

CHAPTER EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Characteristics of Excellence: Through this chapter Trinity will demonstrate compliance with:

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Standard 5: Administration

Standard 6: Integrity

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Trinity maintains an intense focus on comprehensive institutional assessment and effectiveness through a multi-layered governance system that engages the Board of Trustees and executive leadership, management, faculty and staff within and among the academic units and administrative divisions of the university. The Board of Trustees exercises comprehensive oversight, using the strategic plan as the template for ongoing assessment of institutional progress, and the Board vests the president with the daily executive authority to ensure strategic progress, assessment, effectiveness and compliance in all programs and services.

The By-laws of Trinity College establish the legal framework for institutional governance; the Charter and By-laws are available on Trinity's website ([DR 8.1: Trinity Charter and By-Laws](#)). [DR 8.2 Framework for Academic Governance](#) defines the roles and relationships, powers and duties of the Board, president, provost, deans and faculty for all academic matters, including the oversight scope of the faculty within and among the academic units for curricular and academic policy matters. The Senior Executive Staff (SES), including all vice presidents and deans, meet weekly to oversee and discuss all aspects of university management. The Senior Executive Staff reviews progress on the strategic plan routinely, and also reviews and amends administrative policies and processes. The Senior Staff routinely assess areas that need improvement, and direct change as necessary. ([DR 8.3: Master Organization Chart](#))

Trinity maintains a robust and transparent environment for policies and procedures affecting students, faculty, staff and visitors to campus. All [policies](#) are available on Trinity's website, linked on one page for ease of access.

A. Board of Trustees

Trinity's [Board in 2015-2016](#) has 18 members including the president, who is a voting member, and one Trustee Emerita who is non-voting. The current membership includes 8 lay alumnae/i of Trinity and 4 Sisters of Notre Dame, one of whom is an alumna. (Trinity's by-laws express a preference for "no less than five" alumnae and SNDs.) 6 members of the board are "public" members who do not otherwise have a specific alum or SND affiliation.

Board expertise includes 9 members with academic experience, including two high school principals and 6 in higher education; some of those 9 also have significant professional experience in business and finance, law, academic technology, government relations, accreditation and corporate governance. 9 members of the Board have primary professional

experience in finance and business, corporate communications and public relations, philanthropy, law and nonprofit management.

Trinity's Board routinely meets four times annually, once as a day-long retreat and three business meetings. The Board also conducts business from time to time by telephone and email. The president routinely updates the Board on issues at Trinity.

Board Committees include Finance, Audit, Academic Affairs, Development/Institutional Advancement, Nominations, and Enrollment/Student Interests. The Finance Committee meets between Board meetings by telephone and at other times as necessary. Audit, Development and Nominations also meet between meetings or at other times as necessary. The Audit Committee includes three independent trustees, and those three trustees also meet with the Auditors without management present during the annual presentation of the audited financial report. The Committee on Academic Affairs meets prior to each Board meeting, and those meetings include the faculty representatives and other members of the faculty depending upon the agenda. The Board also meets with students on each Board meeting day.

The Board conducts a periodic assessment of its effectiveness. In 2015, the Board conducted a survey of its members; results are available in the document room ([DR 8.4: Board Survey](#)). Consistent with findings of prior surveys, the 2015 Board Survey indicated that Trinity Trustees are generally satisfied with the format of meetings, quality and consistency of materials and information shared with the board, and level of engagement of board members. Areas for improvement include enhancing the work of various committees, ensuring that board members are familiar with Trinity's compliance reports, and ensuring that succession planning is ongoing.

B. The President

Guided by the By-laws of Trinity College, the Board vests the president with the day-to-day executive management of the affairs of the university. The Board oversees the work of the president through the reporting structure inherent in each Board meeting, which includes a formal written report from the president to the Board, and other written and oral reports as needed throughout the year.

The Board conducts a formal evaluation of the president every three years, and that evaluation is the basis for contract renewal. The Board also routinely reviews executive compensation data as part of establishing the president's compensation and reviewing compensation for other senior executives. The confidential compensation data report will be available to the visiting team along with other board materials (minutes, resolutions, presentations and reports) that are maintained on a confidential board web site. Trinity will provide the team reviewers with the password to the board website.

C. The Senior Executive Staff

The Senior Executive Staff (SES) include the president's direct reports and other senior managers whose participation is essential to managing the affairs of the university. In 2015-2016, the SES includes:

Trinity Senior Executive Staff	
Direct Reports	Other Senior Managers
President Provost Chief Financial Officer General Counsel Vice President for Administration Vice President for Enrollment Development/Admissions Vice President for Enrollment Services Vice President for Institutional Advancement Vice President for Development Vice President for Human Resources Vice President for Student Services Vice President for Technology Services	Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of the School of Education Dean of the School of Nursing/Health Professions Dean of the School of Professional Studies Dean of the School of Business/Graduate Studies Dean of Student Services Controller Director of Facilities Services

The SES meets weekly with a standing agenda that includes review of enrollment reports, budget, human resources issues, other administrative and operational issues. The SES also routinely reviews administrative and compliance policies and status reports, and from time to time recommends change in those reports. From time to time the SES also reviews risk management protocols. Each senior executive is responsible for a major institutional functional area, and each executive is responsible to develop, supervise and assess annual plans for the areas of his or her responsibility. Each executive also maintains complaint files and routinely reviews complaints to determine any need for change in policies or staff training.

The members of the SES who are directly responsible for enrollment also form the Enrollment Management Team referenced in Chapter 2 on Trinity Students. This includes the president, provost, academic deans and VPs for Admissions, Enrollment Services and Student Affairs.

D. Conflicts of Interest

Trinity's By-laws include a conflicts-of-interest policy for Board members, and the trustees submit annual conflicts-of-interest statements. Trinity has maintained a fairly rigorous practice of not doing business with any company affiliated with a trustee.

The president discloses all outside boards and potential conflicts-of-interest as part of the annual preparation of the Form 990 for the auditors, and that information is available for Audit Committee review. The president does not accept fees or honoraria from any company that does business with Trinity.

The [Faculty Handbook](#) includes a section on conflicts-of-interest for faculty, and the faculty disclose all potential conflicts-of-interest on the annual faculty inventory form collected with annual contracts. The Provost reviews any instance in which a faculty member may wish to use a textbook that earns royalties for the faculty member.

The [Employee Handbook](#) includes a section on conflicts-of-interest for staff, and the senior staff disclose potential conflicts-of-interest on periodic statements. All staff are specifically prohibited from accepting fees, gifts or personal services of value from any vendors that do business with Trinity.

E. Integrity: Policies and Compliance

Trinity maintains a robust environment for fairness, equity and transparency in the dissemination and application of all policies. The [policies page](#) on Trinity's website is comprehensive. The SES reviews the policies annually, and makes changes as necessary.

Trinity maintains a web page that links to all [Student Right to Know](#) information and policies related to compliance with federal laws and regulations.

Beyond simply stating the policies and procedures, Trinity maintains an environment of active care and concern for due process, student protection and fairness in all matters. The president and senior staff establish a tone of high expectations for respect for all students and individuals on campus, fair treatment and honest behavior in all matters. Trinity's environment of respect for every person is grounded in the mission in social justice, and aligns with Middle States Standard 6 on Integrity.

F. Comprehensive Institutional Assessment

Dimensions of comprehensive institutional assessment flow throughout this Self-Study report. While this section summarizes and illustrates some of these assessment practices, Trinity believes that the best evidence of a complete "culture of assessment" appears in every chapter. Both the 2006 team report and the 2011 PRR reviewer's report commended Trinity for its assessment practices.

Prior sections of this report discuss and illustrate Trinity's practices in academic assessment --- student outcomes, general education, academic programs, and faculty. The Student Affairs section illustrates assessment for those departments. The following chapter on resources provides further illustration of specific assessment practices.

Administrative and operational assessment practices are embedded in the ongoing work of every senior executive, manager and staff of all departments.

All administrative and operational departments conduct annual planning and assessment, rooted in the institutional mission and strategic plan, and these reports are available in the document room ([DR 8.5: Management Annual Plans and Assessments](#)). The president oversees the planning and assessment processes along with the Senior Staff. In January each year, the president issues a memo to the SES outlining expectations for planning and assessment, and these expectations are tied to the institutional strategic plan. In June each year, each executive submits a report on planning and assessment for the departments within his or her area of responsibility. The reports include:

- Data dashboards providing snapshots of progress in key performance areas over time;
- Statements of progress toward fulfillment of departmental goals, aligned with institutional strategic goals;
- Synopsis of assessment activities tailored to select issues;
- Statements of new goals for the subsequent years.

The president reviews all annual plans and provides feedback to the senior executives for plan revision and improvement in performance. The SES conducts an annual August retreat to review the highlights of each plan with the full management team. Individual members of the SES also have opportunities to present their plans and provide updates throughout the year.

Following are examples of the ways in which the annual planning and assessment processes have led to change and improvements in various departments and administrative procedures:

1. Enrollment Services: Understanding Student Enrollment Patterns

This discussion elaborates on material presented in Chapter 2 on the “success rate” and student attendance patterns.

Trinity serves a population of student with well-known risk factors for persistence and completion. Across the years, Trinity has observed that the primary risk factors include student financial conditions, family responsibilities including young child bearing or caring for siblings/elders, physical and mental health issues, poor academic preparation, a lack of understanding of the academic requirements for certain careers, e.g., nursing. Trinity provides a great deal of financial aid support to address the financial conditions, a broad range of counseling and health services for the social needs, and deep academic supports for the preparatory issues.

Nevertheless, many students stop out, transfer to less expensive public institutions, or decide to attend part-time, which delays completion. Like low income first generation students around the nation, many Trinity students “swirl” through multiple institutions, sometimes starting at Trinity and going elsewhere, only to come back later in life; or starting elsewhere and landing at Trinity after collecting a basket full of credits at other schools.

Trinity is one of the institutions nationally that believes that the IPEDS completion rate is a poor indicator of student or institutional success. Because it only measures full-time first-time students who stay and graduate from the same institution in six years, the IPEDS rate excludes a large proportion of students who are actually still in school but attending in a different pattern from the traditional pathway. Institutions like Trinity that serve populations of students for whom the term “traditional” no longer applies need to understand student persistence and completion in entirely new ways in order to tailor programs and services to their needs.

Through the annual planning and assessment process, the vice president for Enrollment Services, who is also responsible for the student information system and annual data reports, organized a study of attendance and persistence patterns of Trinity students across multiple institutions. This study is still in the early stages, but already the study reveals some important data.

Looking at only first-time full-time students (hence, still using the IPEDS baseline), the study took data not only from Trinity’s records but also from the National Student Clearinghouse. While Trinity is not a member of the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) group yet, this study is very similar to SAM studies at other universities. The Clearinghouse data is important because it tracks students across multiple institutions. What the study revealed is that a significant proportion of students not counted in the IPEDS graduation rate actually are still

enrolled or have graduated from Trinity or other institutions on a different timetable or different pathway to completion.

Chart 8.1 below shows this data from the Fall 2006 cohort through the Fall 2011 cohort.

Chart 8.1: Trinity "Success Rate" Still Enrolled or Graduated Trinity/Elsewhere Cohorts Fall 2006 to Fall 2011												
Time since starting: Starting Cohort Semester:	8 years		7 years		6 years		5 years		4 years		3 years	
	2006	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2010	2010	2011	2011
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Earned AA at another Inst	3	2%	1	0%	3	1%	5	2%	1	0%	2	0%
Earned AA at Trinity	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	0	0%
Earned BA at another Inst	22	13%	18	8%	11	6%	11	4%	1	0%	0	0%
Earned Cert at another Inst	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	1%	0	0%
Earned a BA at Trinity (IPEDS rate)	56	32%	75	34%	88	45%	99	41%	34	13%	0	0%
Still Enrolled at another Inst	14	8%	28	13%	12	6%	24	10%	27	14%	68	26%
Still Enrolled at Trinity	4	2%	9	4%	9	4%	5	2%	87	32%	111	42%
Still Enrolled or Graduated ALL	99	57%	131	59%	123	62%	146	61%	154	57%	181	69%
Left not in good academic standing	18	9%	12	5%	16	8%	17	7%	18	7%	20	8%
Financial Hold	26	15%	48	22%	31	16%	23	9%	31	11%	26	10%
Left on academic probation	16	10%	15	7%	14	7%	35	15%	46	17%	22	8%
Left in good standing	15	9%	16	7%	13	7%	19	8%	19	7%	14	5%
Total Left/Not Enrolled Elsewhere	75	43%	91	41%	74	38%	94	39%	114	42%	82	31%
TOTAL Cohort	174	100%	222	100%	197	100%	240	100%	268	100%	263	100%

What the data reveals is that for the full-time first-time cohorts starting in Fall 2006, the overall academic progress through college is significantly greater than the IPEDS rate for Trinity would reveal. This table shows the difference across the three years --- 2006-2007-2008 – for which Trinity has completed IPEDS rates in this study:

Cohort Start Year:	2006	2007	2008
Trinity IPEDS Rate	32%	34%	45%
Total "Success" Rate	57%	59%	62%

Why is this important? Trinity believes it is important for colleges and universities that serve low income first generation students to take a broad, non-competitive view on what it takes to ensure long-term student success. Student swirling, or transferring among many institutions, is a typical behavior in this group. The reality is that this population of students is less likely to care about "brand loyalty" and more eager to enroll according to convenience, flexibility, services and course availability. Students enroll as they have money and time. This population is also less focused on the traditional four-year timetable for college, caring more about fitting continuing enrollment into busy lives that must include work, child care and other non-traditional student obligations.

Money is a significant issue for many students who leave Trinity and enroll elsewhere. The current study shows that the majority of students who transfer go to less expensive nearby public universities and community colleges, including the University of the District of Columbia, Montgomery College, Prince Georges Community College, and Bowie State University. Sometimes, students take some courses at these universities and then return to complete at

Trinity, sometimes completing as part-time students in Trinity's School of Professional Studies. "Swirling" takes many forms.

The current study, like the IPEDS completion rate, itself, does not track students who transfer into Trinity. This is the next phase of Trinity's study. A complete understanding of student persistence and success patterns must include all students, not just the full-time first-time cohorts.

2. Enrollment Services: Reducing Financial Holds and Improving the Default Rate

A review of the "success rate" data presented above also shows that a financial hold is the single biggest reason why students do not persist. Trinity provides generous financial aid packages, and yet, quite often, students find it hard to satisfy even a small balance before registering for a new semester. Students who have to stop out because of even small balances become risks for attrition and even default on student loans.

As part of its annual plan and assessment, the Office of Enrollment Services is examining tactics to reduce financial holds in order to encourage more students to stay enrolled, with the aim to improve the graduation rate and also protect against defaults.

3. Improving Performance on the NCLEX Licensure Exam for Nursing Graduates

As indicated earlier in this report, after starting the Nursing pre-licensure program in 2010, Trinity faced a serious challenge when Nursing graduates did not pass the NCLEX licensure exam at the first-time pass rate required by the District of Columbia. The D.C. Board of Nursing requires program first-time pass rates to be within 5% of the national average, which is usually 80-85%. Unfortunately, after a strong performance in the first year of the program, Trinity's first-time pass rate declined precipitously in 2012 (53%) and 2013 (42%).

Immediately upon discerning this very serious problem, Trinity took a number of action steps to address the problem, with the result that first time pass rates improve in late 2014 and early 2015. Among many action steps, these proved most essential to addressing the issue:

- A deep dive into the student performance data revealed that Trinity Nursing graduates were waiting too long after graduation to take the test, in some cases more than six months; national data shows that first-time test takers are more likely to pass the test within 60 days of graduation; a change in approval procedures to take the test has accelerated student testing closer to the date of graduation;
- The data also revealed that part-time students entering the Nursing program through the School of Professional Studies were more likely to fail the test than full-time students who entered through the College of Arts and Sciences; consequently, Trinity decided to end the part-time pathway and to require any student wishing to enter Nursing to do so through the CAS pathway;

- The data also revealed that students were not taking the test preparation instructions seriously, and were skipping important parts of the NCLEX readiness process; the faculty in Nursing agreed to restructure the curriculum and requirements using ATI tools to embed the NCLEX methodology into every course, to require passage of the ATI comprehensive predictor as a requirement for graduation, and to offer additional test preparation opportunities after graduation;
- A new chief nursing officer has added additional oversight to the admissions pathway, including examination of TEAS data for entrance to Nursing, and more extensive faculty development to ensure alignment of pedagogy and content with the NCLEX expectations.

As a result of this analysis and action steps, Trinity is confident that the NCLEX scores will improve to meet the DC standards, and that the Nursing Program will be more effective in producing high quality nurses to meet the healthcare workforce needs of the Washington region.

4. Institutional Advancement: Improving Trinity's Online Presence

Social media and online marketing tools have become increasingly important for Trinity's student recruiting initiatives, fund raising, and overall communications with all constituencies. Over the last decade, Trinity's Institutional Advancement Team has focused intensely on migrating staff work from exclusively print and paper communications to a highly sophisticated online presence using many platforms.

Online tools give the Advancement Team robust data to use in making decisions about marketing and communication tools. Website visitor data provides one baseline: from 2011 to 2015, traffic to Trinity's website rose from 350,000 visitors annually to more than 435,000, and visitors to the Admissions website increased from 51,000 to 73,000. While the volume of visitors is increasing, the team recommended moving more advertising to Facebook and other online ads to drive even more Admissions business to the website.

The team has also discerned a need to improve the functionality of the website, particularly the way in which visitors access and navigate pages for the academic programs. Improving the academic program pages aims to increase admissions inquiries as well as improve total customer satisfaction with the website. Along with improving the program pages, the team improved the accessibility of the pages for mobile devices, particularly smartphones, ensuring that students, faculty, staff, visitors and prospective students can get the most important information about Trinity in an attractive and highly functional interface on all devices.

The Creative Services Team, the group within the Advancement Team that does graphic design for print and virtual platforms and analyzes performance of all media, also developed and delivered a number of videos posted on Trinity's website and Trinity's YouTube channel, keeping Trinity's message vibrant and interesting for many audiences.

As another example of the use of online data and information to improve Trinity's public interface, analysis of declining numbers of completed online applications convinced the team that a complete overhaul of the online application interface was necessary in order to improve

performance of that vital tool for Admissions. After soliciting bids and choosing a partner, Embark, Trinity is moving ahead with an entirely new online application tool that will provide a significantly better experience for applicants to all programs while also improving data access and analysis for internal users. Demonstrating the kind of partnership that is emblematic of the Advancement Team, the team organized a cross-functional work group including members from Admissions, Technology Services and Academic Affairs to collaborate on design and implementation of the new online application.

Additionally, Admissions and the Creative Services Team have joined forces on new student search tools that make extensive use of online communication and web presence. Adoption of the College Board Search tools with fully online interfaces for data analysis will provide opportunities to align marketing materials more carefully with target populations. In the same way, adoption of a more robust online marketing program for adult and professional students will enlarge those prospect pools for Admissions.

Conclusion to Chapter Eight

Trinity's Board, leadership and management practice continuous planning and assessment in all phases of their work. Board meetings use the strategic plan as an organizing tool for setting agendas that focus on institutional improvements and resource allocation. The Senior Executive Staff engage in continuous planning and assessment activities as a means to ensure the best use of resources and to measure performance toward goals.

Recommendations:

Through the Self-Study process Trinity has identified these areas for ongoing development in its leadership development, planning and assessment practices:

- Developing improved administrative capacity for planning and assessment, including more managerial training on how to collect and analyze data for workflow improvement;
- Engaging more mid-level staff in assessment processes to enhance planning and outcomes in the respective subsidiary departments;
- Creating more opportunities for the executive team and staff to share best practices and results cross-functionally among the various administrative teams, and with faculty.