

**Remarks for May 2018 Commencement  
May 19, 2018**

**President Patricia McGuire**

Each year at commencement it is customary for the president to offer a report on the state of the university and the state of the society that our graduates will influence and hope to change for the better from this day forward.

I am pleased to say that the state of Trinity is excellent. The past academic year was a time of achievement and considerable intellectual advancement for our students and faculty.

Among our students today we have accomplished research scientists, students heading for graduate and professional schools, and outstanding careers in a wide range of professions. Your achievements are many. We are especially pleased to have 13 members of Phi Beta Kappa in this class. We are also pleased to recognize our first group of 20 Dreamers who are graduating, and to note that among the Dreamers are 7 members of Phi Beta Kappa and 14 Dreamers are graduating with Latin Honors --- a very distinguished group!

This year we awarded 12 Carnegie grants to students for study abroad, and faculty have also received Carnegie grants across a wide range of endeavors --- in Nursing and Occupational Therapy to promote interprofessional education, in Education to plan a symposium on childhood trauma, in Journalism and Media Studies to develop podcasting capacities, among many other projects.

Our faculty and deans have achieved a great deal. In particular, I am so pleased to recognize and congratulate three amazing science professors who earned tenure and promotion to associate professor this year:

Dr. Karobi Moitra, Molecular Biology  
Dr. Patrice Moss, Biochemistry  
Dr. Mia Ray, Anatomy and Physiology

Please join me in congratulating these three fine scholars.

These three Clare Boothe Luce Professors have played significant roles in the advancement of the sciences at Trinity. Along with their colleagues Dr. Cynthia DeBoy and Dr. Shizuka Hsieh, the science faculty have received a \$1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute for their work promoting persistence and success for low income women of color in the science majors.

I also salute Dean Sita Ramamurti and the faculty who are doing so much work in curricular transformation with a Mellon Foundation grant. I am also pleased to recognize that here with us today is Dr. Pamela Barnett, formerly the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences who achieved our first Mellon Grant --- and our congratulations are in order to Dr. Barnett on her appointment as Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences at LaSalle University in Philadelphia.

Let me also recognize Nursing Professor Kristie Davis who won the very distinguished ATI Nurse's Touch Award. I am also pleased to note that a graduate of our School of Education, Tenia Pritchard, was named District of Columbia Principal of the Year.

I also want to recognize and thank a member of our faculty who is entering retirement this year. Dr. Konia Kollehlon of the Sociology faculty has been a remarkable teacher and guide through generations of Trinity students. Please join me in thanking Dr. Kollehlon and wishing him well in his retirement.

While Trinity is well and thriving, the world beyond Trinity is fraught with challenges that will demand the very best of your Trinity education. The plague of gun violence continues around the nation in too many schools, just yesterday at Santa Fe High School in Texas, and here in D.C. where another promising young life was cut short just this week. Our nation continues to suffer through an extraordinary period of racial and ethnic hatred, of sexual abuse exposed and yet still continuing, of cruel and inhumane immigration actions. On some days it may seem that the most fundamental principles of our democracy are eroding --- the belief that all persons are created equal, that we are "endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Your Trinity degrees come with expectations, the chief among which are the expectations that you will always work to uphold the fundamental values of freedom and equity for all, to help others to build stronger and healthier communities, that you will uphold truth and be champions for social justice.

Well, sure, you might say, of course I want to do all of that, but I often feel powerless, myself --- you have known what it feels like to be excluded, to have your rights curtailed, to be challenged because of your skin color or religious beliefs or languages or immigration status or who you love or how you choose to live your lives. But the very freedom and justice you seek for yourselves is what this education demands you also seek for others. Your own rights cannot be secure unless the rights of others are also secure.

With your Trinity degrees, you have the right to claim places of privilege at the tables where decisions get made. How can I do that, you might say, I am not welcome at those tables! Really? Look to the history of this great institution and the graduates who came before you. They did not focus on what they could not do; they did not ask for permission. They went ahead and claimed their rightful privileges at the table. And so should you.

Trinity graduates across the decades have included legislative staff at the local state and national level, members of state assemblies governors and cabinet secretaries, members of Congress and even a Speaker of the House. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been judges of municipal courts and United States District Courts, the current presiding judge of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the retired chief justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been writers, journalists and winners of awards including a Pulitzer Prize. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been award-winning teachers and principals at schools in the Washington region and across the country. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been distinguished members of faculties and scholars at many universities, and even college presidents. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been entrepreneurs and business executives, nonprofit leaders and members of many boards of directors. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been distinguished doctors and nurses and health care professionals, and research scientists at NASA and Naval Research other major government laboratories. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have served with distinction as officers in the military services, in law enforcement and the intelligence community agencies. YOU have a right to be there, too.

Trinity graduates have been in the White House as advisors to presidents. YOU have a right to be there, too.

You do not need permission, you need the will to action and the ability to execute action with integrity and excellence. Your Trinity degrees today call you to that disposition to action, to take your rightful places as citizen leaders and advocates for justice in all of the places you inhabit.

121 years ago, Trinity was founded by courageous religious women, the Sisters of Notre Dame, whose motivation was and still is their deep belief in the power of education to change and improve lives. Today, you, Trinity's Class of 2018, you are now the latest in a long line of alumnae and alumni reaching back to the very first Class of 1904, the pioneers who first came to this place seeking the means and methods to create social change.

You now take up this work of the ages, carrying Trinity's banner high to all of the corners of the earth you will touch, teach and transform with the work of your lives. May the power, wisdom and light of the Trinity go with you each day. Congratulations, Class of 2018!