CHAPTER TWO: TRINITY STUDENTS: ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Characteristics of Excellence:

Through this chapter Trinity will demonstrate compliance with:

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention
Standard 6: Integrity

Enrollment Development is Trinity's #1 strategic goal, making Trinity an intensely student-centered institution. All other strategic goals and daily operations focus on the elements necessary to ensure enrollment growth and student success.

Trinity once thought a small enrollment was a way to ensure quality. From 1900 to 1960, Trinity held enrollment to fewer than 500 students in order to ensure excellence, a disposition that earned Trinity a reputation as one of the elite women's colleges. But that no-growth strategy meant that Trinity did not develop the kind of institutional capacity in finances or other resources necessary to compete in the heady era of higher education's expansion in the 1960's and 1970's. Trinity had a brief enrollment boom in the mid-1960's, but soon experienced catastrophic decline when Georgetown and other men's colleges went coed.

As stated in Chapter One, Trinity studied strategic options over the years, including full coeducation, and determined that it would sustain the core women's college with a more distinctive focus on the educational needs of women in the city as part of a strategy for programmatic diversification that also included building coeducational graduate and professional units. As one Middle States reviewer noted in reflecting on one of Trinity's many reports over the years, choosing to sustain the women's college with the emphasis on urban women proved to be more radical than if Trinity had gone coed.

A. Trinity's Enrollment History

CHART 2.1: Trinity Headcount Enrollment 1900 to 2015
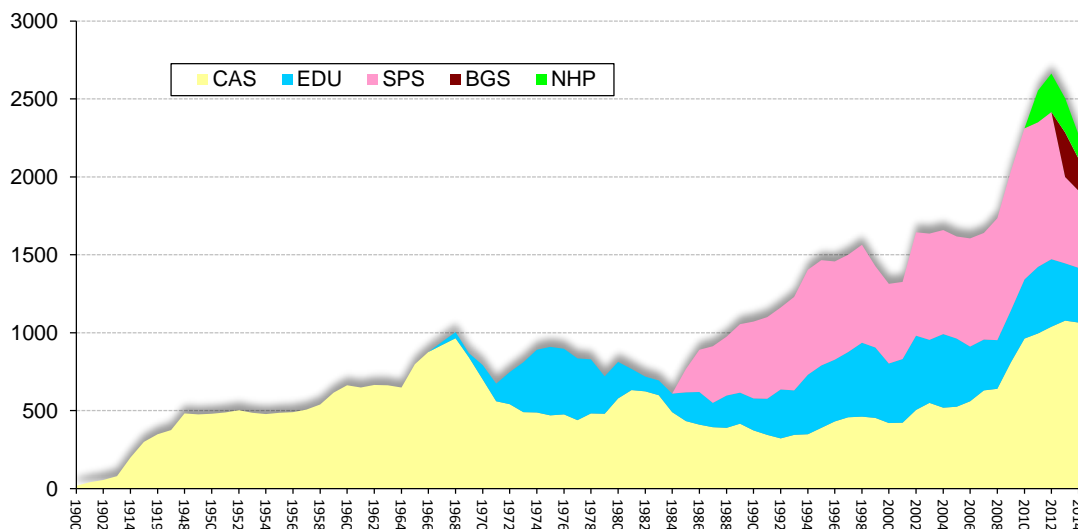
Chart 2.1, above, shows Trinity's enrollment history. The yellow area on the bottom of the chart is the historic undergraduate women's college, now known as the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). Enrollment in that unit peaked at a high of nearly 1,000 in 1968, then declined precipitously when Georgetown and other men's colleges went coed. Enrollment in that unit dipped to a low of just about 300 in 1989, rebounding to more than 1,000 in 2014. CAS offers only baccalaureate degrees.

The blue area shows the School of Education (EDU) that began as an M.A.T. program in 1966. The unit has always been coeducational and graduate-level, offering master's degrees.

The pink area is the School of Professional Studies (SPS) that began as a Weekend College for adult working women in 1985; the unit is now coeducational. SPS offers associate as well as baccalaureate degrees. The burgundy area is the relatively new School of Business and Graduate Studies (BGS) that took the graduate programs originally in SPS into a new partner unit in order to provide those students and faculty with administrative services and focus appropriate for graduate education.

The green area is the School of Nursing and Health Professions, starting in 2010. NHP is coeducational and offers associate, baccalaureate and master's degrees in Nursing and Occupational Therapy.

CHART 2.2 shows enrollments from 2001 to 2015 for the fall semesters:

FALL ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNTS 2001 to 2015
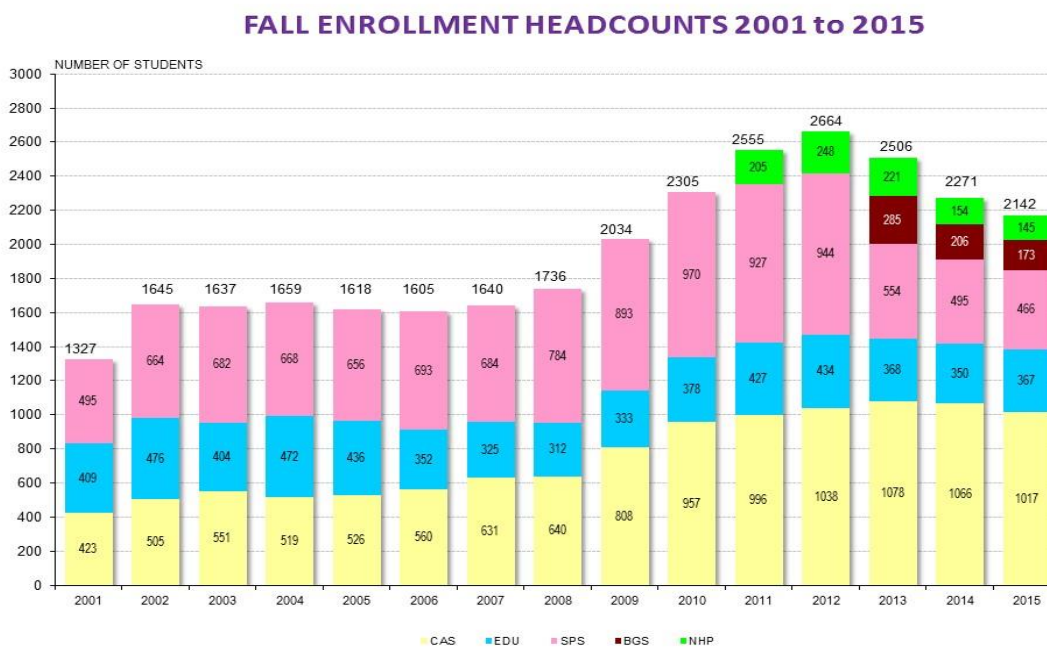
As **Chart 2.2** clearly shows, Trinity enjoyed substantial enrollment increases from Fall 2008 to Fall 2012. Starting in Fall 2013, enrollment decreases have occurred. The following discussion analyzes these decreases and action steps to address them.

B. Enrollment Fluctuations and Action Steps

Several significant factors contributed to Trinity's enrollment gains from 2008 to 2012:

- Implementation of the Nursing pre-licensure program was the single greatest contributor to enrollment growth in CAS and SPS, as well as NHP, since students intending to major in Nursing enter Trinity through one of the undergraduate programs;

- A new First Year Experience Program in CAS emphasized mastery of skills necessary for collegiate success with the goal of boosting retention and graduation rates;

- New undergraduate programs in Criminal Justice, Forensic Science, Early Childhood Education and other fields attracted new enrollments, and programs related to health professions also grew, e.g., Psychology at the undergraduate level, Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the graduate level;

- Trinity's visibility and reputation in the District of Columbia grew increasingly strong through partnerships with college access providers like the D.C. College Success Foundation, D.C. College Access Program, the Girl Scouts and other organizations.

Starting in Fall 2013, Trinity began to experience enrollment declines in several key programs, and the reasons for these declines are relatively clear:

- Graduates of the Nursing pre-licensure program were unable to pass the NCLEX exam at sufficiently high rates to meet the D.C. Board of Nursing standard; consequently, Trinity immediately pulled back on Nursing enrollments in order to give the dean and faculty time to address the issues effectively. The turn-around process has taken some time, but 2015 results to date are promising. Chapter 8 of this Self-Study provides more details on Nursing in the institutional effectiveness section, and the Nursing program review and related documents on the website.

- Enrollment in graduate programs has declined severely as a result of several factors:

  o New providers for teacher and principal licensure have taken considerable market share in the Washington region, resulting in downturns in enrollment at Trinity and other Schools of Education, as well as nationally.

  o The popularity of MBA degrees diminished considerably for a time (more recently growing again), a situation aggravated in the Washington region by the effects of the federal sequestration.

Beyond these factors of markets and programs, Trinity's enrollment patterns also vary because of student conditions that affect persistence, retention and completion. These conditions are a direct result of the factors that affect the populations that Trinity chooses to serve as a matter of mission. The following discussion includes a profile of Trinity students and factors influencing their persistence and success.

C. "Thousands of Women At Trinity's Doorstep"

In the early 1990's, as Trinity's Board of Trustees debated elements of the strategic plan, one of the Sisters of Notre Dame grew exasperated with the discussion of how to "reclaim" the past of Trinity. "Why are we trying so hard to 'reclaim' something that is gone," she exclaimed, "when there are literally thousands of women at our doorstep who need this education." She went on, "The Sisters of Notre Dame founded Trinity because women did not have access to higher education in 1897, and many women still do not have access. Trinity should be the college that provides access to women who have been excluded." The Trustees heard the call to action, and from that moment forward, Trinity made a radical commitment to the education of women in the city. Choosing to pursue mission among previously excluded women changed the demographic, economic and academic profile of the student body in ways that have had a significant impact on curricula and programs, services and finances.

1. Demographic Profile

Trinity today is a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), predominantly Black with a growing Hispanic population. **CHART 2.3** shows the evolution of Trinity's racial composition during the last decade:

CHART 2.3: Race of Trinity Students 2006 to 2014
Fall Data (IPEDS)
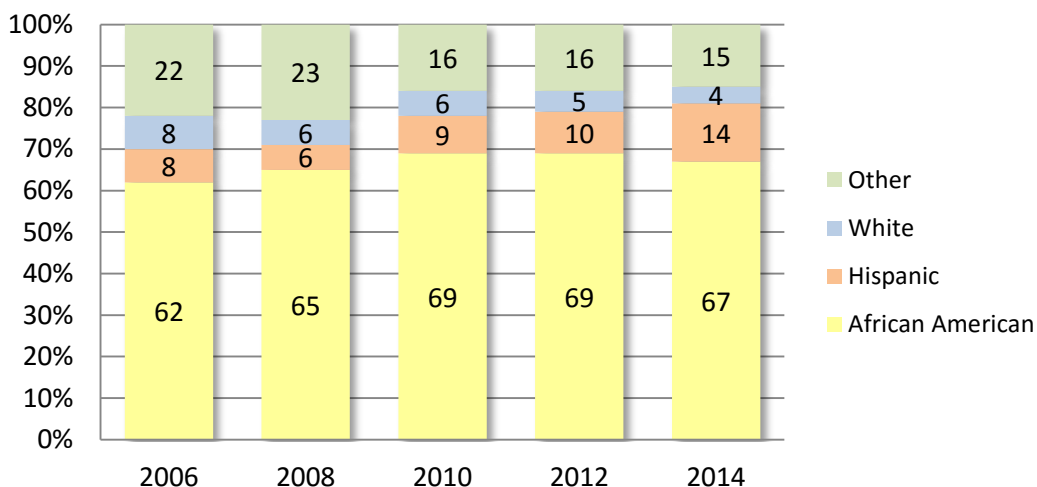
Trinity's growing Hispanic population is due in part to excellent Admissions relationships with Hispanic-serving schools and organizations in the D.C. region, as well as a partnership with TheDream.US on a scholarship program for undocumented students (Dreamers).

Trinity new students in CAS participate in the annual CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) data collection program. (See DR 2.1 2015 CIRP Trinity First Year Survey) CIRP reports compare Trinity first year students to the same cohort of women at other Catholic colleges and universities. **Chart 2.4**, below, shows some key comparisons:

Chart 2.4: FALL 2015 CIRP DATA: KEY DATA POINTS Comparing First Year Women at Trinity v. Other Catholic Colleges		
	Trinity	Catholic Colleges
Black or Hispanic Identity	94%	23%
White Identity	>1%	57%
Age 19 or younger at start of college	94%	99%
Language Other than English	29%	10%
Will Need Help with Math in College	67%	35%
Will Need Help with Writing in College	46%	19%
Parents Divorced or Living Apart	60%	26%
57% of Family Income Estimated At or Below	$25,000	$100,000
Family Income Estimated Above $100,000	7%	41%

In Fall 2015, 58% of the new students in CAS are residents of the District of Columbia, with most coming from public or charter schools. (See DR 2.2 CAS New Student Profile)

Trinity students in all academic units have high aspirations at entrance. While the majority of students enrolling in the College of Arts and Sciences are full-time first-time students, with some transfers, in the School of Professional Studies the majority of new undergraduates have prior college credit, some dating back many years.

2. Financial Profile

Trinity students across all academic units have considerable financial challenges. Predominantly low income women of color, many single parents, these students are largely self-supporting and working a considerable number of hours to pay for school while supporting their families. CIRP data reveals that the median family income for Trinity freshwomen is $25,000, with fully 26% reporting family incomes below $10,000.

Even among traditional-aged freshwomen and sophomores, the number of young mothers and students who work 40 hours a week or more is considerable. Students often struggle with books, transportation, food and housing, and Trinity extends support services as much as possible to aid students who find these expenses daunting.

Trinity strives to keep tuition prices affordable. Tuition increases have averaged no more than 2-3% annually for the last decade. With a full-time tuition of $22,390 in 2015-2016, Trinity is the least expensive private university in the Washington region as well as among Trinity's cohort institutions. The average discount is 40% of tuition. A complete presentation on Tuition and Financial Aid is available in the document room (DR 2.3 Tuition and Financial Aid 2015 Presentation to the Board of Trustees).

3. Academic Preparation

Decades of academic failures in the D.C. Public Schools and other urban school systems have a devastating impact on the readiness of most public school graduates for college, and many charter school graduates have similar characteristics. (DR 2.4: 2015 DC PARCC High School
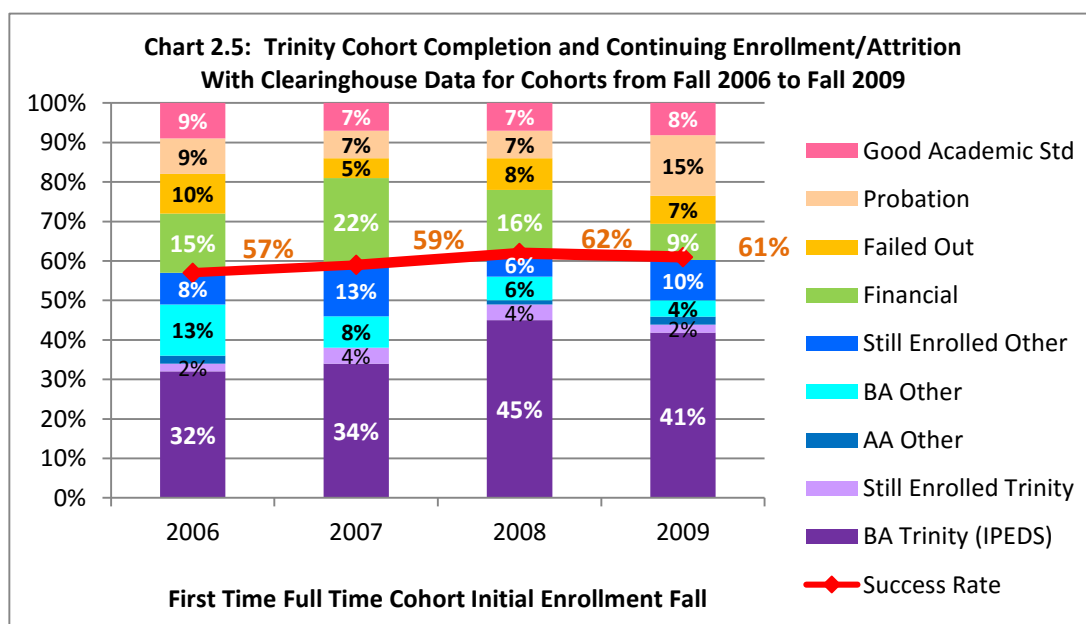
Test Scores) Trinity believes deeply that its mission in social justice demands that such students have an opportunity to change the course of their academic lives, to learn how to grow and succeed intellectually despite prior learning deficiencies. As a women's institution, Trinity also believes in the essential imperative of educating mothers in order to improve the long-term opportunities for children to learn well. Consequently, Trinity students from D.C. and nearby Maryland counties often arrive with significant preparatory challenges that tend to elongate time toward degree, and sometimes contribute to years of stopping out. Other chapters in this self-study document the ways in which Trinity's academic programs and academic services support the ability of students to overcome preparatory deficiencies to become successful college students.

D. Persistence, Retention and Graduation Rates

Trinity uses multiple measures of student performance and persistence to assess individual and institutional success. Data from the U.S. Department of Education indicates that about 75% of all undergraduates today have non-traditional characteristics. All Trinity students are "non-traditional" by some measure --- not only by age, but by the amount of time spent working outside of school, by parenthood or other family obligations.

The IPEDS graduation rate, a traditional straight-line measure frequently cited in popular media and by policymakers as a surrogate for institutional quality, is a weak indicator of educational effectiveness for an institution like Trinity whose student body is largely non-traditional, and where the students have multiple risk factors. Trinity's IPEDS 6-year graduation rate for the cohort that entered in Fall 2008 is 45%, a substantial increase from the Fall 2007 rate of 34%, and very strong performance for a student body that has a high percentage of Pell Grant students, and extraordinarily low income students. Poverty is one of the greatest risk factors for academic success, along with having children, working many hours, and health problems. Trinity students have all of these risk factors.

To provide a more complete picture than IPEDS allows, Trinity has developed a "success rate" profile similar to the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) used at other universities.
CHART 2.5 shows Trinity's "success rate" for 6-year cohorts for Fall 2006 to 2009:

Chart 2.5: Trinity Cohort Completion and Continuing Enrollment/Attrition With Clearinghouse Data for Cohorts from Fall 2006 to Fall 2009

Observations on **Chart 2.5:**

- Because the cohorts are relatively small, the IPEDS "graduation rate" (dark purple on bottom) fluctuates across the years from as low as 32% for the Fall 2006 cohort to a high of 45% for the Fall 2008 cohort.

- The Trinity "success rate" (the red line with red percentages alongside the columns) shows the percentage of students in the cohort who are *still enrolled or have graduated at Trinity or another college* and this line tends to be more stable than the IPEDS rate.

- The "success rate" includes students who transfer and remain enrolled or who complete at other colleges; unlike IPEDS, Trinity does not view transfer as a failure.

- Financial holds (green bar) as a reason for not graduating appear to have abated, illustrating the results of work done by the Financial Aid team to address financial concerns; academic reasons for not graduating (gold and pink) fluctuate with cohorts.

DR2.5: Graduation and Success Rates 2006-2011 provides more detail, as well as Chapter Eight of this self-study in the section on Institutional Effectiveness.

E. Enrollment Management

Given Trinity's intense focus on enrollment issues, the entire process of enrollment management from inquiries through graduation is a major component of the daily work of all senior executives and management teams. The full Enrollment Management Team, led by the president, meets weekly as part of the Senior Executive Staff meetings. This team monitors weekly enrollment reports, examines trends in retention and persistence, reports from academic advising, identifies risk factors for attrition, and collaborates in planning initiatives to improve enrollment performance. (See DR 2.6: Strategic Enrollment Analysis as one example of many presentations for discussion at Enrollment Team meetings.)

1. Retention Trends

Chart 2.6 below shows fall-to-fall retention rates overall and for each unit:

| Chart 2.6: Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates Fall 2007 to Fall 2015										GOALS	
F-F	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2015*	*2016*
Total	70%	71%	72%	75%	73%	72%	70%	71%	72%	78%	80%
CAS	68%	67%	72%	76%	73%	71%	69%	70%	73%	78%	80%
SPS	67%	73%	71%	73%	68%	66%	64%	69%	70%	72%	75%
BGS	73%	80%	76%	77%	76%	76%	74%	82%	79%	82%	85%
EDU	73%	73%	68%	75%	74%	74%	74%	72%	76%	82%	85%
NHP					94%	85%	77%	78%	64%	90%	92%

The Enrollment Management Team examines retention data continuously; the academic deans are responsible to provide analyses of retention/attrition factors for their students. The Enrollment Management Team reviews this data on a continuous basis, and directs actions to address factors that cause attrition or promote retention. The primary risk factors driving attrition across all academic units at Trinity include financial stress, academic stress, health challenges and family responsibilities including child care and care for siblings or elders.

Aware of these risk factors, the Enrollment Management Team, working through the academic units and Enrollment Services group, has taken these initiatives:

- With the leadership of the CAS dean and faculty, redevelopment of the CAS First Year Experience and General Education to improve student engagement, reduce time spent in developmental courses, and promote persistence into second year.

- With the leadership of the deans of each academic unit, assessment of academic advising practices that foster retention and completion, or that discourage students from persisting, e.g., eliminating an advising practice that limited many first year students to 12 credits per semester.

- Identifying and eliminating "small barriers to retention" such as requiring appointments in offices where students should be able to get help on a walk-in basis;

- Recognizing the profound impact of deep poverty on many students, Trinity also strives to provide a web of personal support services ranging from maintaining a food pantry for hungry students to providing Metro cards for transportation to expanding the use of open source materials to reduce textbook costs; Chapter 7 of this Self-Study provides more detail on the resources available through Student Services.

2. CAS Retention Early Success Indicators

CAS retention improvement during the last three years is an example of the ways in which Trinity's practices of assessment lead to institutional change and improvement. **Chart 2.7** below shows improvement in fall-to-fall retention for each CAS class year for the last three years:

Chart 2.7: Trends in CAS Fall-to-Fall Retention by Class Year Cohorts
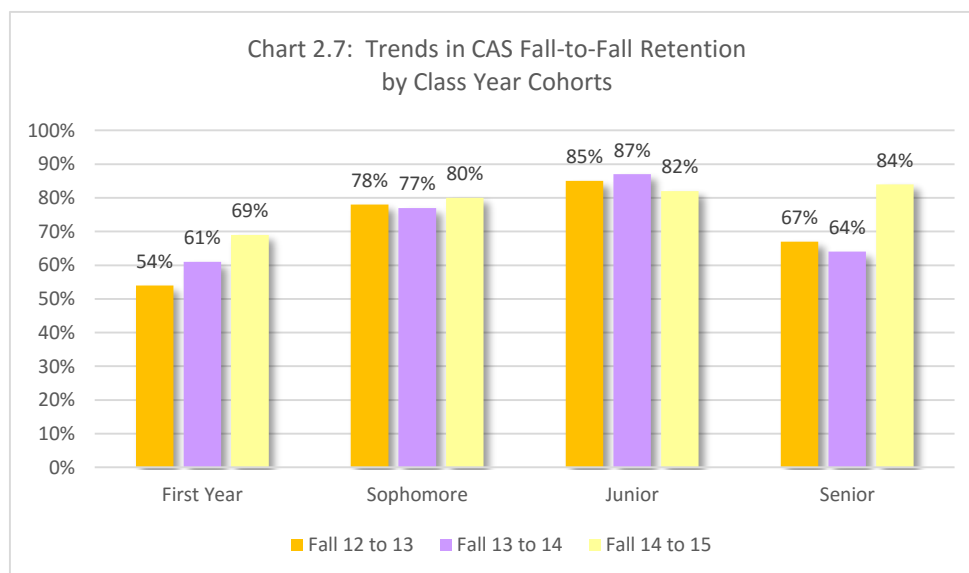
Based on Trinity's analysis of the 32-34% graduation rates for the Fall 2006 and 2007 cohorts, the CAS dean and faculty began intensive work on restructuring the first year experience. However, for the cohort that started in Fall 2012 (the 54% first year retention rate shown on the far left of the graph above), the results indicated that further change was imperative. Consequently, the dean and faculty added even stronger academic supports as well as significant improvements in the capacity of the CAS advising team. Additionally, Student Affairs collaborated with the CAS team to strengthen co-curricular supports. As a result, the fall-to-fall retention rate for first year students improved to 61% for freshmen starting in Fall 2013, and 69% for freshmen starting in Fall 2014.

Improved advising and a more intentional effort to get students to completion also led to improved retention of upperclass students, notably a large increase in retention of students from junior to senior year. The work on first year retention improvement and later year persistence and completion initiatives is ongoing.

F. Enrollment Development (Admissions)

Enrollment Development (*aka* Admissions) at Trinity is a centralized administrative function that serves all academic units. The vice president for Enrollment Development supervises the team of admissions directors and recruiters serving each academic unit who work collaboratively while also developing expertise in the markets and requirements for each academic unit and program. The team also includes data services and other centralized support staff. The cross-functional nature of the team ensures that all prospective students receive full service while also making sure that admissions materials, presentations and decisions are carefully aligned with the requirements of each program.

1. CAS Admissions Data and Strategies

CAS Admissions performance has improved considerably in the last decade, but the enrollment environment remains challenging. **Chart 2.8** below is an analysis of application and enrollment data since 2005:
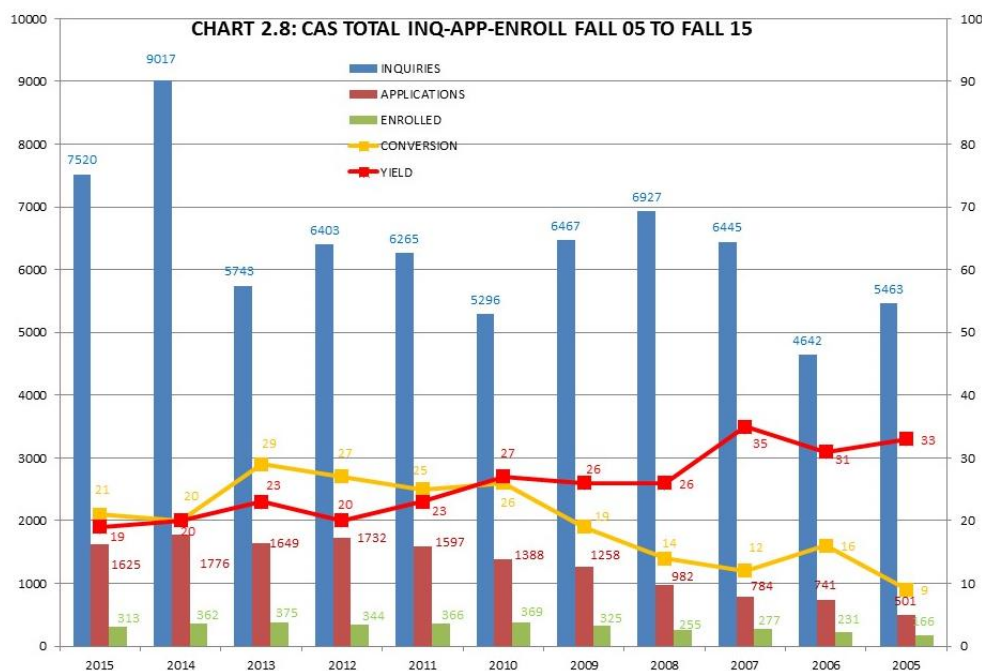
Chart 2.8 shows that while inquiries and applications have increased in recent years, conversion (inquiry-to-application) and yield (application-to-enrollment) rates are falling. The Enrollment Development Team has established goals for improving the quality and rating of the inquiry pool; improving the proportion of completed applications (currently 25-30% of applications remain incomplete in any given cycle); and improving yield management tactics to ensure fulfillment of goals. Other strategies to improve CAS Admissions performance include:

- Development of a new online inquiry and application system that will streamline data capture and analysis, improve staff responsiveness with applicants, and provide greater ease of interface between applicants and Trinity in ways that will increase satisfaction, and ultimately, the yield rate; all units will benefit from the new online application which is being pilot tested for CAS in 2015;

- Adoption of new College Board search tools to improve development of the prospect pool through more targeted marketing that emphasizes alignment of academic programs with prospective student interests;

- Improved focus on the "top 25" feeder schools where Trinity has strong partnership relationships and excellent historic enrollment performance.

- Improved collateral materials in print and online, revamped campus visit programs and streamlined processes for yield management from acceptance through enrollment.

2. Marketing, Recruiting and Admissions for Professional Students

Recruiting students for the four professional schools – SPS, BGS, EDU and NHP – is located in the central Enrollment Development Office under the leadership of an executive director who reports to the vice president. The recruiting teams work closely with deans and program directors to ensure that professional students have the requisite qualifications for admission.

Chart 9: New Student Counts in Professional Schools
Aggregated Fall + Spring New Students By Academic Years
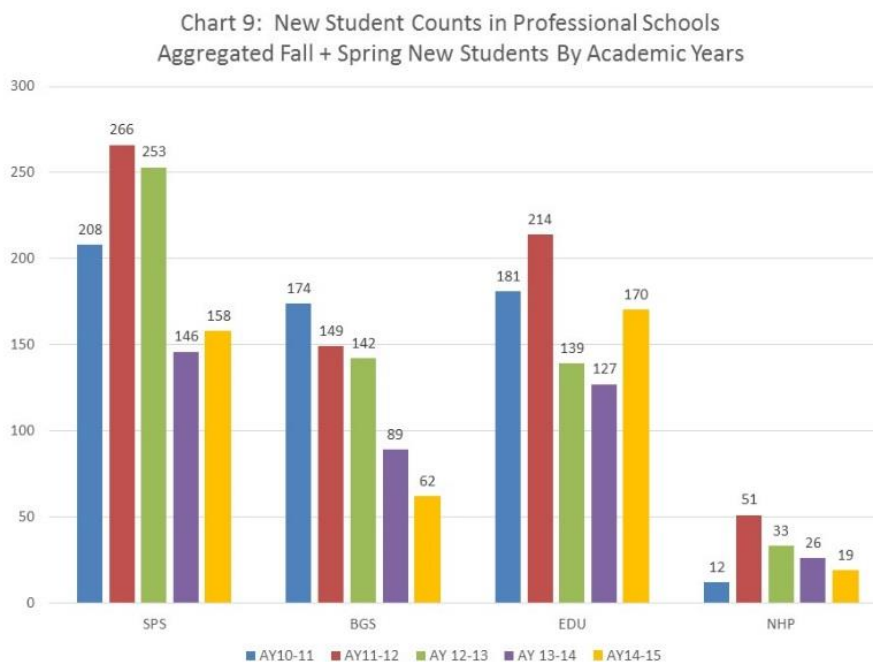
New student enrollment in the professional schools has declined in the last five years due to a number of circumstances. **Chart 2.9**, above, shows the decline for each school. Trinity's analysis of the reasons for new student enrollment declines in the professional schools include these factors:

- As indicated in several places in this report, poor NCLEX score results for Nursing graduates led to conditional approval by the DC Board of Nursing which, in turn, caused Trinity to slow down the pace of admissions not only for Nursing proper but also for part-time adult students entering pre-nursing through the School of Professional Studies. Consequently, the downturns in both SPS and NHP are largely a result of the NCLEX issues. SPS needs to rebuild enrollment with greater emphasis on other programs and stronger employer relationships. NHP is focusing on improving NCLEX results and adding other programs.

- Graduate student enrollments in the MBA, MSA and MA programs in BGS experienced a downturn largely as a result of softening markets for master's degrees in the Washington region as a result of federal sequestration and concerns about the value of master's degrees and their earning power. BGS recruitment is focusing on building stronger employer relationships to open new markets through partnerships.

- Graduate student enrollments in the School of Education are affected by the negative climate for teacher education generally, and the fact that the District of Columbia has recognized many non-traditional providers for teacher and principal licensure. Recruiters are focusing on new markets for teacher candidates outside of traditional schools, e.g., career changers, partnerships with charter and private schools.

New leadership and recruiters also will benefit from new lead pool development strategies, particularly a partnership with a firm that specializes in online marketing which has not previously been a source of strength for Trinity. Additionally, the new online application will also provide a more responsive tool for professional school marketing and recruiting.

G. Integrity

Marketing and recruiting activities also receive support from the Advancement Team that manages all advertising, print and online materials, websites, social media channels and other specialized outreach materials and activities. Trinity's Creative Services Department developed the "Discover Your Strength" campaign that includes videos, banners, posters, social media snapshots and a wide range of activities devoted to promoting Trinity.

The Enrollment Services Team --- including Financial Aid and Registration Services --- works closely with the Admissions team as well, particularly for financial aid presentations, packaging and registration. The Vice President for Enrollment Services supervises all institutional data management and is responsible for IPEDS and other regulatory reports.

All members of this collaborative team exert a great sense of responsibility for integrity and accuracy in all activities, including print and digital materials, "live" presentations and

individual advising conversations with prospective students. All pages of the website, along with print materials, receive routine review from the responsible managers, and the Senior Executive Staff routinely review these materials as well.

Trinity complies with federal requirements for the publication of "Student Right to Know" data, the Net Price Calculator, and other compliance expectations, and all required information and notices are on Trinity's website. Trinity's website posts prior accreditation reports, financial reports and 990's. Trinity's website also provides an extensive page of policies, and a page devoted to federal compliance reports.

Conclusion to Chapter Two

Ensuring student success is a relentless focus of the faculty and administrative teams at Trinity. The professional workforce at Trinity is deeply committed to Trinity's mission, particularly manifesting the ideal of social justice through improving educational opportunity for historically marginalized students. Trinity students present multiple risk factors for persistence and completion as a result of the financial, familial, social and other personal stress points in their lives. While never quite done with the analysis, Trinity has increasingly demonstrated competence in assessing these risk factors and designing academic and co-curricular programs responsive to student needs. Subsequent chapters of this self-study document the ways in which Trinity's faculty and staff work together to ensure academic and personal success for these students.

Recommendations:

- Continue improving analysis of student risk factors in order to tailor responsive programs and services even more carefully to improve student persistence;

- Continue improving academic advising as the front line for the diagnosis of student conditions and coordinating service delivery depending upon each student profile;

- Develop additional sources of scholarships in light of the large role that financial need continues to play in student attrition;

- Develop additional solutions for child care and family pressures, hunger and homelessness, mental health and domestic violence, including working with community partners with expertise in these areas;

- Improve new student recruiting for all academic units so that Trinity can meet enrollment goals that are the basis for Trinity's ability to provide a robust and high quality menu of programs and services to the students that Trinity serves as a matter of mission.