

CHAPTER FIVE: ASSESSMENT OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Characteristics of Excellence: Through this chapter Trinity will demonstrate compliance with these Middle States standards:

Standard 11: Educational Offerings
 Standard 13: Related Educational Activities
 Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Quality and excellence in academic programming are the essential elements of the Trinity learning experience. Trinity's mission is the foundation on which this programming rests. Trinity offers degree programs at the associate, baccalaureate and master's levels that are entirely consistent with institutional mission and that are responsive to local, regional, and national educational needs. **Chart 5.1** displays the programs by unit:

Chart 5.1: Trinity Undergraduate Programs 2015-2016

CAS		SPS			NHP	
BA	BS	AA	BA	BS	AAS	BSN
Business Admin.	Biochemistry	General Studies	Communication	Accounting	Occupational Therapy Asst.	Prelicensure
Communication	Biology	Early Childhood	Early Childhood	Business Admin.		RN-BSN
Criminal Justice	Chemistry		Human Relations	Criminal Justice		
Early Childhood Ed.	Exercise Science		Media Studies	Health Science		
Education	Forensic Science		Psychology			
Elementary Ed.	Mathematics					
English						
History						
Human Relations						
International Affairs						
Political Science						
Psychology						
Sociology						

Trinity Graduate Programs 2015-2016

NHP		EDU				BGS		
MSN	MOT	MAT	MED	MA	MSA	MA	MSA	MBA
Nurse Admin	OT	Early Childhood	Educating for Change	Clinical Mental Health	Ed. Administration	Strategic Com & PR	Concentrations:	Bsns Admin
Nurse Education		Elementary Ed.		School Counseling		International Security Sds	Human Resource Mgmt.	
		Secondary Ed.					Non-Profit Mgmt.	
		Special Ed.					Org Development	
							Public & Community Health	
							Federal Program Mgt.	

This chapter demonstrates that Trinity's "educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission" and that "the institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings." (Standard 11) Trinity's faculty cultivate practices of continuous assessment to ensure that programs are meeting students' educational needs, achieving stated learning outcomes, and conforming to mission. Trinity has identified four factors that impact the effectiveness of academic program assessment: conceptual design must provide a coherent framework for assessment; assessment activities must engage thorough data collection and analysis; evaluation mechanisms must provide timely and relevant feedback; and finally, implementation of findings – closing the loop – must be the outcome of each assessment project. This chapter illustrates how Trinity's faculty accomplishes program assessment on a continuous basis.

A. The Major Programs

[DR 5.1: Majors and Minors](#) is a spreadsheet showing all major and minor program enrollments by semester from Fall 2007 to Fall 2015. CAS offers BA and BS degrees in a range of liberal arts disciplines, and also prepares students for entry into the Nursing BSN program in NHP. The suite of majors in NHP also includes both the associate degree for Occupational Therapy Assistant as well as the master's degree in Occupational Therapy which leads to licensure in the profession. NHP also offers the RN-BSN program for licensed nurses, and the MSN program for nurses who want to go on in Nurse Administration or Nurse Education.

SPS offers undergraduate degrees including the AA, BA and BS in a number of academic fields. The associate degree is offered on Trinity's main campus as well as at THEARC (Town Hall Educational and Arts Resource Center) in southeast DC. Section D, below, provides more detail on Trinity at THEARC. EDU and BGS are exclusively master's-level programs, with EDU offering the suite of majors for teachers, school leaders and counselors. BGS specializes in master's degrees for business professionals.

Almost all of Trinity's academic programs are delivered in classroom formats; while SPS and BGS offer a few on-line courses, these are minimal and available face-to-face as well (offering in both formats allows alignment of course goals and outcomes). Some graduate and professional courses occur in hybrid formats, with both classroom and online instruction; in NHP, for example, the OTA and MSN occur in hybrid formats.

Chart 5.2 below shows Trinity's top growth majors from academic years 2007 through 2015. The majors represented in this list underscore what today's Trinity students are looking for: majors that clearly articulate to careers, yet remain grounded in the values of liberal learning.

Chart 5.2: Top Growth Majors AY07-AY15

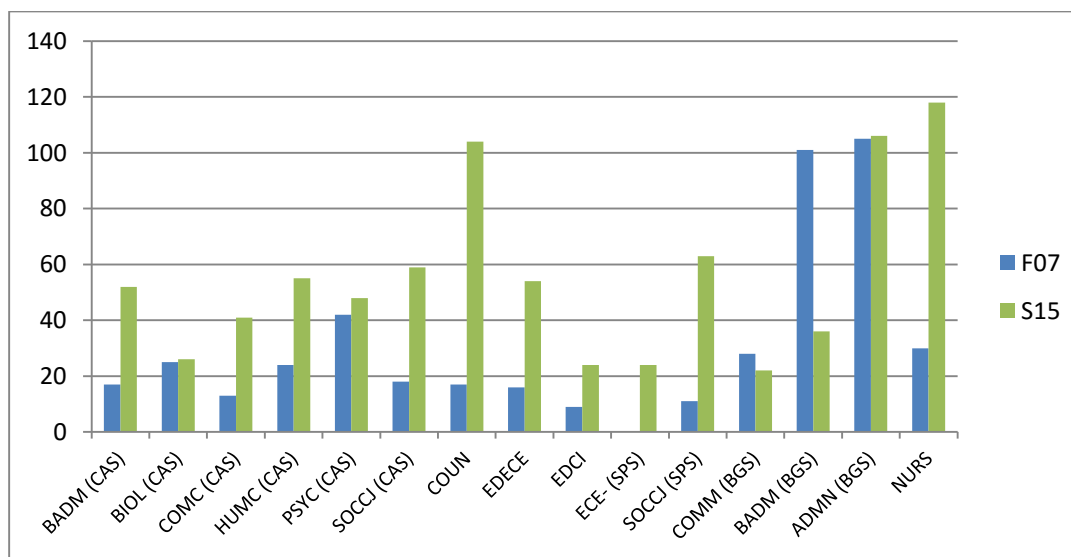


Chart 5.2 shows that fifteen of Trinity's academic major areas experienced robust growth over the last ten years. All major areas represented above showed promising growth, notably

Biology, Biochemistry and Chemistry (CAS undergraduate, here collapsed as BIOL), Education (CAS and SPS undergraduate - ECE), Human Relations, Psychology and Counseling (CAS and SPS undergraduate – HUMC and PSYC, EDU graduate - COUN). Trends indicate overall strength in a majority of major areas in CAS, SPS, EDU and NHP.

However, not all majors experienced this robust growth – and some are due for an overhaul. In CAS humanities and general social sciences, several majors either lost students or showed no significant change over time. And while graduate enrollments held steady or began to grow in EDU and NHP, BGS programs experienced enrollment declines as many students graduated but Admissions did not replace the numbers, similar to other programs in the marketplace.

As an example of responsiveness to workforce demands and enrollment changes, the School of Business and Graduate Studies reviewed the MA in Communication. BGS has developed a new market-responsive major which replaces the traditional program in Communication with an MA in Strategic Communication and Public Relations (SCPR). SCPR provides an excellent example of grounding in liberal learning while integrating professional preparation. In the same vein, for undergraduate students in the School of Professional Studies, a similar assessment of the traditional Communication major led to the creation of the Journalism and Media Studies (JAMS) program to align traditional liberal arts skills and knowledge more carefully with modern media workforce demands.

B. Assessing and Ensuring Rigor in the Academic Programs

Trinity has a long history of formal academic program assessment, curricular review, and use of findings to improve student learning outcomes. Trinity’s CAS and SPS undergraduate academic programs, and graduate BGS programs, participate in a five-year assessment process on a continuing basis. In the School of Education and the School of Nursing and Health Professions, program review is mandated by external specialized accrediting agencies that oversee licensure programs according to the timetable specified by each accreditor.

Program assessment cycles are staggered, so that in any given year, each program is engaged in a particular phase of the assessment process. This model allows for cyclical workload for the faculty, administrators and committees responsible for program review and forms natural cohorts of programs in similar stages of the cycle. In addition, programs which have completed tasks may act as consultants with valuable insight for programs in a different phase of the process.

During the first three years of the assessment cycle, Trinity’s programs examine their mission and learning goals, design their assessment methodology and select instruments, and analyze findings. In the final two years, the academic programs implement the goals, objectives, and recommendations that result from the assessment process, in anticipation of further assessment in the next cycle. [DR 5.2 Program Review Schedule](#) provides a snapshot of each program’s current placement in the assessment cycle and progress timeline.

The program assessment process is driven by faculty collaboration and peer review with strong support from the Provost’s Office. The University Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee (UCAP), a committee that includes faculty and administrators from all five of Trinity’s academic

units, supervises and mentors all programs in the assessment process. The deans, associate deans, and records and research offices in Enrollment Services also provide necessary support, consultation, and data. **Chart 5.3** below provides an overview of the assessment process:

Chart 5.3: Program Assessment Process Overview	
Year 1	Outline Mission and Develop Assessment Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop program mission, goals, and objectives • Generate questions that can be answered with measurable outcomes • Identify appropriate sources of data and describe method for data collection
Year 2	Carry out assessment plan designed in Year 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect all qualitative and quantitative data needed for assessment • Use multi-modal methods (direct and indirect) to assess student learning outcomes at entry, intermediate and exit points in the major
Year 3	Analyze data collected during Year 2; develop formal assessment report, which includes strategies for furthering program objectives and goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft report and present findings to UCAP Committee • Discuss findings and identify areas of success and challenge
Years 4 & 5	Close the Loop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement findings • Begin to review mission, goals and objectives for next cycle

[DR 5.3: Protocols for Program Assessments](#) in the First, Second and Third Years provides a comprehensive outline of the program review process. The balance of the [Chapter 5 Document Room](#) contains the individual program reviews for all programs in all academic units.

To facilitate consistency, Trinity defines relevant terms in the program review process as follows. The **mission** of an academic program, which states what the program's purpose or aim is within the context of its school, must be aligned with the University's mission. The mission statement identifies the contribution of the program as related to all relevant constituencies --- major and non-major students, program and university faculty, post-graduate stakeholders (i.e., future employers). Trinity asks programs to imagine their ideal graduate, and determine the following: what should the successful graduate know (knowledge base)? What should the graduate be able to do (skills base)? And what should the graduate care about (values base)?

The knowledge, skills and values of the ideal graduate must inform the program's mission, goals, objectives, and most importantly, learning outcomes. Program **goals** specify the contribution that the program intends to make as a result of its knowledge, skills and values focus; **objectives** are operationalized as measurable benchmarks that guide the next phase - developing questions and assessment instruments for self-study. **Objectives** are also directly related to the program's stated **student learning outcomes**.

The resulting research questions frame the assessment process and allow the program to identify and define the learning outcomes data that it will collect. Overall, each program's assessment is grounded in this broad research question: how successful is the program in meeting its identified objectives (student learning outcomes)? Trinity asks programs to assess not only perceived strengths, but particularly areas that might need to be improved.

In designing assessment plans, programs determine sources of data. To measure academic rigor, programs may draw external comparisons to cohort and regional institutions by examining structures of the major, credit hours, course distributions and sequences, introductory and capstone activities, assessment strategies, and pedagogical techniques. Programs also align their curricula to the national recommendations of their respective professional organizations; for example, Trinity's psychology curriculum is aligned with the American Psychological Association's [Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major](#).

Common data sources for the measurement of specific learning outcomes include both direct and indirect measures, such as content analysis of portfolios, papers, or capstone assessments, grade distribution analyses, student and alumnae surveys, course pre-and post-tests, embedded assessments, and national test outcomes such as NCLEX exam results.

In addition, the Offices of the Provost and Enrollment Services provide programs with data such as student-teacher evaluations, program faculty (including part-time faculty) curriculum vitae, analyses of teaching load and course sequences, student enrollment data, etc. As part of the review, Trinity also expects programs to create a curriculum matrix which maps the program's learning outcomes at increasingly sophisticated cognitive levels as a student progresses through the curriculum. The curriculum map allows visual examination of coherence in a particular major's academic plan, including sequence of courses with prerequisites.

In the third year of the cycle, programs submit a draft assessment report to the University Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee (UCAP). Trinity has established evaluation criteria for third-year reports which analyze how well programs have met their own goals and objectives. UCAP is responsible for providing feedback and ensuring that programs "close the loop" using what they've learned from the assessment process.

UCAP assigns two faculty members from different schools and disciplines as peer reviewers of each submitted review. These peer reviewers often provide rich and varied feedback, all of which include essential elements. In responding to the program assessments, reviewers consider whether programs clearly tie results of data collection to programmatic goals and correspondent course goals. They ensure that programs have analyzed all collected quantitative and qualitative data, and that programs identify other notable results. Reviewers consider whether the report describes to what extent programmatic goals and objectives have been achieved, discusses how the results will be used to improve the program, and articulates a specific plan for program changes, based on the conclusions of the analysis.

C. Case Studies in Program Review

Over the last decade, Trinity's approach to assessment evolved from a pro-forma exercise to a vibrant and vital form of research to maintain currency and quality in academic programs. Faculty endorsement of assessment work underscores Trinity's excellence in program review. The following case studies illustrate how program review at Trinity achieves strong outcomes.

➤ *Case Study #1: Sociology Program Assessment Plan, Year 2, 2014-2015*

Trinity's Sociology Program is a prime example of this shift in assessment culture. In the past, although reluctantly engaged in assessment tasks, the Sociology Program was resistant to the review process and thought it superfluous. In embarking on its most recent review, the associate provost and the program chair decided to create a meaningful assessment that would ignite Sociology's interest in whether students were learning essential concepts in Sociology.

The program faculty reflected that their students were not developing "sociological imagination", a core competency in Sociology, and decided to focus their review around this concept. Once they identified a learning goal that piqued their interest, the Sociology faculty threw themselves into the assessment process with intentionality and gusto. Below are excerpts from the Sociology Program's assessment plan; the program is currently in phase 2, data collection:

Excerpt from the Sociology Program Assessment: The Sociology Program is in the second year of implementing our assessment plan. In the first year, 2013-2014, we developed the plan which is centered on helping students develop an understanding of sociology. In Fall 2014, we began data collection...utilizing the concept of the sociological imagination developed by C. Wright Mills, a sociological theorist, as a measure of how well students can articulate a sociological perspective. The sociological imagination is widely acknowledged to be a cornerstone of the discipline. In four sections of SOCY 101, including one honors course, students are introduced to the sociological imagination through readings, class discussions and written assignments. We designed several measures to evaluate the ability of students to define, summarize and analyze social issues using the sociological imagination [by applying a rubric to exam questions and written assignments]. Below is a specific list of goals we hope students will achieve:

GOALS: Students should understand and articulate the sociological imagination as an essential component of sociology so that the student will be able to

1. define and identify the sociological imagination.
2. apply the sociological imagination to a specific social issue or experience.
3. use other sociological concepts in conjunction with the sociological imagination to display an understanding of the overarching sociological perspective and articulate the value of the sociological imagination in their lives beyond the classroom.

Rubric and Evaluation Method:

1. **Sociological Imagination:** Student recognizes that an individual is impacted by and exists within a social context (meets goals 1)
2. **Vocabulary:** Student demonstrates use (application) of sociological terms and vocabulary to describe, and/or comment on the social context of questions asked: (meets goal 2)
3. **Application of the Sociological Imagination:** Student demonstrates appropriate and accurate application of sociological ideas, concepts, vocabulary, and theory in describing, identifying and analyzing relationships among elements in a social context, i.e., has developed a sociological perspective (meets goal 3)

EVALUATION: In each of the above areas the measure will include the following ratings:

0: Poor—Does not use sociological concepts

1: Fair—Sociological concepts infrequently used or frequently misused or inappropriately applied

- 2: Good—Sociological concepts are applied with reasonable accuracy and frequency
- 3: Very Good—Sociological concepts are consistently applied with accuracy and clarity of use
- 4: Excellent—Especially strong understanding and application of sociological concepts

As Trinity’s program assessment protocol requires, the Sociology Program followed a three-year cycle. In 2013-2014, the Sociology program developed the assessment plan. In 2014-2015, the program collected data to measure the goals articulated above, using the sample rubric. In 2015-2016, the program analyzed findings and is closing the loop. The Sociology Program submitted the program’s final report in December, 2015 ([DR 5.4: Sociology Program Assessment](#)). In the Spring 2016 semester, the program begins the work of curricular revision. As the program report states: “Measures used to evaluate student understanding of the sociological imagination demonstrate that students were able to identify the concept and define it, especially in objective assessments, but were less successful in applying the concept [in written work]. There is more the program can do to increase students’ understanding of and application of the sociological imagination, thus giving them a tool to use throughout their lives:

“1. The program should continue to provide consistent and varied measures to test comprehension and application of the sociological imagination in the introductory course.

“2. The program must increase the direct emphasis of the sociological imagination in introductory courses, and reinforce through the semester.

“3. The program will bring the sociological imagination more explicitly into upper level courses so as to reinforce the concept as an analytical tool. Students studying focused areas of sociology, especially social inequality, theory and research methods should become comfortable with its application.”

The program also noted: “Experience with this assessment process has reinforced the program’s commitment to teaching in the broadest possible way the basic tenets of sociology, the centerpiece of which is the sociological imagination ... [Students can use] the sociological imagination as an analytical tool so that they can be empowered to face their futures with confidence long after they leave Trinity.”

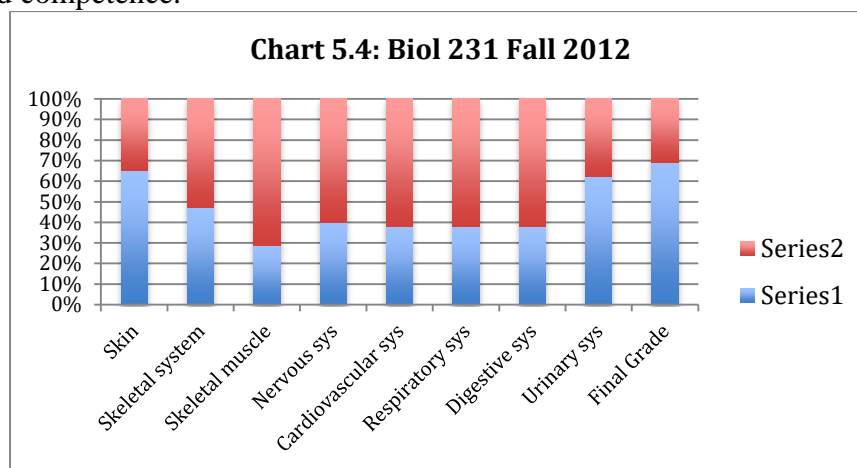
➤ *Case Study #2: Biology Program Assessment*

Biology is a model program for the use of assessment data to improve student learning outcomes. In its 2014 assessment plan, Biology modified its program goals to be aligned with an external benchmark, the 2011 “[AAAS Report: Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education: A Call to Action](#)” and selected two overarching goals for review: 1) concepts for biological literacy and 2) competencies for the process of science. Utilizing a multi-method design, the program collected data from courses ranging from the 100 level, BIOL 101, to senior seminar, NSCM 499. The program uses the data effectively to inform curricular revision. Below is an example from the Biology program’s most recent review:

BIOL 231 Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy

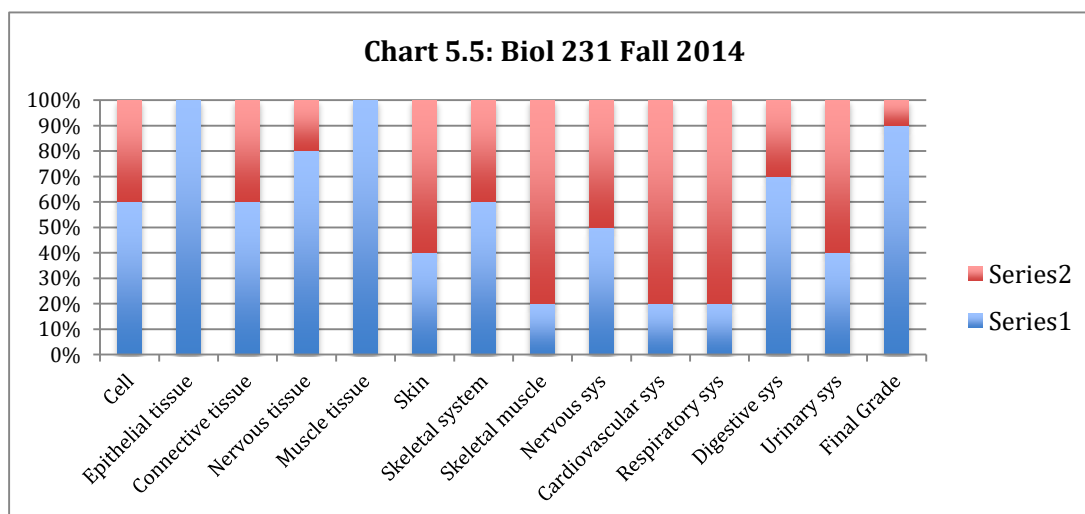
Goal 1.2 Concepts for Biological Literacy: Structure/Function

The following graphs for BIOL 231 are based on the percentage of questions answered correctly in a given topic area. The graph demonstrates the percentages of students that passed (correctly answered 60% of the questions – indicated in blue) for a given area in anatomy and physiology compared to the percentages of students that correctly answered fewer than 60% (red). **Chart 5.4** provides scores from Fall 2012 for comparison to scores in **Chart 5.5** for similar areas of knowledge and competence.



70% of students correctly answered questions related to structure-function (blue) on the final exam. In Fall 2012, skeletal muscle was the area with lowest scores. These findings informed course revision with the intention of increasing concept knowledge in low-performing areas.

Compare the **Chart 5.4** results above to the results in **Chart 5.5** below, in which similar data were tracked for students enrolled in 2014. Overall student outcomes greatly improved compared to Fall 2012. 90% of students correctly answered questions related to structure-function on the final exam (blue). This is a 20% improvement in course outcomes. However, skeletal muscle scores were still lower than other topics. As a result of this analysis and data from other anatomy courses, the biology program invested in the purchase of clay models that allow students to build skeletal muscles; a future assessment will determine whether this hands-on, active pedagogy will improve student learning outcomes in this key area of competency.



[DR 5.5: Biology Program Assessment 2011-2015](#) provides significantly greater depth on the total program assessment for majors and service courses. An important outcome of Biology program assessment is a movement by the faculty to increase the use of undergraduate research opportunities as a means to improve student outcomes.

➤ *Case Study #3: Master of Science in Administration, BGS*

Trinity has offered the Master of Science in Administration for professional managers for many years. The School of Education offers the MSA for principals and school leaders, and that program is accredited through NCATE (now CAEP) and is aligned with requirements for the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA). In the School of Business and Graduate Studies, the MSA program has concentrations for students who are professional managers in the federal government, nonprofit and public organizations and private businesses. While these programs do not have specialized accreditation, the faculty of BGS has undertaken alignment of these programs with professional association standards in the respective areas of concentration, including:

- MSA in Federal Program Management now aligns with the competencies of the Project Management Institute's Program Manager's Certification (PgMP) as well as the competencies outlined in the National Association of Contract Managers' (NACM) Body of Knowledge.
- MSA in Organizational Development aligns with the Organizational Development Network's competencies of leaders of change.
- MSA in Human Resources Management aligns with the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) competencies and learning outcomes for the HR profession. This alignment enables graduates of the program to apply for HR certification.

Achieving these alignments required curricular review, the addition or reformulation of several courses, and redevelopment of course syllabi to ensure that the professional guidelines flow through the courses and that the faculty are appropriately trained to satisfy the competencies.

➤ *Case Study #4: Occupational Therapy Assistant Program*

In summer 2014, the relatively new OTA program analyzed student feedback provided on course evaluations, graduate surveys, and accreditation standards against the curriculum, course syllabi, and student performance outcomes. Students noted they felt unprepared to implement intervention strategies during their fieldwork experiences. They recommended more skill analysis and in-class activities to practice interventions.

The OTA faculty revised the occupational performance thread to begin with activity analysis and progress in intensity as occupational performance is analyzed through the lifespan. The Occupational Performance curricular thread, replacing OTA Skills Labs, now includes "Analysis and Performance of Occupations across the Lifespan", "Occupational Performance I" and "Occupational Performance II. They revised the intervention thread to "Intervention and Tools

in Pediatrics”, “Interventions and Tools in Behavioral Health and Psychosocial Rehabilitation”, and “Interventions and Tools in Physical Rehabilitation”. Each intervention course increased to 4 credits to incorporate more hands-on laboratory time and fieldwork experiences.

D. Trinity at THEARC

Responsive to Standard 13 on Related Educational Activities, this section describes Trinity’s work at an additional location at THEARC in southeast DC. Middle States approved a substantive change request for this location in 2009. Through the School of Professional Studies, Trinity offers the associate degree at THEARC in southeast Washington, in a neighborhood severely under-served by educational, arts and recreational programming. [THEARC \(Town Hall Education, Arts and Recreation Center\)](#) is an innovative partnership that includes major educational and cultural organizations including the Washington Ballet, Children’s Hospital National Medical Center, Levine Music, the Washington School for Girls, and the Boys and Girls Clubs, among others. Trinity was the only university invited to participate in the partnership to serve the educational needs of residents of communities east of the river. THEARC is located in a major new building constructed specifically to house the activities of the partners.

[Trinity at THEARC](#) is truly mission-driven; the associate degree programs offer adult students who have been out of school for a while an opportunity to advance educationally and at work. Trinity offers the associate’s degree in general studies, and one with an emphasis on early childhood education to enable teacher aides to earn the credentials necessary to stay employed in Pre-K educational centers in DC. 85% of the students are eligible for Pell Grants, and the teacher aides are also eligible for DC TEACH grants, and many also receive employer tuition benefits. Trinity’s program director at THEARC reports to the dean of SPS, and the SPS-CAP Committee oversees the program in the same way as other SPS programs. Most of the faculty who teach at THEARC are adjuncts, and they have a deep commitment to the students there.

Approximately 80 students attend Trinity’s program at THEARC in any given semester, and since the program’s inception, nearly 400 students have enrolled. 85 students have earned the associate’s degree, and 38 have gone on to Trinity’s main campus in baccalaureate programs, and others have gone on to baccalaureate education in other institutions. Several have also entered master’s programs. [DR 5.6: Trinity at THEARC](#) is an assessment report with more details about the faculty and students at THEARC, and identifies future goals.

E. Experiential Learning

This section is responsive to Standard 13: Related Educational Activities on the topic of Experiential Learning. Trinity conducts different forms of experiential learning activities appropriate to the degree programs, including:

1. Internships and Practica

Nearly all major programs require or encourage internships or different kinds of field experiences. The Office of Career Services and Experiential Learning works with the provost,

deans and faculty to supervise and assess these experiences. Chapter Seven on Student Services discusses this work in more detail.

2. Clinical Experiences

Licensure programs in Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Teaching, Counseling and School Leadership all require clinical experiences and the faculty of those programs supervise these experiences carefully. [DR 5.7: NHP Clinical Affiliations List](#) and [DR 5.8 EDU Clinical Agreements](#) illustrate the types of placements.

3. TELL: Trinity Experiential Lifelong Learning

Supervised by the dean and faculty of the School of Professional Studies, [TELL](#) is a program to recognize credit for professional experience. The program is structured according to national standards for prior learning assessment, and it requires substantial portfolio development along with participation in the TELL seminar conducted by a member of the faculty trained in experiential learning assessment.

Trinity also accepts credits approved through CLEP, DANTES and ACE, and a student may earn up to 30 prior learning credits through a combination of TELL and the other sources.

Conclusion to Chapter Five

Program review is a vital process at Trinity and provides the opportunity to demonstrate educational effectiveness to students, institutional stakeholders, accrediting agencies, and other external audiences. Program review is a faculty-governed process that produces objective information, useful for decision making at every level—departmental, collegiate, and to the university as a whole.

Recommendations:

- Going forward, the program review process will continue to develop even more sophisticated methods to assess student learning in the major disciplines and to measure effective outcomes beyond graduation. Toward that end, Trinity will augment program review in these ways:
 - Improve methods for assessing effectiveness of general education in relation to requirements of the major disciplines for critical reasoning, advanced writing, quantitative and technological skills to improve student learning outcomes;
 - Improve alignment of major discipline goals and evaluation metrics with external standards for the disciplines and professional associations in related workforce areas;
 - Develop a systematic method for collecting data from Trinity graduates and their employers to assess the long-term effectiveness of the programs in preparing Trinity students for participation and leadership in the workforce and civic life.