

## Charge to the Graduating Class President Joanne Berger-Sweeney

Congratulations to all of today's graduates. For you, for your families, and for all who are here to support you, this Commencement marks a turning point in your lives. You are leaving 300 Summit Street, taking with you a strong liberal arts education, and forging ahead to make your mark on the world, whatever that may be. As you have bettered yourself during your time here, so have you bettered our College and the city of Hartford.

As you know, I like to share with you the books that I am reading, and today is no exception. I am currently reading Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels, a series of four books that cover 60 years and the lifelong friendship of two women who grew up in Naples, Italy. One of the friends is Elena, whose brilliance lifts her out of poverty in her Neapolitan neighborhood and provides her an opportunity to study at the University of Pisa. She says:

"I arrived at the university very timid and awkward. ... I knew almost nothing about etiquette, I spoke in a loud voice, I chewed noisily. ... In my anxiety to appear friendly I interrupted conversations, gave opinions on things that had nothing to do with me, assumed manners that were too familiar ...

"I began to distinguish myself and gradually became liked. Students male and female, janitors, professors liked me, and though it might have appeared effortless, in fact I worked hard. ... I assimilated rules of behavior, written and unwritten ..."

Graduates, what written and unwritten rules have *you* learned here at Trinity in the classroom, in the laboratory, in The Mill or The Fred, on the athletics fields, in the pool, in Posse or Hillel, in SGA, in Kappa Sigma, or in the Campaign for Community?

What have you learned to prepare you for today's knowledge-based economy, an economy with a greater reliance on intellectual and emotional capabilities rather than on physical inputs or natural resources? This College, like other institutions of higher education, is in the business of developing intellectual capacity and harnessing creativity for social good: all of us here at Trinity are the foundation of our global, knowledge-based economy.

You may ask why I, a college president and neuroscientist, feel so strongly about these issues. I don't mention this often, but I hold two U.S. patents. I also did the proof of concept work for Razadyne, one of the leading Alzheimer's drugs in the world today. I know a little something about innovation and creativity.

Trinity College has a storied history with deep roots in innovation and creativity and with graduating students who possess incredible emotional intelligence, people who know how to deal with people. Many of our alumni, through their successes after Trinity, prove just that.

Take Danny Meyer, Trinity Class of 1980, who majored in political science. We are lucky Danny now serves on the Board of Trustees. Many of you may know of his restaurants past and present — Shake Shack, Union Square Café, and Gramercy Tavern, just to name a few. Last fall, Danny’s Union Square Hospitality Group announced that it would eliminate tips at all of its full-service restaurants. The website *New York Eater* characterized the move this way: “Big news out of Manhattan: Dining out is about to get turned on its head.” I say Danny is simply using the creativity he learned at Trinity to give restaurant workers what he sees as fair wages. And beyond food, he is well-known for what he calls H.Q. or “Hospitality Quotient.” Hospitality, he has said, is “the degree to which it makes *you* feel good to make *other* people feel good.” Creativity, innovation, and emotional intelligence at work.

Liz Elting, Class of ’87, who majored in modern languages, French and Spanish, is another great product of a Trinity education. She is co-founder and co-CEO of TransPerfect, the world’s largest privately held provider of language services and technology solutions. When she and her co-founder were in graduate school, Liz noted the need for a company like TransPerfect, and she set her creative mind to establishing it. The firm has grown from a two-person business working out of a dorm room to an industry leader that boasts 3,500 full-time employees in 90 offices throughout the world. Liz exemplifies what it means to be a visionary leader.

Then there is Owen Tripp, Class of 2001, a Spanish major, founder of Reputation.com, and co-founder and CEO of Grand Rounds, a firm that provides companies a way to give people the technology, information, and support they need to make key decisions about medical treatment. Owen points out that “patients will achieve better health care outcomes through the intersection of technology, medical expertise, and extraordinary patient care.” Owen thinks creatively and innovatively about how to bring people together using the power of technology to achieve health and wellness.

And take Rhoden Monroe, an economics major in the Class of 2009, the founder and CEO of CariClub, an organization that links young professionals with nonprofit leadership opportunities. In building his company, Rhoden creatively used his Trinity Wall Street connections to help like-minded people utilize their talent, time, and money to make an impact.

Though there are many more, I want you to think about these four graduates, who have spanned the last four decades. There is a theme here, a red line if you will, that connects you to them and them to you. I think it is fair to say that there is something in the very DNA of Trinity. I’m just putting a name on it — creativity, innovation, and emotional intelligence — but it has always been here.

Creativity and innovation exude from our faculty as well, and Professor of Computer Science Ralph Morelli is a prime example of this. Retiring this year, Ralph continues to innovate, instructing educators to teach “Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles” through the use of app development. In fact, last month Ralph received a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation to extend his work to an online classroom and eight satellite locations. Ralph also offered a very successful MOOC (massive open online course) last fall through TrinityX, the College’s edX platform. More than 15,000 people from across the world enrolled in Ralph’s class, “Mobile Computing with App Inventor.”

Graduates, I hope that during your time here, Trinity has tapped into *your* creativity and innovative spirit. We know that entrepreneurship is all the rage right now ... people starting new businesses.

It's important to remember that all new businesses start with a new idea. Liberal arts colleges are in the business of ideas. That's what we do best.

'Neath the elms, you have been given what you need to go out into the so-called real world, to share your insights and your analytical and social abilities to flourish outside of the College. Perhaps the skills you have learned here will help you to understand workplace dynamics a little better, or maybe you will ask questions that someone else, with a narrower educational background, might not think to ask.

It is also my hope that your education allows you the confidence to be creative and innovative in whatever field you choose. And I hope that you will pair that confidence with a sense of morality and civic engagement that guides you to uplift and empower others.

You, the graduating Class of 2016, have a formal education, and, like Elena in Ferrante's novel series, you learned some of those written and unwritten rules of life. *You* now have a degree from one of the best liberal arts institutions in the country. *You* have the confidence that comes along with that. *You* can feel self-assured and poised in any social or intellectual circle. *You are BANTAMS!*

What you now owe to yourselves and to Trinity College — as you graduate today — is to use your confidence, your creativity, and your innovative nature to seize the opportunities that await you and to make the most of your lives. And remember, wherever you may roam, Trinity will always be your home!

Go Boldly! Be Engaged!