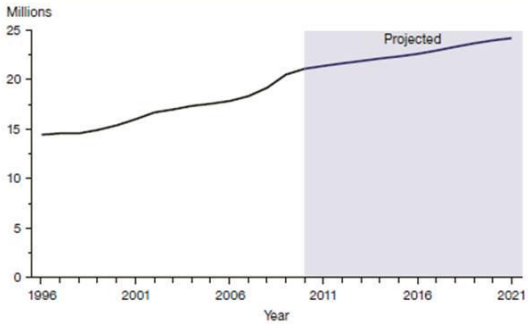
**TOTAL ENROLLMENT**

**Total enrollment in postsecondary degree-granting institutions**

- increased 46 percent from 1996 to 2010, a period of 14 years; and
- is projected to increase 15 percent, to 24 million, from 2010 to 2021, a period of 11 years.

*For more information:*
*Table 20*

**Figure 16. Actual and projected numbers for total enrollment in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions: Fall 1996 through fall 2021**




NOTE: Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Mean absolute percentage errors of selected education statistics can be found in table A-2, appendix A.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:96–99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2011, Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Model, 1980–2010. (This figure was prepared February 2012.)

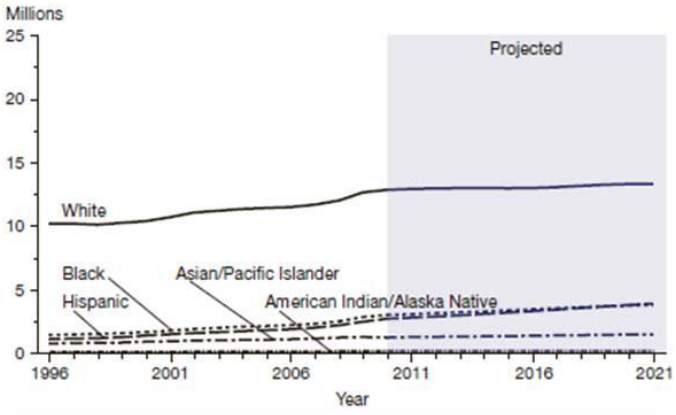
Source: Projections of Education Statistics to 2021
January 2013

4

*• Higher education's total enrollment will slow to a 15% rate of increase through 2021, down from a torrid 46% rate of increase from 1996 through 2010;*

*[Slide 5: Race/Ethnicity]*

**Figure 21. Actual and projected numbers for enrollment of U.S. residents in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 1996 through fall 2021**




NOTE: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Because of underreporting and nonreporting of racial/ethnic data and nonresident aliens, some estimates are slightly lower than corresponding data in other published tables. Enrollment data in the "race/ethnicity unknown" (all years) and "two or more races" (2008, 2009, and 2010 only) categories of the IPEDS "Enrollment component" have been prorated to the other racial/ethnic categories at the institutional level. Mean absolute percentage errors of selected education statistics can be found in table A-2, appendix A.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:96–99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2011, Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity Model, 1980–2010. (This figure was prepared February 2012.)

**Enrollment by race/ethnicity**

Enrollment of U.S. residents is projected to

- increase 4 percent for students who are White between 2010 and 2021;
- increase 25 percent for students who are Black between 2010 and 2021;
- increase 42 percent for students who are Hispanic between 2010 and 2021;
- increase 20 percent for students who are Asian/Pacific Islander between 2010 and 2021; and
- be 1 percent higher in 2021 than in 2010 for students who are American Indian/Alaska Native.

*For more information:*
*Table 29*

Source: Projections of Education Statistics to 2021
January 2013

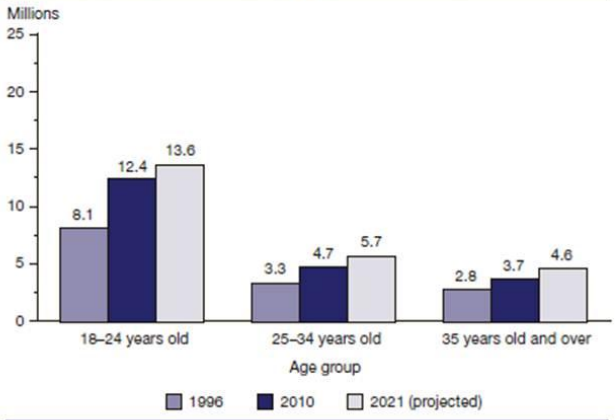
5

- *While enrollment of white students will increase just 4 percent, enrollment of Hispanic students will increase by a whopping 42 percent, and for black students the rate of increase will be a rapid 25 percent growth rate;*

*[Slide 6: Age]*

Source: Projections of Education Statistics to 2021
January 2013

**Figure 17. Actual and projected numbers for enrollment in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions, by age group: Fall 1996, fall 2010, and fall 2021**




NOTE: Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Data by age are based on the distribution by age from the Census Bureau. Mean absolute percentage errors of selected education statistics can be found in table A-2, appendix A. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:96); IPEDS Spring 2011, Enrollment component; Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Model, 1980–2010; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, "Social and Economic Characteristics of Students," various years. (This figure was prepared February 2012.)

**Enrollment by age of student**

Enrollment in postsecondary degree-granting institutions of students who are 18 to 24 years old

- ▲ increased 52 percent between 1996 and 2010; and
- ▲ is projected to increase 10 percent between 2010 and 2021.

Enrollment in postsecondary degree-granting institutions of students who are 25 to 34 years old

- ▲ increased 45 percent between 1996 and 2010; and
- ▲ is projected to increase 20 percent between 2010 and 2021.

Enrollment in postsecondary degree-granting institutions of students who are 35 years old and over

- ▲ increased 32 percent between 1996 and 2010; and
- ▲ is projected to increase 25 percent between 2010 and 2021.

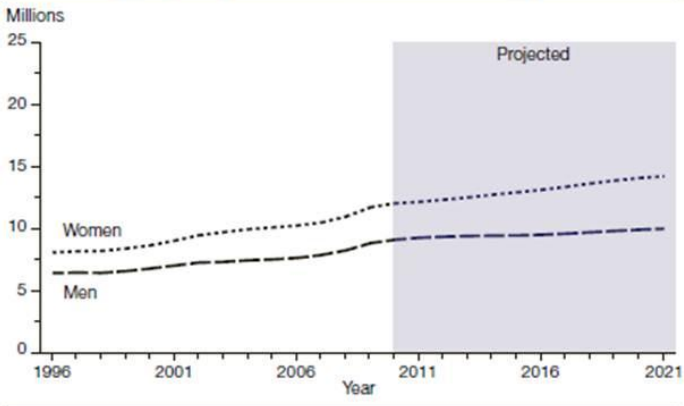
*For more information:*
*Table 21*

6

*• While enrollment of traditional-aged collegians (18-24) will go up about 10 percent, enrollment of older students will grow at twice that rate, with the population of students over age 35 growing the fastest at 25 percent;*

*[Slide 7: Gender]*

**Figure 18. Actual and projected numbers for enrollment in all postsecondary degree-granting institutions, by sex: Fall 1996 through fall 2021**




NOTE: Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Mean absolute percentage errors of selected education statistics can be found in table A-2, appendix A. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:96–99); IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2011, Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Model, 1980–2010. (This figure was prepared February 2012.)

**Enrollment by sex of student**

Enrollment of men in postsecondary degree-granting institutions

- ▲ increased 42 percent between 1996 and 2010; and
- ▲ is projected to increase 10 percent between 2010 and 2021.

Enrollment of women in postsecondary degree-granting institutions

- ▲ increased 49 percent between 1996 and 2010; and
- ▲ is projected to increase 18 percent between 2010 and 2021.

*For more information:*
*Tables 20–22*

Source: Projections of Education Statistics to 2021
January 2013

7

*• Enrollment of women will continue to grow at a faster pace for women (18 percent) than men (10 percent) advancing a decades-long trend that has made women the majority population in colleges and universities.*

*These trends will continue to challenge and change academic tradition, leading ultimately to a paradigm shift in our students, teaching methods and organizational structures. Among the most notable changes we should anticipate, these may well be the most critical:*

*• Abandonment, at long last, of the seat-time vocabulary of the "four year degree" that does not apply to the majority of students today who finish on a different timetable; we should talk about baccalaureate degrees, not four year degrees, and in the same way, associates or masters degrees, or other credentials;*

*• Replacing that outmoded time-in-place language with new emphasis on learning outcomes and degree attainment, so the focus is on what the student actually learns, and what the degree actually means; what should a student know and be able to do who claims an associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree?*

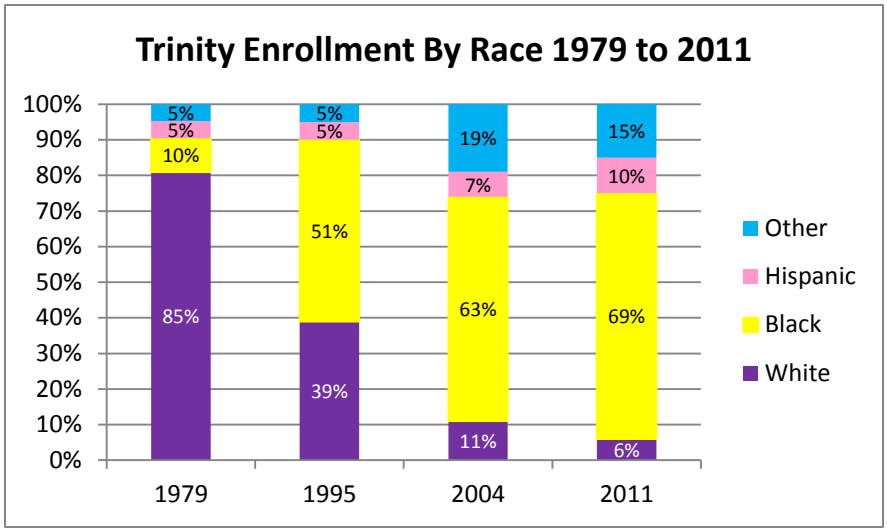
*• Replacement of the utterly deficient notion of "graduation rates" (another traditional time-at-one-place yardstick) with more appropriate measures of academic quality for institutions and students: mastery of general and specific learning outcomes leading to degree or credential attainment.*

*• Transformation of the student financial aid system from its outmoded assumptions about time-in-place to a more reality-based program that can support students of all ages, taking courses throughout the 12 month calendar in different course packets and different formats; right now, the behemoth size and arabesque rules of the federal aid system pose some of the biggest barriers to real transformation of the cost and delivery of higher education;*

*The demographic trends will force the major change ---- from time-in-place to genuine outcomes as the benchmarks of quality --- because the growing proportions of women and students of color do not attend college in the same way that the traditional white men of the 19th and 20th centuries attended college, but their attendance patterns established virtually all of the current benchmarks that informed federal and state policy that has shaped the current collegiate system.*

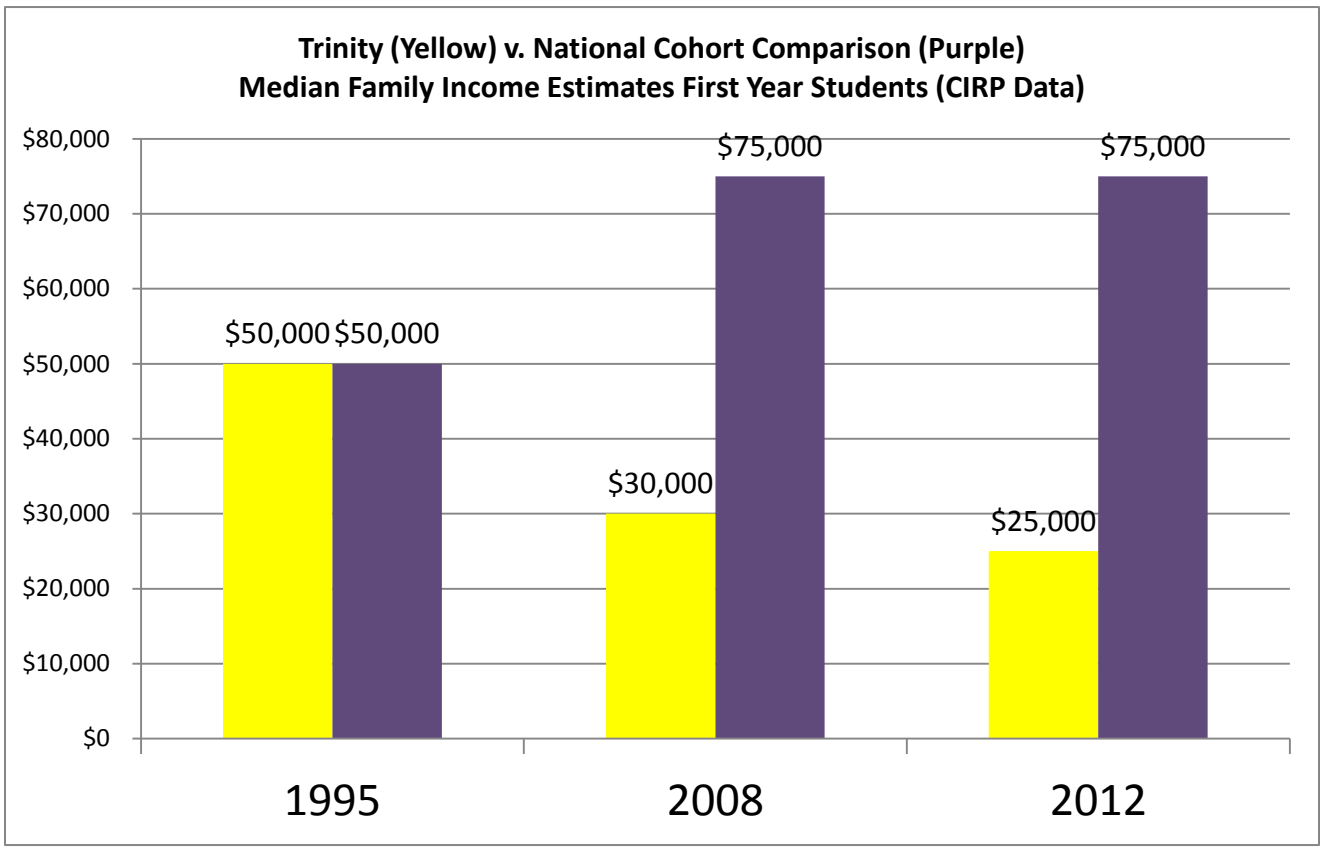
What are institutions already doing about these change dynamics? Let me refocus for a bit on how my institution, Trinity in Washington, has adapted to considerable change:

[Slide 8 – Trinity race changes]



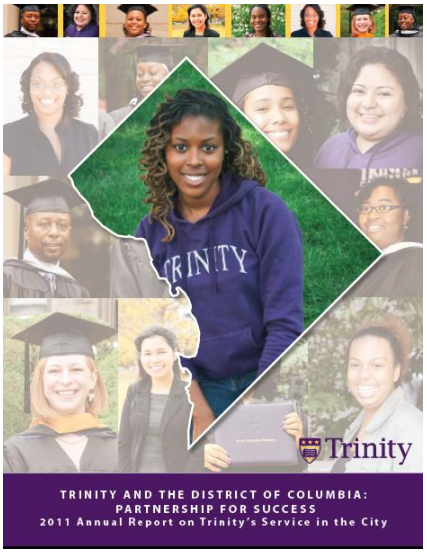

From 1989 to the Year 2000, Trinity's student body demographics changed from more than 85% White to more than 60% Black, from predominantly Catholic to predominantly Baptist and other Christian denominations, from middle class to low income.

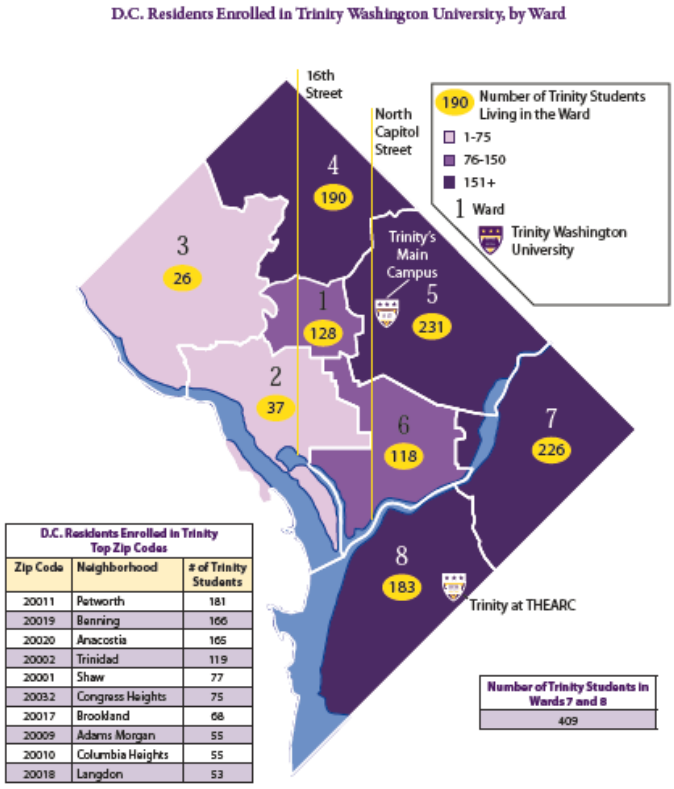
[Slide 9 – median family income change]



The changes in race and social class also illustrated the fact that Trinity was fast becoming a preferred institution for students from the District of Columbia and nearby Prince Georges County.

[Slide 10-11 – Trinity and DC Report]




D.C. Residents Enrolled in Trinity Top Zip Codes

| Zip Code | Neighborhood | # of Trinity Students |
|---|---|---|
| 20011 | Petworth | 181 |
| 20019 | Benning | 166 |
| 20020 | Anacostia | 165 |
| 20002 | Trinidad | 119 |
| 20001 | Shaw | 77 |
| 20032 | Congress Heights | 75 |
| 20017 | Brookland | 68 |
| 20009 | Adams Morgan | 55 |
| 20010 | Columbia Heights | 55 |
| 20018 | Langdon | 53 |

More than half of Trinity's full-time undergraduates today are from D.C., and about 45% of our total student body are D.C. residents. About one-third of these students are from the "east of the river" neighborhoods that are among the lowest income places in the city. D.C. has one of the highest poverty rates among major metropolitan areas along with one of the highest median family incomes. D.C. also has a staggering adult illiteracy rate, about 35%, even though it also boasts the highest percentage of earned degrees in the country. D.C. is a city divided, and that divide runs down the center of the map --- and Trinity serves most of the city on the eastern side of the map.

All of this data framed the real work: Trinity had to undergo profound change --- a true paradigm shift --- in curricula and programs, services and support systems, policies and practices, and in the size and capacity of faculty and staff to work successfully with a new student population. We had to move our perception from focusing on our students as unprepared for us, to an understanding that we had to be better prepared for them.

Some of the obvious characteristics of our student body today, revealed in our financial aid and CIRP data and student essays at entrance and later discoveries by advisors and counselors and service specialists and faculty include:

[Slide 12 - Realities]

- 75% of entering first year students in Fall 2012 are Pell eligible
- $25,000 is the approximate median family income of the first years
- 25% of first years estimate their family income at $10,000 or less
- More than 75% identify as African American, close to 20% as Hispanic
- Majority are self-supporting
- Most work more than 20 hours per week, many work 40+ hours
- About 15% of first year young women have children already
- About 40% of first years have health issues that can impede academic progress
- About 25% of those health issues are mental health issues
- Many of the health issues are previously undiagnosed or untreated
- Pregnancy during any academic semester is likely to require time out of progress toward degree completion, sometimes a year or more
- Majority of entering students require some level of developmental math
- Critical reading skills are deficient
- Writing skills are deficient
- Knowledge of "the academic vocabulary" and culture is limited
- Few if any adults in their lives who can be good supports for academic success

What is Trinity doing to ensure college success for students with characteristics such as these? We have a long list of innovative programs and services running through curricula and pedagogy, academic support services and co-curriculars. We focus on the First Year Experience because we have learned that first year success makes all the difference in persistence and completion.

Some of the most important elements include:

[Slide 13 – Curriculum and Pedagogy]

<u>Curriculum and Pedagogy</u>

1. Assessment: Every student is assessed at entrance for Math, Writing and Critical Reading skills and her first year schedule is tailored to her needs. **We believe that the liberal arts are the essential foundation for success in all future studies, including professional studies. Addressing math, writing and critical reading skills prepares students for successful study in general education in the liberal arts, and general education also prepares students for their subsequent engagement with majors in both liberal arts disciplines and professional disciplines like Nursing.**

2. Engagement: Every first year student has a learning community with no more than 18 other students, led by a senior member of the faculty. All faculty have participated in professional development programs designed to improve their effectiveness with pedagogies designed to help at-risk students achieve at higher levels. **Our faculty are focusing with increasing**

**clarity on opportunities for undergraduate research, particularly in the sciences and social sciences. We have students who are making presentations at conferences and participating in publications.**

3. Specialists: Specialists in the gateway Math, Critical Reading and Writing courses teach the gateway courses and also work with the rest of the faculty to develop the expertise of the discipline-based faculty in the ongoing work of student development. **Our faculty have modeled excellence in partnerships with a variety of instructional models, realizing that there is no "one size fits all" for**

4. Technology: Technology tools provide considerable assistance at the right places for all students. In the first year program, the use of Pearson's MyMathLab and similar packages, as part of the larger pedagogy, has proven effective. All courses at Trinity have websites on Moodle and many faculty have developed considerable expertise in combining classroom and online pedagogies to keep students engaged (even in snowstorms!). **We are wary of MOOCs, however. Our students need a great deal of personal attention and intervention.**

5. Assessment Again: The specialists pay careful attention to assessment in every semester, and we have a body of data collected and analyzed over the last five years that demonstrates increasing progress for students in these foundation skills areas.

6. Career Pathways: With the addition of Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Criminal Justice and other new majors with more specific career pathways, student have additional incentive for higher achievement in general education and all pre-requisite courses. The attention to math and science, in particular, to support the growing health professions programs is forcing students to stick with the gateway courses in greater number.

7. Internships: Internships and experiential learning are essential methodologies for most majors at Trinity. Because of the strong tradition of internships in Washington, many students are employed in their first professional jobs even before graduation, and post-graduate career pathways are strong.

[Slide 14 – Academic Support]

Academic Support

Because the work of the faculty in the regular curriculum is obviously not enough, we have developed a robust Academic Services Center and group of advising professionals who are able to work with the faculty on a broad range of student issues, including:

1. Tutors and workshops: math, writing, critical reading. "Monday Mathematics" has proven to be an immensely popular method to engage reluctant students in additional informal instruction with faculty members. Additionally, tutors --- upper division students who have excelled --- provide important additional support for math, writing and reading. The Writing Center provides significant support for information literacy, avoiding plagiarism, writing skills.

2. Learning skills support: through the Academic Services Center students can access staff and programs that assist them with a wide variety of academic issues from time management and study habits to locating tutors and specialized assistance.

3. Disabilities Support: Trinity's support for students with disabilities keeps expanding, with about 125 students registered for support in Spring 2013.

4. First Year Advising and Services: Success in the first year is crucial to the ultimate goal of timely completion. In addition to all of the other supports, Trinity's first year experience program includes entrance assessment, learning communities, professional academic advising, health assessment, "intrusive advising" when a student starts to slide, triage for the most at-risk students, taking attendance and other activities designed to intervene when students exhibit signs of failing.

[Slide 15: Co-Curricular Support and Partnerships]

**Co-Curricular Support**

1. Health Services (year-round)

2. Residence Life

3. Athletics

4. Campus Ministry

5. Traditions

**Partnerships**

Trinity has developed strong partnerships with a number of organizations that work to provide college access and support to students while in college. Working with the staff and advisors of these organizations, Trinity has been able to improve retention and completion rates because the relationships provide an additional safety net for students. Some of the key relationships include:

College Success Foundation
College Access Program
KIPP-DC
Girl Scouts
Jumpstart

[Slide 16: Successful Outcomes]

A recent survey of Trinity graduates from 2002 to 2012 (survey still in process) points to these results: of those who have answered…

95% are currently employed with a median salary range of $60,000-$69,000

70% have pursued some graduate studies since graduation; 60% have completed graduate degrees and 36% are still enrolled for a total persistence/completion rate of 96% for graduate degrees; the graduate schools they have attended include universities such as Georgetown, the London School of Economics, American University, Howard University, the University of Pennsylvania, UMUC, Bowie, Towson, Phoenix and Trinity

Within one year of graduation, 78% reported that they were immediately employed and 32% were in graduate school

85% of respondents say that they are employed in the same or related field as their major, or in a different field by choice;

The most important knowledge and skills the respondents said they received from their Trinity education include excellence in written and oral communication, critical thinking and a deep sense of ethics.

Top Ten Recommendations for Institutional Success (or how to escape the bursting bubble)

So, what does all of this mean as we contemplate our collective and individual institutional futures around the issues of access, value and innovation in the academy? Can we be successful even as bubbles burst all around us? Whether a relatively small, private, special mission institution like Trinity, or a large public university, or an elite flagship, we are all facing dramatic changes in our students, delivery systems, governmental and societal expectations for our work. To cope with so much change effectively, let's consider these final "Top Ten Tips" for staying ahead of the curve on access, value and innovation:

10. Mission: know what's really distinctive about your mission and affirm that distinction with programs and services that make it work for your students --- and don't be afraid if that looks different from other institutions

9. Risk: do not fear risk, some of the greatest success stories in higher education are at institutions that threw out the rulebooks and tried some new things

8. Beware the Lemmings: don't just do something because everyone else is running to the shiny new thing. It's ok to let others be on the "bleeding edge" of certain kinds of innovation --- especially in tech concepts that seem to change hourly.

7. Be the "disruption" you think is necessary in higher education: why let Bill Gates or some billionaire at Apple tell you that you've become irrelevant? Or worse, an editorial writer in the Washington Post? If we have any brain cells working, we know what we need to do to create healthy change in our own institutions --- stop being afraid of what they'll say about you in the faculty lounge, they'll say it anyway. Disturb the peace, make some noise, experiment!

6. It's not all about money. Much of the change we need to make can be achieved with a good deal of efficiency simply by reprioritizing our sense of what's important, reorganizing how we do our work.

5. It IS about money. For our students, economizing and doing what we can to make college more affordable is essential. I tell our staff at Trinity --- a student took out a loan to pay for those cookies you demanded at the faculty meetings. Bring your own cookies!

4. Assessment is a good thing. We simply have to know what works and why, and what doesn't work so we can get rid of it. The ongoing resistance to assessment is a defense mechanism by vested interests to avoid the potential exposure of ineffective learning results, bad curricular and programmatic practices, outmoded pedagogies. These waste student time and money, see #5.

3. Know the right way to use technology. MOOCs may be great for some kinds of students and certain forms of learning, but they are not the solution for under-prepared learners, which is, unfortunately, one of the target populations currently under discussion in the MOOC think tanks, i.e., the Gates Foundation. Under-prepared learners can certainly benefit a great deal from technology-assisted pedagogies and learning tools. But helping a student get onto a different pathway to academic success is labor intensive, very hard, often frustrating, sometimes disappointing, and, when it works, exhilarating. Don't take shortcuts to quality.

2. Collaborate to innovate. You know this already, but it bears frequent repetition --- we are so much better when we share ideas and work together. The best innovation to transform higher education cannot be imposed by the federal government or big philanthropists or outside forces. True innovation will come from within as we tear down the walls of institutional competitiveness and work across genres and geographies to find the right new methods for making our students powerfully successful intellectually, academically and professionally.

1. Students come first, and teaching and learning is our primary business. Sure, for the research/doctoral institutions, R&D is vital and makes a great contribution to our civilization. But we have to stop excusing away bad teaching practices with the excuse that we exalt research over teaching. You are here today because you believe in the integration of teaching and research. Let's exalt this model as the best way to open gateways of real knowledge and success for our students.

Thanks for listening!