

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

TRINITY COLLEGE

Hartford, Connecticut

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
Self-evaluation report and a site visit
March 5–8, 2017

The members of the team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

**COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page to the Team Report**

Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: _____ March 7, 2017 _____

Name of Institution: Trinity College

1. History: Year chartered or authorized 1823 Year first degrees awarded 1825

2. Type of control: State City Religious Group; specify: _____
 Private, not-for-profit Other; specify: _____
 Proprietary

3. Degree level:

Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate

4. Enrollment in Degree Programs: (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate	--	--	--	--	--	--
Baccalaureate	2132	93	2163	90%	85%	529
Graduate	3	80	29.67	75%		49

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year

5. Student debt:

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior (FY 2012)	Two Years Prior (FY 2011)
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	3.4% (FY2013)	1.6% (FY2012)	3.3% (FY2011)
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	82% ^{*.1}	81% ²	81% ³

* The Department of Education notified institutions of a technical error in the calculation of this metric on 1/13/17.

<https://fap.ed.gov/eannouncements/011317UpdatedDataForCollegeScorecardFinAidShopSheet.html>

¹ FY2011, FY2012 cohorts measured in FY2014, FY2015

² FY2010, FY2011 cohorts measured in FY2013, FY2014

³ FY2009, FY2010 cohorts measured in FY2012, FY2013

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt*	-	42%	62%
Average amount of debt for graduates*	-	\$26,913	\$16,925

*Averages for last three graduating classes.

6. Number of current faculty*: Full-time 201 Part-time 98 FTE 233.66

7. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: FY2016)
 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Tuition, Room & Bd less Fin Aid	\$95.583	Instruction, Research & Related	\$62.965
Federal & State Grants	\$1.575	Academic Support	\$20.961
Contributions & Endowment Inc	\$36.273	General	\$24.843
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$5.932	Student Services	\$14.691
Other	\$4.715	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$22.381
Total	\$144.078	Total	\$145.841

8. Number of off-campus locations:

In-state 0 Other U.S. 0 International 0 Total 0

9. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:

Programs offered entirely on-line 0 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

10. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship? No Yes Specify program(s): _____

Introduction

The Evaluation Team visited Trinity College on March 5–8, 2017, for a comprehensive evaluation. This visit followed two months of review of the institution’s self-study and additional institutional materials.

Throughout the review process, the Evaluation Team found the members of the Trinity College community to be helpful, candid, and passionate about their work. It was clear to the Team that President Joanne Berger-Sweeney’s enthusiasm for and devotion to higher education—and her commitment to placing Trinity on a positive, upward trajectory—extends throughout her leadership team and across much of the administration, faculty, and staff.

Trinity’s self-study was, on the whole, thorough and informative. It presented a comprehensive, accurate, and compelling description of the institution. Where members of the Evaluation Team had questions due to vagueness or omissions in the self-study, members of the Trinity staff were generally able and willing to supply additional materials for clarification.

Additional materials requested and reviewed by the Evaluation Team included, among others: working documents related to the institution’s current strategic planning process; financial reports; syllabi; reports on graduation and retention rates; student, faculty, and staff handbooks; and student surveys.

A review of the self-study and other materials provided to the Evaluation Team, along with meetings held during the team visit and during the chair’s preliminary visit the semester before the team visit, provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the nine sections of this report. Each section addresses one of the *Standards for Accreditation* of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

It is the hope of the Evaluation Team that, in conjunction with its own self-study, the administration of Trinity College will find this report a helpful reference point for its ongoing efforts in planning and development.

Standard 1. Mission and Purposes

Trinity College adopted a new mission statement in October 2016. The previous mission statement had been in use since 1993. The new mission statement’s central claim is that: *“As the preeminent liberal arts college in an urban setting, Trinity College prepares students to be bold, independent thinkers who lead transformative lives.”*

The new mission statement effectively positions Trinity as distinctive from its peers by emphasizing the college’s urban location (presumed unusual for a small, selective, residential liberal arts college) and using lofty and energetic descriptors such as “bold,” “independent,” and “transformative.” Indeed, Trinity’s location in Hartford, a state capital, and its connections to this international urban center, are mentioned in each part of the mission statement.

The adoption of the new mission statement was the first step in an institutional planning process launched by President Berger-Sweeney within two years of her arrival at Trinity. This process involved broad participation by faculty, staff, students, and trustees. Several draft statements of mission were offered to the Trinity community in September 2016, and a final proposal was submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees in early October 2016. Though the mission statement has only recently been adopted, it is already in fairly broad and consistent use in a variety of campus platforms.

The new mission statement is a departure from the 1993 mission statement that preceded it, which described in much greater detail the quality of the faculty and the student body, the degree of rigor of the curriculum, and the superiority of the campus and campus life. Indeed, just one phrase from the last bullet point in the 1993 mission statement refers to Trinity's urban setting, the characteristic of the institution that dominates the new 2016 mission statement. The college clearly sought to capitalize on this point of distinction, but may have lost some important descriptors of the top-tier liberal arts experience it provides in the revision process.

Overall, Trinity's mission statement is appropriate to higher education, consistent with the college's charter, and implemented in compliance with CIHE standards. It is, as the self-study says, to some degree aspirational, and in that respect gives Trinity clear and worthy guidelines for its current institutional planning and its future work. It also provides a sound basis for assessment and enhancement of Trinity's effectiveness.

Standard 2. Planning and Evaluation

Overview

Trinity College has undertaken several planning and evaluation efforts over the last decade with mixed success. The financial crisis of 2008, misaligned enrollment targets, and institutional budgetary constraints contributed to this uneven record. As a result, the college occasionally put aside its planning efforts and made more reactive, immediate, or short-term decisions. However, in the last few years, the college has refocused its efforts around planning and evaluation and is working toward aligning this work with institutional priorities and resources. These efforts began with 18-month transitional planning goals in 2014 and continue through the Bicentennial Strategic Planning process that started in January 2016 and is expected to finish this spring. A commitment on the part of the college's senior leadership and changes to the cabinet will likely promote integrated, institutional planning and help create a culture of planning and evaluation across the institution.

Institutional Capacity

The college candidly acknowledges its previous challenges with planning and evaluation in the self-study. The relatively new leadership at the college has set a new direction and intentionality around planning—planning that integrates strategic and other initiatives with available resources. The cabinet is working to develop further planning habits throughout the college. Several administrators spoke of the desire and need to measure the outcomes and efficacy of upcoming initiatives. Additionally, the current administration is moving away from post hoc transparency around decision-making to one where the discussions and transparency happen before decisions are made.

Structurally, a key element to planning and budgeting at Trinity would seem to be the Planning and Budget Council (PBC). Following the 2004–05 Cornerstone Plan, the college created the PBC in an effort to align resource allocations and budgets with the strategic plans. The PBC has had a mixed history in terms of its mission and effectiveness. As budgetary challenges emerged, the ability of the college and the PBC to align appropriate resources with strategy diminished. In addition, the identity and purpose of the PBC has not always been clear or widely understood, further weakening its role and relevance.

The senior administration, with the relevant constituency groups, will have to work toward making the PBC's identity, membership, role, and purpose much more transparent, shared, and understood. This will be particularly critical if the college intends to use the PBC as a vehicle to review, prioritize, and help implement aspects of the strategic plan, as some administrators have indicated.

The Office of Institutional Research has had only one employee for several years, which has made it difficult to remain current on reporting that is useful and necessary for the college to evaluate its programs. To address the staffing issue, the college is in the process of hiring an analyst in that office. In addition, the college recently redefined its institutional research function by creating the Analytics and Strategic Initiatives Center. The purpose of the center is to improve the college's ability to support its analytical, assessment, and planning needs. The center will be staffed with existing resources but will have clear and articulated goals and responsibilities that are central to supporting the college's initiatives. It will be important for the college to monitor the center closely and evaluate whether it is sufficiently staffed to meet the needs of the institution.

In addition to staffing challenges related to data, the college's reporting systems and tools appear to be cumbersome, difficult, and time-consuming to use. The college is investing in a data warehouse and working on its implementation beginning this summer, which should help improve this problem. In the meantime, the ability to report on key data is a struggle.

Overall, the college has momentum with respect to planning and evaluation, with these efforts enjoying administrative support at the highest levels and a strong desire to incorporate planning and evaluation throughout the college. There are, however, cultural issues with respect to planning and evaluation that will need to be addressed to fully realize the benefits of integrated planning and evaluation. While some faculty and staff seem willing to embrace a culture of planning, following a period where there was not one, others are skeptical that this renewed focus on planning will be different from the past.

Planning

The most recent strategic plan from 2005–06, the Cornerstone Plan, outlined six pillars or aspirations that resulted in two parallel campaigns that raised a combined \$369 million. As mentioned above, the financial crisis that followed a few years later derailed the implementation of many of the aspirations of the plan as attention was redirected toward getting through the crisis. The financial crisis and significant administrative turnover have affected Trinity's ability to implement much of the Cornerstone Plan.

An example of a lack of integrated planning occurred a few years ago with the setting of enrollment targets for FY16. At the time, the college focused on budgetary needs without necessarily

considering the impact of those targets on other areas of the institution, including academics and reputation. As a result, the college pulled back from its FY16 budgeted enrollment targets in an effort to protect academic quality and reputation, thus contributing to the institution's financial challenges. The college now takes a more collaborative and informed approach to setting enrollment targets that takes into account both improving the quality of the student body and institutional financial needs, a key strategic initiative.

As noted, under new leadership, and with the support of the Board of Trustees, the college is currently engaged in a "Bicentennial Strategic Planning" process that began in January 2016 and is expected to conclude by the end of this academic year.

The areas of focus of the five planning subcommittees are as follows: Partnering with Hartford, A Global College, Learning and Skill Development Inside and Outside of the Classroom, Resources, and Facilities and Environmental Sustainability. Each subcommittee has drafted a report with recommendations for moving Trinity into the future. The steering committee will review those drafts, identify priorities, and create a single draft plan to share with the Board and the Trinity community in April 2017 to get feedback. In addition, the college will identify the costs associated with the recommendations so that the Board and community will have a sense of what may be possible. The Board is expected to consider and approve the strategic plan in June, at which point the process of developing implementation plans and metrics that will be used to measure the success of the plan will begin. To assist with funding many of the initiatives in the strategic plan, the college plans to begin a capital campaign following the plan's approval.

One area not addressed in the Bicentennial planning process is Trinity's Graduate Studies program, where there seems to be no history of planning. Indeed, the Commission noted that Graduate Studies did not appear to be part of Trinity's "planning agenda" in 2007, at the time of the last comprehensive evaluation. Under new leadership, however, Graduate Studies is currently in a "pre-planning" phase of gathering information and researching the marketplace for possible areas of growth. It should be noted that historically the recordkeeping for Graduate Studies has not been done in a consistent or centralized way, thus making it difficult to answer even basic questions about the program, not to mention evaluate its efficacy.

Evaluation

The college reviews data relating to enrollment and staffing, and from external department reviews, to aid in decisions around the allocation of resources. These data are used by a fairly wide group of academic administrators and faculty committees. In addition, the college has been working on developing efforts to evaluate student learning (see Standard 8).

The Office of Institutional Research provides departments with data, including enrollments and student satisfaction (including peer data), to assist departments with evaluating their effectiveness. However, these reports have not been updated in two years. Furthermore, there does not appear to be evidence to show how departments actually use these data elements in evaluating their programs.

The college plans to move in a direction of developing metrics to aid in its evaluation efforts. This would represent a positive departure from past practices around evaluation.

An example of program evaluation is with the Bantam Network. To assist with the evaluation of the Bantam Network, Trinity conducts a survey of first-year students and faculty associated with the Network. The college has identified areas of improvement based on those results and has developed a list of potential actions it could take to improve the program.

Evaluation processes of Graduate Studies at Trinity do not appear to exist. In 2009, the college undertook an external review of Graduate Studies, which resulted in nine recommendations, and in 2014 created an Academic Plan for Graduate Studies. There is no evidence, however, to show if or how Trinity has implemented or evaluated the recommendations and plans of those two reports.

Standard 3. Organization and Governance

Trinity College has an organizational and governance structure appropriate to the institution and one that facilitates activities directed to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes. Changes over the past three years bolster administrative capacity and clarify lines of authority, two challenges candidly discussed in the self-study. Responsibilities, authority and rights are clear and reflected in the by-laws and handbooks for trustees, faculty, students, and staff.

As discussed in the self-study, events and decisions over the past decade weakened the overall governance structure, with blurred decision-making roles and a lack of coordination sowing the seeds of distrust. The candid discussion of the governance challenges President Berger-Sweeney encountered at the start of her presidency illustrates the clear and honest self-appraisal that the institution has displayed over the past 3 years. The focus of change has been on i) building administrative capacity, ii) enhancing communication, and iii) creating processes at all levels. At the Board and senior management levels, there is solid evidence now that the necessary administrative capacity and clear lines of authority are in place. Improved communications, more regular and more substantive, are a foundation for appropriate participation of all constituencies.

Board committee organizational changes have provided more leadership opportunities for trustees and there are intentional efforts toward trustee professional development. With the organizational changes, trustees are oriented toward the strategic and action items relevant to their committees, with fewer opportunities for conflicts and confusions about areas that should be in the realm of management. Board leadership is fully committed to President Berger-Sweeney's vision of transforming Trinity.

Governing Board

The Board is currently composed of 35 members, including the president of the college and the president of the National Alumni Association (both serve *ex officio*, with full votes). As a group, members of the Board of Trustees share a deep commitment to the mission of the college and are aware of their legal and oversight responsibilities. The Trustee Code of Conduct sets out responsibilities and expectations. All members of the Board are reported to be free of personal or immediate familial financial interest in the college.

The Board conducts annual reviews of the President's performance.

The Board has changed in composition over the past two years. Two years ago, there were 32 trustees on the Board. Since then, 16 new trustees have joined the Board, which now numbers 35. With new members, the Board is more diverse, in regard to gender and race/ethnicity, than in the past. Given the changing demographics of the college-age population, it may be timely to consider enhancing the geographic diversity of the Board. The new integrated, cross-administrative unit Board committee structure is intended to support enhanced communication and coordinated decision-making.

The Board is aware of the need to develop measures to assess the success of the committee structure changes. These changes are in the early days, having been implemented in the fall of 2016. With so many new Board members and attention paid to more careful management of trustee term staggering, it may also be timely to pay firmer attention to term limits, while preserving the ability of the Board to retain trustees who may be freer to contribute time, attention, and philanthropy.

On-campus interviews with the Board revealed its clear focus on financial sustainability, through the levers of increasing revenue, expense discipline, and increased fundraising.

Overall, there is an awareness of significant need for data collection and analysis. The timely and necessary expansion of capacity in Institutional Research will have positive implication for the Board's work and ability to assess effectiveness.

The Team supports the initiatives to establish a formal process of Board self-evaluation and the continued professional development of trustees.

Internal Governance

President Berger-Sweeney has brought in new leaders for her senior team and created new positions. The President's Cabinet (formerly President's Group) numbers 14, with nine of the 14 key officers of the college. In that group, there are new vice presidents of: enrollment and student success, academic affairs, student affairs, finance, communications and marketing, information technology, and a new position of general counsel. With new leadership and capacity, the focus is on aligning strategic planning with mission and purpose and seeing planning through to implementation and then evaluation, all within available financial resources, and with transparency of process and clear communication.

Risk management is identified as an area of challenge, with a perceived need for better communication across units. The new position of general counsel adds capacity in this area, and enhanced communication with the Board risk committee does the same, including the attention paid to enterprise risk management.

President Berger-Sweeney communicates regularly with the campus and the extended college community, while also engaging with the Hartford community. The new Vice President for Communications and Marketing arrived in January 2017.

Faculty and staff appreciate the more frequent and detailed communications and speak of a strong sense of President Berger-Sweeney's commitment to transparency and inclusion.

The Faculty: The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty's office was re-organized in 2014, with the creation of two Deans of Academic Affairs to oversee departments and programs and (in 2017) a Dean of Academic Affairs and Strategic Initiatives to lead and oversee summer programs, graduate programs, and non-traditional undergraduate study. A new Dean of Faculty was appointed in Summer 2016. This reorganization is in its first year, with early signs of success from increased attention from the Dean's office to faculty in departments and more capacity for strategic planning.

The merger of the library with ITS opened questions for the faculty about a downgrade in the role of the faculty in library leadership. The organizational chart does not have a spot for a (faculty) library director, although faculty librarians remain in the operational positions. The future of the library as a centerpiece for teaching, learning, and scholarship may be uncertain without a faculty college librarian.

The focus, energy, and quick implementation approach of Trinity's senior administrative leadership stands in some tension with the traditional analytical and considered approach taken by faculty to issues of strategic planning. Questions about ownership and co-ownership of responsibilities between faculty and administration could emerge in the near-term future, particularly in regard to the size of the tenured and tenure-track faculty, the allocation of tenured and tenure-track faculty slots across the academic program, faculty hiring and performance review. These questions are at the heart of a tension about the role of faculty in shared governance expressed to the visiting team by administrators and by faculty leadership. A lack of coordination across faculty committees, such as Educational Policy Committee (EPC) and the Curriculum Committee, when combined with informational barriers with Planning and Budget Council (PBC), could potentially hamper planning and implementation as the Bicentennial Strategic Planning process moves ahead.

Changes in senior staff, particularly in positions responsible for the intersection of Board and faculty governance, have resulted in some logistical and information challenges. The Faculty Secretary, as the highest ranking member of the faculty (an elected two-year position), attends (while not a member of) meetings of the Academic and Campus Affairs committee of the Board, and some misunderstanding of this structure resulted in the Faculty Secretary not receiving an invitation to a Winter conference call. Because the Faculty Secretary is the only faculty representative/ liaison to the Board, the role is critical to, at a minimum, help provide a proper flow of information and consultation. Reviewing models of faculty representation used by peer colleges may be useful.

Staff are represented in the governance structure through the Exempt Staff Council (ESC) and the Non-exempt Staff Council (NSC). Issues of equal representation are important to staff and to other campus constituencies, particularly on PBC. The balance of representation and access to the Board of Trustees is a matter for clear communication, and establishing clear information flows is critical to the integration of faculty, staff, and students in governance. Particularly for staff, key officers and "one level down" can play an important role in these information flows. The existing structure of senior staff liaisons to the ESC and NSC is also important to help avoid morale implications resulting from years of tight budgets, one year without salary increases, and staffing pressures caused by vacancies.

Standard 4. The Academic Program

Trinity College offers the bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees to around 2,225 undergraduate students, including around 90 non-traditional students in the Independent Degree Program. It also offers three master of arts degrees to approximately 80 mostly part-time students. In addition, two five-year B.A./M.A. options have recently been established in American Studies and Neuroscience. The college is also directly involved in pre-college education through the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA).

Trinity's self-study is forthcoming about the broad array of challenges that the college must address in order to be successful in achieving its academic goals. This section mainly focuses on areas of challenge, while acknowledging at the outset that the academic and faculty leadership recognize and have begun to work on many of them.

Assuring Academic Quality

The college has a well-established system for overseeing the quality of academic programs through strong faculty committees that play a major role in program quality assessment, approval of new programs, and allocation of faculty lines to meet curricular needs. Notwithstanding this admirable degree of faculty ownership over academic quality, the Evaluation Team had two broad observations on current arrangements in connection with enhancing Trinity's ability to move forward with the academic goals that will emerge from its strategic planning process:

- The Curriculum Committee and Educational Policy Committee acknowledge that they operate mainly in reactive mode and that the forward planning dimensions of their briefs are largely latent. The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for advancing the college's strategic academic priorities, but the current structure limits opportunities for the Dean to engage the committees as essential partners and provide the kind of guidance that would allow committee agendas and decisions to be more fully responsive to the strategic context. Trinity could strike a more favorable balance with respect to shared governance.
- The responsibilities of these important committees are not well connected. Program approvals and curricular changes have implications for the structure of academic staffing and vice versa. Greater coordination across key faculty committees would strengthen their oversight and decision-making functions in support of academic quality.

Program Reviews: In 2007–08, Trinity instituted a regular, 10-year cycle of reviews for departments offering majors overseen by the Curriculum Committee. Review procedures are well established and provide an opportunity for discussion among reviewed departments, the Dean of the Faculty's office, and the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee provides departments with guidelines and procedures for preparation of their self-study. Review committees typically include a member from a research university along with those from peer liberal arts colleges, which is a useful measure for maintaining disciplinary quality and ensuring that graduates are prepared for more advanced study or entry into relevant professions. Reports are shared with departments and discussed with the Dean of the Faculty. The Curriculum Committee prepares a summary of the self-assessment and review findings, on which the chair may comment before it is finalized.

As a group, the external reviews speak to an array of challenges faced by Trinity's departments over the past decade. Discussion of faculty overwork (and advocacy for additional hires) is common. Department chairs interviewed by the Evaluation Team reported that the external review process was generally useful, especially with respect to arguing for additional faculty resources through the Educational Policy Committee process. It was noted, however, that review findings generally remain relevant for only a few years. Given the 10-year review cycle, it would be worthwhile to develop some more nimble form of mid-term check-in with departments. This would be most effective if, following reviews, departments received more systematic guidance on how they can work toward achieving greater academic excellence and advancing the college's mission.

To date, the regular review process has extended only to programs offering a major. Other credit-bearing programs have been reviewed on an ad hoc basis by the Dean of the Faculty's office, and there is an uneven record of implementing recommendations. A more comprehensive plan for reviews of all credit-bearing programs will help advance Trinity's academic goals and inform allocation of resources. The Curriculum Committee recognizes that extending the review process is an important goal but did not have a specific plan or timeline for implementation.

Program and course approvals appear to be handled thoughtfully by the Curriculum Committee (with the exception of graduate programs, discussed below), which has usefully engaged in clarifying policies and criteria in recent years. Two new majors have been approved over the last decade and two proposals have been rejected. Course proposals must be approved by departments before they come to the Curriculum Committee. The Committee makes its decisions based on course descriptions and does not review draft syllabi.

Allocation of faculty search approvals by the Education Policy Committee is decided with reference to clear criteria and a uniform set of departmental data prepared by Institutional Research. Peer benchmarking data may also be used in proposals. The Committee must thoughtfully balance different criteria depending upon the particular needs that are being addressed by a proposal. It may recommend changes to proposals, although major changes necessitate re-submission in the following cycle. As part of the approval process, the Educational Policy Committee also reviews proposed search plans with a focus on ensuring diverse applicant pools. The Dean of the Faculty serves as a non-voting member, and the Committee makes recommendations to the Dean. Although it has been a rare occurrence, the Dean has postponed or overruled Committee recommendations.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

Trinity's undergraduate program is designed to balance breadth of knowledge through general education and distribution requirements with depth through a major chosen from a wide range of options. In addition to its main program for traditional-aged college students, Trinity also offers an Individualized Degree Program for older students seeking to complete an undergraduate degree. This operates along similar lines as the general program, with some greater flexibility tailored to the non-traditional-aged population.

In 2008, the college adopted a set of 10 overarching learning goals that cover specific skills (critical reading, research and analysis, written and oral communication, quantitative facility); types of work (independent and collaborative); literacies (scientific, artistic, linguistic); and outlook (ethics and diverse/global perspectives). These goals were adopted without a faculty vote or input from staff

and students. Trinity's self-study raises a number of questions about revisiting degree requirements and college-wide learning goals, and the extent to which course offerings enable students to achieve those goals. Four possible learning goals tied to the mission statement and in conjunction with a revised curricular structure have been advanced through the strategic planning process.

General Education: General education serves Trinity's mission to engage, connect, and transform through supporting the acquisition of core academic competencies and skills along with broad acquaintance with major realms of human thought and creation and knowledge about the world beyond our borders. To fulfill requirements, students must earn a grade of C- or more. Trinity instituted a reform of its general education in 2007 with significant faculty input and some controversy. The new requirements were evaluated by the Curriculum Committee shortly thereafter in 2009–10. In 2013–14, the requirements were “reframed” in response to the sense that they were seen more as a checklist than a coherent foundational liberal arts experience. As the self-study observes, strategic planning provides an opportunity to take stock of general education in light of the 2016 revised mission statement and a decade of experience with the current requirements.

The Major or Concentration: Trinity offers 39 majors (including independent study). All majors have now had their content and structure reviewed by external committees, and as summarized on the E-Series Forms numerous changes have resulted. Since 2010, following the creation of the Assessment Advisory Board as a standing faculty committee, all majors have developed learning goals, which are posted on departmental web pages. (Programs not leading to a major have not been required to develop learning goals.) The Team heard that not all departments fully embrace learning goals as an operative concept and that there is some suspicion that they will be used in reductive ways. The degree to which learning goals are articulated across programs ranges from the highly general (e.g., Neuroscience) to the highly specific (e.g., Sociology). In addition to learning goals, departments also developed assessment plans. As with the articulation of learning goals, departments have taken different approaches to assessing students' success in achieving them and demonstrating competencies. Trinity is in the process of hiring a Director of Academic Assessment who will report to the Dean of the Faculty and be responsible for developing more robust mechanisms for evaluating attainment of learning goals.

The course numbering system provides a clear differentiation between introductory and advanced-level courses, and appropriate sequencing of coursework for each major is clearly described in the Bulletin and program websites. The number and structure of requirements varies across majors, though to a greater or lesser extent each defines a sequence involving a foundational core, distribution or elective courses, and advanced seminar or capstone experience courses.

The number of required course credits for majors ranges from nine to 18 (with Engineering an outlier requiring 20–25.75 credits). Nine course credits meet the minimum 25% of the 36 total needed for graduation. Variation in the kinds of courses required appears to be appropriately tailored to the nature of each field. Majors have set minimum requirements for advanced level courses so that students will move “up” as well as “across” the subject. The self-study calls for greater attention to the nature and function of capstones. A “senior exercise” is required of all students, but the nature of this work is variable across departments and it is not clear that the demands on students are equivalent across majors. The website offers a helpful listing of lower-level courses that help prepare for each major. A project underway will present major requirements in a standardized format that will help students to make informed comparisons across subjects.

There are a few very large majors (Economics, Political Science, and Psychology) and some that attract very few students.

Minors: In addition to majors, Trinity offers 27 interdisciplinary and eight disciplinary minors. A small percentage (9%) of students currently pursue minors. The role of the minor as part of the college's current educational mission and curriculum is not clear. As a category, minors do not appear to be a purposeful or coherent set of offerings. Interdisciplinary minors are a holdover from an earlier, discontinued curricular mandate for interdisciplinary study, while disciplinary minors are a relatively recent creation offered by only a few departments. Most of these departments have smaller majors, although a couple have large majors. Disciplinary minors are new, and departments will need to determine the extent to which they are bolstering enrollments or cannibalizing majors.

Special Curricular Opportunities: Trinity offers Study Away opportunities through programs the college runs directly with faculty involvement (a campus in Rome and eight other sites) as well as 90 approved programs offered by third-party providers. Front-end advising processes have been strengthened to help ensure that students' Study Away choices align with their academic interests, and that provider-based courses will be accepted for transfer credit at Trinity. Academic evaluation of external programs is also in order. Study Away is included in the strategic planning process; the new director has been charged with developing an assessment regime.

Trinity provides a number of special for-credit opportunities for students, many taking advantage of the college's location in a state capital. Most of these are practice-based and experiential. There does not appear to be a high degree of coherence to these opportunities as a group, and academic oversight and validation for the practical or experiential based elements seems uneven.

There is an apparent disconnect between the Community Learning Initiative (CLI), which is described in the self-study and by Trinity faculty and staff as having an academic component, and the Office of Community Service and Civic Engagement in Student Affairs, which articulates a mission "to build strong, sustainable partnerships with the Hartford community." Interviews revealed that the potential overlap between these two organizations has been considered only superficially. Greater coordination would create opportunities for Trinity to leverage existing community partnerships to build more academically rich community learning opportunities.

Summer and January Terms: Trinity offers courses outside the regular term, which ideally provide academic opportunities for faculty and students as well as additional financial resources for the college. Trinity offers summer courses for matriculated Trinity undergraduates, special non-degree students, and students enrolled at other colleges. (The Graduate Program also offers summer evening courses for its part-time student body.) The self-study raises issues of the regularity and quality of offerings, as well as the overall rationale for summer programs. This is beginning to be addressed by the Dean of the Faculty's office, which is now giving the summer session closer oversight and experimenting with new kinds of offerings to engage faculty and student interests.

Since 2014, Trinity has offered a set of small, intensive, half-credit courses during two weeks in January. In 2016, the Curriculum Committee recommended continuing the J-Term for another three years. Conversations with deans indicated that the program draws students who are relatively weak academically and who benefit from the focused effort on one course to earn half a course credit. While this is clearly valuable (particularly since Trinity's graduation rate is low among its peers) it also raises questions about the J-Term's academic purpose within the college's mission. The

evaluation indicated an interest in more experimental courses. Given that academically weaker students seem to find J-Term a valuable resource, it is also important to note that funds are limited to assist aided students who might also be encountering academic difficulties. Equitable access is a significant consideration.

Online Offerings: Trinity's experiments with developing courses for edX and teleconference course sharing through the Connecticut, Trinity, Wesleyan (CTW) Consortium are at an early stage. While these are promising directions to pursue, as the initiatives develop Trinity will need to articulate their function within its residential college mission.

Graduate Degree Programs

Trinity currently offers three stand-alone MA programs (American Studies, English, Public Policy) enrolling 83 students. These programs are structured for adult, part-time learners with two parallel (though not mutually exclusive) objectives: on the one hand to enhance the professional skills of students in the workforce, and, on the other, to provide higher learning opportunities for personal enrichment. Each program's website outlines professional and non-professional objectives that the program is intended to meet, as well as specific tracks within each program aimed at particular interests or employment sectors. These are suggestive of, but not exactly the same as learning goals. All programs require an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a minimum GPA of 3.0, as well as evidence of proficiency in the subject of study. Each program requires 10 courses. Demonstration of competence takes the form of a thesis or final project.

In 1986, 1991, 1996, 2007 and 2010, the Commission emphasized the need to evaluate Trinity's graduate offerings within its institutional mission. The question of fit with the college's mission does not appear to have been satisfactorily answered, and materials provided to the Evaluation Team do not provide a strong sense of what is distinctive, mission-driven, or strategic about the part-time, stand-alone graduate programs for local working adults attached to a liberal arts college of high academic reputation. An external review in 2009 pointed to many areas for improvement but concluded that eliminating graduate programs would not be a "strategic move" and that, with some additional investment, they could play an important role in the college's public outreach and financial goals. (Information provided to the Evaluation Team did not provide an adequate basis for evaluating graduate programs' financial contributions.) Since that time, the program identified by the reviewers as strongest academically, Economics, has been discontinued. Furthermore, the review's positive assessment of the American Studies M.A. rested to some extent on the stature of the program's then director who is now an emeritus professor.

With respect to program content and quality, M.A. program and course approvals do not flow through the same faculty governance structure as for undergraduate education. The idea of establishing a separate Graduate Council for this purpose is contested by the Curriculum Committee. With the exception of the program in English, M.A. programs rely heavily on adjunct faculty and opportunities for offering graduate courses are not factored into regular faculty teaching loads in relevant departments. The external review concluded that graduate courses exceed undergraduate-level learning, but this is not currently clear in every case.

Data collection for evaluation of the M.A. programs has been minimal. Information about the programs did not include any information on students' post-graduation careers. Responses to a

survey of graduate students indicate overall satisfaction with the quality of instruction, but other measures suggest that the M.A. programs are not very robust. Attraction to reputation for quality was not very strong, and it does not appear that the programs are well known absent some kind of local familiarity with Trinity. A significant percentage of students report being motivated to enter the program by the availability of employee tuition benefits. The self-study states that many graduate program students are college employees receiving tuition remission. Enrollment growth in this category has not, therefore, contributed to financial sustainability and raises further questions about the academic rationale for graduate studies at Trinity.

The departure of the dean responsible for graduate programs and the college's overall strategic planning process make this a critical moment for Trinity to think afresh about graduate programs in relation to the college's core mission and goals for the future. The existential questions are quite clear and need to be considered carefully to direct any further investment in these programs.

In addition to the three stand-alone M.A. programs, Trinity has recently established two B.A./M.A. options for Trinity undergraduates in American Studies and Neuroscience. In principle, such programs are much more closely aligned with the college's core mission. They not only address undergraduate students' interest in efficiently obtaining advanced credentials but also give research-active faculty more opportunity to carry out higher-level work in their fields. In her April 2016 discussion with the faculty, Trinity's Board Chair noted the possibility of extending B.A./M.A. options. More careful assessment will be needed to consider how these programs fit within the college's mission, can be academically successful, and on what basis and to what extent the college should develop more options of this kind. A small number of isolated programs may meet some specific interests, but the role of B.A./M.A. programs in the future is a strategic consideration.

Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy

Trinity's involvement in pre-college education through the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA) represents a major strategic commitment by the college to Hartford and the surrounding communities, as well as a visible element of Trinity's urban focus. In 2011, Trinity College signed an MOU with the Hartford Board of Education to establish HMTCA, which extended an existing magnet middle school into the high school grades. The MOU called for Trinity to be involved with HMTCA at several levels, including the design and evaluation of academic programs; summer skills-building programs for rising 9th and 10th graders in writing and science, respectively; opportunities for Trinity undergraduates to work with HMTCA students as tutors, mentors, and in other capacities; and an "early college" program under which selected HMTCA students could take courses and earn college credit.

The MOU was executed in advance of detailed planning, so the initial design has been adapted in a number of ways as the school has developed. School-college faculty curricular partnerships have been productive in selected areas such as calculus and computer science as well as in the development of more general standards for the "Keys to College Readiness." Currently, the summer writing program is co-taught by HMTCA faculty and Trinity faculty based in the Writing Center. The summer science program is now being supported through an NSF grant (in partnership with several other colleges and universities) which emphasizes college student teachers drawn from many institutions supervised by HMTCA "master teachers" under the overall direction of a faculty member from Central Connecticut State University. As part of this program, students visit Trinity

laboratories and meet STEM faculty and students. Trinity students are actively engaged as tutors and mentors, with HMTCA as a “go-to” site for activities under the Community Learning Initiative. The early college is now larger than originally envisioned: between 2014 and 2016, 55 HMTCA students have taken a total of 63 courses at Trinity. Five graduates of HMTCA are currently enrolled as Trinity undergraduates and specific scholarship opportunities are available.

Having graduated its first class in 2015, HMTCA is now moving beyond the proof of concept phase and there are opportunities to consider ways in which Trinity can further strengthen the program. Survey data indicate that some faculty regard HMTCA as primarily an administrative initiative. Sustainability of this venture depends upon Trinity faculty engagement, and interviews suggest that it could be useful to find more structured approaches to encourage greater HMTCA faculty-to-Trinity faculty engagement, such as a shared professional development session on differentiated instruction or student learning needs. Attention to program evaluation for all components of the HMTCA partnership would benefit both HMTCA and Trinity. This venture might also benefit from thoughtful consideration of how Trinity’s initiatives for community engagement and service learning could play a role in the HMTCA-Trinity partnership.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

Through the Curriculum Committee and the Educational Policy Committee, authority over all academic elements of undergraduate programs falls under the faculty governance structure. As noted, graduate offerings have not been handled in the same way. The Registrar’s Office has a detailed procedure and timeline for auditing fulfillment of degree requirements. The faculty Academic Affairs Committee and Individualized Degree Program council oversee academic standing for undergraduates and have clearly defined criteria for maintaining good standing. Standing is evaluated every term. The Educational Policy Committee makes recommendations on the allocation of faculty lines to meet curricular needs. The Student Integrity Contract encompasses both academic and social codes. Whereas at some other institutions adjudicating charges of academic dishonesty falls under the purview of faculty governance in partnership with academic leadership, at Trinity responsibility for that process falls to Student Affairs deans.

Baccalaureate Degrees: Students majoring in STEM fields and Economics may receive a B.S. degree. There are no college-wide standards to distinguish the B.S. from the B.A. degree. Some departments have clearly defined requirements for each degree, but distinctions are not evident in all of the relevant programs. In some departments, according to the Bulletin, students may simply elect to receive the B.S. instead of the B.A.

Course Availability: The self-study asserts that Trinity offers a sufficient number of required and elective courses to enable students to complete in four years. According to Institutional Research data, Trinity’s four-year graduation rate (currently 80%) has been tracking the 25th percentile of a group of peer institutions; the peer average four-year graduation rate is about the same as Trinity’s six-year rate (85%). The self-study connects graduation rate to retention issues, but does not directly address whether there are other obstacles to timely degree completion such as the number and frequency of course offerings, advising, or other practices.

Transfer of Credit: Criteria and procedures for transfer of credit for courses taken at other institutions are clearly described on the website, both at the college level and for cases in which

specific departmental restrictions apply. Transfer of credit is under the general auspices of the faculty through the Curriculum Committee, but in practice evaluation and approval of proposed transfer courses is delegated to the Office of the Registrar. The current prohibition on transfer of credit for online courses is out-of-date and difficult to enforce unless transcripts specifically indicate that a course was offered online.

Other Credit-Bearing Activity: Trinity awards academic credit for teaching assistantships, internships, and physical education classes. As the 2013 memorandum on credit requirements states, only one other peer institution awards credit for all three of these activities. Trinity is considering reconfiguring credit for these activities in a 32+ model for degree requirements (students would be required to take 32 credits in traditional academic subjects—four courses per semester—and to obtain additional credit via internships, community learning, study away, and undergraduate research). As noted above, greater academic oversight of some internship opportunities could be warranted, and the self-study notes the need to strengthen criteria and evaluation for TA-ships.

Credit Hour: Trinity is currently engaged in a process to determine the appropriate number of semester hours for its courses, with a plan expected to be completed by Summer 2017. In response to the 2010 Department of Education regulations relating to credit hours, Trinity increased the equivalency of its course credit unit from three semester hours to four. (Trinity’s system includes fractional course credits; lab courses, for example, are assigned 1.25 course credits, equivalent to five semester hours.) As the self-study notes, faculty were not involved in considering what this administrative change might mean for their course expectations, and there has been no assessment of the extent to which courses now counting for four credits demand 180 hours of engaged academic effort on the part of students.

In conjunction with considering a decrease in the number of required course credits from 36 to a 32+ model, Trinity is beginning to gather data on faculty expectations for students’ work in their courses, along with better mechanisms for self-reporting by students on time spent on courses outside the classroom. Measures discussed with the Evaluation Team include a faculty survey (a draft was provided) and greater standardization of course evaluations. Additionally, Trinity will assess the academic uses of the two-day “Trinity Days” periods that accompany the 13 weeks of classes. Given the extent to which these matters are still in process, evaluation of Trinity’s conformity with credit hour requirements must wait until the new policies and practices are in place.

Standard 5. Students

Admissions

Enrollment of undergraduate students at Trinity has fluctuated from a total of 2,242 FTE in FY15 to 2,192 in FY17, representing a negative 2.4% shift according to the Data First form. With the hiring of a Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success in June of 2015, the college introduced a new philosophy and approach to enrollment that reflects a “holistic view of enrollment, retention, and student success.” According to the self-study, initiatives related to admissions are designed to attract more high-achieving students from more diverse geographic and educational backgrounds. While these efforts have just recently begun, the admissions team cites the increased yield of accepted students from 22% for the Class of 2019 to 30% for the Class of 2020 as an early success.

Specific admissions strategies that have been introduced under the leadership of the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success include the creation of a new predictive model, closer tracking of demonstrated interest through a new Constituent Relationship Management system, the introduction of a test-optional policy for SAT/ACT scores, the identification of non-cognitive skills as additional predictors of academic success, and the introduction of a new scholars program designed to build a cohort and community of students. A senior associate director for international admissions and student success was hired in August of 2016 to facilitate enrollment and retention of international students, and leaders in admissions and financial aid report increased collaboration and streamlining of processes, such as the integration of financial aid awards as part of the admissions notification process.

Information regarding admission, cost of attendance, and financial aid is readily available on the Trinity website, with additional guidance for international, graduate, and individualized degree program (IDP) students. According to the self-study, the strategy of considering alternative predictors of student success is a new feature of the admissions evaluation process, yet information on the non-cognitive skills that are assessed (“curiosity, grit, optimism, overcoming adversity, and the ability to be comfortable expressing a contrarian viewpoint”) does not seem to be available to prospective students.

Retention

The Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success and his team describe a “cradle to grave” approach to recruitment and admissions, stating that retention is closely linked to recruiting and enrolling students who are the best fit for Trinity, and that retaining high-quality students requires a campus-wide effort. Strategies to address student retention include campus-wide conversations about retention issues and features of the undergraduate experience that promote student persistence. The admissions and enrollment team is leading the retention conversation, and will rely on data, student success efforts, and strategic initiatives to achieve positive retention results. The admissions team views the admissions essay where students write about their interest in Trinity or Hartford as a means of predicting yield and retention because it gives admissions counselors insight into why students apply to Trinity.

Additional efforts to recruit and retain students, especially first-generation students and those from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, include participation in the Posse Foundation, growth of international efforts, the introduction of the 1823 Scholars Program, and an increase in Presidential Scholars. Trinity recently withdrew from its participation in QuestBridge, citing alternative methods of recruiting and retaining students. The number of international students enrolled at Trinity increased from 58 in 2015 to 67 in 2016, according to the self-study.

In a letter to the trustees dated October 12, 2016, five faculty members wrote on behalf of the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee to convey their impressions of the Class of 2020 as comprising unusually strong, collaborative, and engaged students.

Trinity’s first-year retention rate of 90% is strong compared to the national average, according to the self-study. The admissions and enrollment team, however, strives to be closer to its NESCAC peers at a rate that is in the low- to mid-90s. To that end, several student success efforts have been

introduced or modified in recent years in order to promote student engagement and retention, including the Bantam Network, Career Development, and connections to Hartford.

The Bantam Network initiative began with first-year students in the Class of 2019 and resulted from a modification of a student-recommended plan to address retention. First-year students are placed into “nests” of approximately 60 students who live near each other and are supported by a team of individuals that includes a Transition Fellow, faculty, staff, and upper-level students. The Bantam Network is built on a foundational first-year seminar and shared communal experiences such as group dinners and events in Hartford. While the Bantam Network is only in its second year, early feedback is positive. Trinity’s emphasis on supporting first-year students is based on the assumption that once students complete the first year, they are more likely to stay at Trinity and complete a degree (at a rate of 86%, according to the self-study).

The Career Development Center (CDC) is currently under the leadership of an interim director and was recently the subject of an in-depth report to the President and Trustees. According to the recommendations included in the report, the enrollment and student success team will build career development into Trinity’s newly adopted vision for recruiting and retaining students.

The importance of Trinity’s relationship to the city of Hartford is noted throughout the self-study, with an assumed impact on outcomes such as student retention and career development. As noted elsewhere, however, Trinity’s approach to working with Hartford is not yet unified.

Admissions and retention efforts at Trinity were well-documented in the self-study and during the visit, save for a few areas. The Individualized Degree Program for nontraditionally-aged students and graduate programs do not appear to be under the purview of the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success, therefore there is little information about admissions, retention, and financial aid for IDP and graduate students. Based on website and document review, basic information about these programs is available to individuals who might be interested.

The self-study describes enrollment and retention efforts as “complex and data-driven.” It will be important for the admissions and student success team to collect, analyze, and disseminate data as these programs grow in order to facilitate evidence-based decision-making for admissions, recruitment, and retention.

Financial Aid

The cost of attendance for current and prospective students at Trinity is available on the institution’s website, which includes a net price calculator. Deadlines are posted along with links to forms and relevant information. There are statements online and in the self-study that indicate Trinity’s commitment to meeting the full, calculated need of all admitted applicants and that approximately 40% of students receive need-based financial assistance. The newly developed 1823 Scholars and the Presidential Scholarships are mentioned in the self-study, but there is limited information online and in available documents about the criteria and process for disseminating these financial awards.

Increasing financial aid resources appears to be a priority at Trinity, as evidenced by the Presidential Financial Aid Leaders Initiative, which raised \$10 million in one year. The goal of increasing the endowment for financial aid is included in the self-study, and faculty stated in the Admissions and

Financial Aid Committee letter to the Trustees that increasing financial aid to students is a key factor in enhancing the quality of admitted students. According to the Data First form, 41% of undergraduate students in 2016 who completed a degree at Trinity had debt that averaged \$21,933. For students who did not leave with a degree, the average debt was \$10,933. Financial aid and debt figures were not reported for graduate or Individualized Degree Program students. The three-year loan repayment rate was 82% in FY13, with a three-year cohort default rate of 3.40%.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

The Student Affairs division at Trinity falls under the leadership of a new position, Dean of Campus Life and Vice President for Student Affairs, created in 2015. There are also a Dean of Students and two associate deans who oversee the work of staff and administrators within Student Affairs. Student conduct, as described in the Student Handbook and the Student Integrity Contract, is the responsibility of the Student Affairs division.

According to the self-study, there are over 100 student organizations and initiatives that promote student involvement. An active website and an app are devoted to student life, with information for undergraduate, IDP, and graduate students and their families. In their effort to promote student engagement and success, members of the Student Affairs division support several programs and initiatives, including Title IX, health, counseling, accommodation services, athletics, residential life, and religious and spiritual life.

The Student Affairs division has been tasked with providing significant resources and time to recently implemented student-centered initiatives, such as the Bantam Network and Bantam Network Experience for Sophomores, in addition to providing ongoing programming for students that includes extensive pre-orientation and orientation for first-year students. While the self-study implies that the admissions and student success “cradle to grave” approach to retention includes extensive programming and supports provided by the Student Affairs division, the self-study and on-campus meetings demonstrated a lack of sufficient resources to do the work as effectively as possible. During the Team visit, Student Affairs staff stated that their work experience would benefit from clearer expectations and outcomes through ongoing performance evaluation and opportunities to communicate their ideas, interests, and needs to leadership at Trinity.

Student Diversity

According to the self-study, students of color have represented a range of 18-23% of the student population during the past 10 years, with the number of international students increasing in recent years. There is a Dean of Multicultural Affairs/Chief Diversity Officer who oversees P.R.I.D.E., a mentoring program that is designed to “provide social and academic support for incoming students from diverse cultural backgrounds and to increase awareness and acceptance of difference among members in the student body as a whole.” A similar program for international students is in development. There is a Queer Resource Center and Women & Gender Resource Action Center (WGRAC). Recent student activism at Trinity generated student demands that called for changes such as diversity and inclusivity training for faculty and students, increased diversification of the faculty, and a diversity general education requirement.

Accommodation Services

Accommodations for students with physical and learning disabilities is an area that needs significant attention and expansion in order to fit with the vision for recruiting and retaining students. Trinity identified a full-time coordinator of accommodation resources 3 years ago and has a dedicated testing center for students who require extended time for exams. In order to best meet students' needs and create proper access to supports and services, additional resources need to be allocated to a campus-wide effort to implement accommodations and supports beyond physical access and extended test time. Students with needs in mental and emotional health are referred to the Counseling Center, which reports sufficient staff (for now) and short wait-time for appointments.

As the self-study acknowledges, some physical space on campus is not accessible for students with disabilities. For example, a visit to the offices of the Dean of Campus Life and Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Students, and associate deans, which requires passage up at least two flights of stairs with no elevator access, would not be possible for a student with a significant physical disability. According to the self-study, "the college has retained an architectural firm to help us identify and prioritize the physical structures that should be modified for greater accessibility." The Team learned during the campus visit that a report from the architect had been received by the Dean of Campus Life and Vice President for Student Affairs. We were not provided access to the report and learned after our visit that it is in draft form and that Trinity considers it confidential. The inaccessibility of campus buildings is related to the issues of deferred maintenance described in Standard 7. Making spaces more accessible could become part of a broader maintenance plan.

Resources, Space, and Assessment

Members of the administration and staff who work with admissions, financial aid, career development, and student success describe a vision for collaboration, unification, and sharing of their work, as well as a complex data-driven system that has just been initiated. Such a cohesive approach with a vision that includes resources, supports, and a plan for assessment has not yet been fully achieved in Student Affairs. In addition to lacking a centralized physical space that would promote collaboration and communication within and across units of Student Affairs, plans for growth in these areas were not reported in the self-study or during the Team visit. Student survey data is collected regularly, following programs such as orientation, but use of the results for the purposes of reviewing student programs and making necessary changes has not yet begun. It is possible that the reported lack of resources is a contributing factor. The Team observed resilience and capacity to adjust regarding Student Affairs staff, yet Trinity should rely on more than good will to ensure that student programming and supports are fully resourced and evaluated.

Standard 6. Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff

Trinity College has 165 tenured/tenure-track faculty (number set by the Board of Trustees in 2001–02), 21 continuing contract faculty, and about 35 visiting full-time faculty. In addition, there are 98 part-time faculty (a substantial increase from FY14 when there were 75), though there is an effort

underway to reduce dependence on part-time teachers. The graduate program (see Standard 4), while relatively small (83 students currently pursuing a master's degree), relies much more heavily on part-time faculty: Full-time instructors teach only 40% of graduate courses, while 85% of instructors of undergraduate courses are full-time. The vast majority (92%) of full-time faculty hold terminal degrees.

Given the Board-imposed limitation of the tenure-track faculty to 165 positions, there is keen competition for allocation of positions vacated by retirement or resignation, in which cases positions do not automatically stay in the department. In the case of denial of reappointment or tenure, the position does remain. In spring of 2016, the Interim Dean responsible for working with the Educational Policy Committee made public the rationale for each decision in order to improve transparency and facilitate longer-term planning. Long-term renewable contract positions are also approved by the EPC. In spring of 2017, on the recommendation of the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) with support from the Dean, the faculty voted to allow discussion of whether it is time to revise the “magic” number of 165, which precludes opportunity hires and other forms of flexibility.

The college has made good progress in the past ten years toward its goal of diversifying the faculty. Of the 61 new tenure-track hires in that period, 28% are people of color. Faculty of color now comprise 23% of the total faculty (higher than representation in the student body, which is 20%), which represents an increase of 42% over ten years ago. More women have been hired, as well. There are now 17% more women than there were ten years ago, bringing the total of all faculty who are women to 48% and of the tenured and tenure-track faculty to 42%.

Robust regular reviews of faculty are in place. For tenure-track faculty, the *Faculty Manual* lays out expectations for scholarship, teaching, and service, and each department articulates discipline-specific criteria for scholarship to supplement (but not supersede) the *Manual*. Components required for review files and the entire process are clearly outlined, including the roles of the Department (or committee, for interdisciplinary or joint appointments), the Appointments and Promotions (A&P) Committee (with the Dean as a non-voting member), and the Dean. In making the tenure decision, the college demands very high standards in both teaching and scholarship—faculty are often referred to as “scholar-teachers” or “teacher-scholars.”

For renewable contract faculty positions, the *Faculty Manual* also outlines clear review procedures centered in the department and decided by the Dean.

The *Faculty Manual* states that “normal” retirement age is 65, but there is no mandatory age. A new faculty retirement incentive program was introduced in spring of 2016, offering 2- and 3-year options. A number of faculty have signed on to the opportunity, resigning tenure as they enter the phased period, which has given EPC more positions to allocate and inspired more departments to submit proposals. According to the Dean, this development also promises annual budget savings in three years (when these senior faculty are replaced by junior faculty) of about \$630,000.

The college tracks salaries for faculty and academic staff, aiming to be at the median in their 24-college national comparison group. A five-year plan to get there was adopted by Trustees in 2012 after no salary increase in 2010–11, but the plan was deferred in 2015–16. Since 2006–07, the average faculty salary increase has been 2.6%. There seems to be a small gender gap in faculty salaries at the full professor and assistant professor levels, though women have a slight edge at the

associate level. The deans are committed to looking deeper into these apparent discrepancies as soon as they can obtain relevant data.

The standard teaching load at Trinity is 10 courses over each two-year period, though new tenure-track faculty have an 8-course total load in their first two years (i.e., two courses in each of their first four semesters). Some courses are “worth more” than others in the translation from courses to “teaching units” (e.g., a course that includes a lab) but there seemed to be satisfaction among the faculty the Team interviewed about equity. Sabbatical leave is offered after eight consecutive terms of teaching, with one semester at full pay or two semesters at half pay.

Workload beyond classroom teaching varies widely from department to department and person to person. Some of this is inevitable, of course, but there are several areas where adjustments could potentially be made to achieve better equity (or perceived equity): differential advising loads; differences in “service burden” for faculty, particularly for those with joint appointments; differences in course releases attached to named professorships; and differences in research support from various departments. Course release for department chairs has recently been regularized.

Given the high expectations placed on faculty for (1) teaching in the core undergraduate program, (2) research quality and production, as well as (3) advising and committee service, the Evaluation Team is concerned that there is the potential of diffusing faculty time and energy, given the College’s many other initiatives. Use of faculty time needs to be considered along with revenue streams and educational benefits.

Interviewing faculty on various committees gave the Team a sense of the strong commitment that many faculty feel to faculty governance. Some faculty serve on more than one major committee at one time, which is a heavy load. The team also noted that not all members of the Appointments and Promotion Appeals Committee are tenured.

The *Faculty Manual* is comprehensive and clear about faculty appointments, faculty governance, and college policy affecting faculty. The self-study report, however, indicates a need for better clarification about expectations and responsibilities beyond official policy, particularly for visiting faculty. It projects that the Dean of the Faculty will issue a Faculty Handbook and/or a Department Chairs Handbook to address activities beyond course-load and include topics such as best practices for syllabus design including credit hour requirements, procedures for classroom observation by senior colleagues, and guidance for integrating visitors more fully into departments and programs. Finding mechanisms to ensure faculty collaboration in developing and implementing such Handbooks and for their articulation with the *Faculty Manual* will be important, particularly as the *Faculty Manual* is currently seen as the primary document (overseen by the Academic Freedom Committee) that has been thought to tie the hands of deans and faculty in adapting to new opportunities. Conversations with various groups on campus also indicated that undertaking such a project, as the new Dean of Faculty settles in, might be a good time for a broader discussion about shared governance and the role of faculty and deans.

There is also a felt need for clarifying the role of course evaluations. The self-study’s suggestion that the form should be revisited and a decision made as to whether and how to encourage or mandate universal course evaluation was echoed in on-campus interviews with faculty and deans.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning at Trinity is supported by a strongly held principle of academic freedom, enforced if need be by the Academic Freedom Committee, which adjudicates any alleged infringement, in addition to its role as keeper for the faculty of the *Faculty Manual*. There is also widespread attention to excellence in teaching and learning, faculty reviews (see above), decennial department and program reviews, department chairs' annual meetings with each faculty member, and course evaluations. It is clear in talking with faculty that they are devoted to teaching and to their students' success.

Trinity has increased its support for effective teaching and learning substantially over the past ten years. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), established in 2008 with a grant from the Mellon Foundation, is now fully endowed and runs well-attended workshops and roundtables open to all faculty on various topics throughout the year. In discussion with deans and committees responsible for clarifying the credit hour, advising, and assessment, it was clear that they see the CTL as an effective, even essential, venue for faculty discussion and awareness of important teaching issues.

Faculty can apply for targeted grant funds to support curricular innovations—currently from the Community Learning Initiative and the Small Seminar Development Grant fund. In the past ten years there have also been targeted Mellon funds through the Dean's office, grants from the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, and money from the Sustainability Task Force. To highlight and reward especially effective teaching, Trinity bestows two teaching awards per year at Commencement, one to a junior faculty member and one to a more senior teacher.

Study abroad is a key catalyst for learning for the roughly 60% of Trinity students who participate. Trinity's nine sites (from Rome and Paris to Trinidad and Shanghai) provide organized experiences for the students who choose them (about 70% of those who study abroad), but Trinity also facilitates study at about 90 other approved programs. Courses offered at Trinity's own sites are vetted by the on-campus Curriculum Committee, and each of these programs has an on-campus advisor. Opportunities for program improvement include developing closer links between faculty and Study Away staff and a more regular review system.

Academic support for students is well-established and widely accessed. The motto adopted by the Allan K. Smith Center for Writing and Rhetoric—"if you write, you belong"—is indicative of the ethos that ALL students benefit from professional and peer feedback. The Aetna Quantitative Center provides help with quantitative assignments and the Interdisciplinary Science Center supports scientific learning; all three centers have dedicated space and are open during student-friendly hours.

Both the library and IT—now under the joint aegis of the Vice President for Information Services—are organized to support teaching and learning. The library's Research Education Program supports individual courses through developing research guides and direct instruction, as well as individual students (each first-year student is assigned to a research librarian) and faculty (in course design or development). The Center for Educational Technology's (CET) three instructional technologists work closely with faculty in incorporating technology into their classes, supporting digital portfolios projects, Moodle, and other tools to enhance teaching, offering course development grants, and hosting faculty workshops. CET works closely with the Information Technology Education

Committee (ITEC). As previously noted, however, there is concern among faculty that the reorganization of the library under the leadership of a Chief Information Officer obscures the centrality of the library as a core educational resource.

Trinity is in the early stages of experimenting with online learning in two ways: With oversight by a faculty-staff steering committee, it joined edX in December of 2014 and has offered successful courses in computer science, chemistry, philosophy, and biology. Trinity is also part of the CTW Consortium (Connecticut College, Trinity, and Wesleyan University) that offered a neuroscience course on one campus with students participating remotely; they are currently hoping to extend offerings in Russian Studies and other humanities fields.

A new committee, the Learning Spaces Committee (LSC), was created in 2011 to evaluate and improve the quality of classrooms and other learning spaces and ensure that they are configured and equipped in ways that are optimal for learning. It refigured and publicized occupancy caps for each room, established an annual budget for classroom improvement, and developed a system for input from faculty on needs and priorities. It helped redesign the Life Sciences Center Auditorium (a formerly low-rated space) into a more user-friendly space. It has also worked to equalize usage of classrooms by piloting new course time slots.

Academic Advising

Trinity has paid increased attention to academic advising in the past ten years. There is now a very comprehensive, user-friendly *Academic Advising Primer* available on the Dean of the Faculty webpage for all academic advisors. Trinity has also developed a new enhanced system of advising for first-year students called the Bantam Network, which provides each student with a trained upper-class mentor and, through the first-year seminar, a research librarian, a peer writing tutor, and a student technology assistant. In addition, recent graduates are appointed as Transition Fellows to help first-years adjust to both the academic and social parts of college life.

While the college is very pleased with the success of these innovations—and comparative data from COFHE show that Trinity students are more satisfied with academic advising than students at peer institutions—faculty and administrators want to make further improvements in the coordination of all the advising resources available to students in the first two years and in students' transition from the pre-major advisor (always the teacher of the first-year seminar) to the major advisor. The self-study also mentions the need for enhanced advising for transfer students, as well as efforts to even out the advising load for faculty and to make advising more recognized and rewarded as part of a faculty member's work. The recent reorganization in the Dean of the Faculty office has occurred in part to address several of these issues.

Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activities

As a liberal arts college that emphasizes synergies and balance between teaching and scholarship, Trinity requires significant scholarly achievement for tenure and promotion and works to support it. Expectations are clearly outlined in the *Faculty Manual* and supplementary departmental documents, and the college has increased support for research and artistic productivity in the past ten years.

Faculty excellence has been corroborated in the past decade by an increased number of external grants (20 in 2015–16) and publications produced. Faculty research has been showcased through the faculty newsletter, on the college website, and in receptions hosted by the Dean following faculty meetings. Faculty who have received outside grants are invited to present their work on campus, and everyone who has published in open source journals archives their work in the Trinity College Digital Repository.

In the past ten years several new centers for cross-disciplinary scholarship and teaching have been added to the existing Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life and the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. The new centers are:

- The Center for Urban and Global Studies (2007).
- The Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (2010), a sort of umbrella structure for the others.
- The Center for Caribbean Studies (2016), which leverages the Trinity off-campus study site in Trinidad.

All of these centers are sites of faculty interaction with outside speakers, students, and colleagues from different disciplines, creating synergies and inspiration for scholarship and teaching beyond those available within departments. Additionally, the Center for Urban and Global Studies and the Center for Caribbean Studies engage in substantial interaction with the surrounding Hartford community, which is regarded as a laboratory for addressing urban issues and which has a substantial Caribbean diasporic population.

Student scholarship is also strongly encouraged and supported at Trinity. On average, 80 students are on campus in the summer doing research. Grants to support faculty supervising student research are available through the Student Research Program (SRP), and support for Student-Initiated Research Grants (SIRG) are also available, both administered by the Faculty Research Committee. Senior theses and other final year projects are archived in the Trinity College Digital Repository, and several student-initiated journals showcase outstanding student work in all disciplines. Recently, about 30 students per year co-author papers with a faculty member. Approximately the same number participate in professional conferences to share research, and about 200 present research posters on campus. And in recent years, several students have won national fellowships.

Intellectual Community

One final area brought up in the self-study is intellectual community and the sense that it may not be as strong among faculty as it once was. Changing demographics and more complicated family structures and the need to balance work-life issues may well be a factor, just as the stress of recent financial exigencies may be. The new Dean has made fostering intellectual community a priority, and the various centers—for Teaching and Learning as well as the topically focused interdisciplinary centers—have been excellent steps in the direction of fostering dialogue and collegiality across departments and divisions of the college. The challenge will be integrating this emphasis with faculty commitment to their students, to their fields of study or creativity, and to the work of the college; there is always a shortage of time.

Standard 7. Institutional Resources

Human Resources

Since the arrival of President Berger-Sweeney in 2014, there have been significant changes in the senior leadership of the college with a number of revised positions and many new members of the leadership team. The Evaluation Team reviewed the Data First forms in the self-study and the employee census records (some of which were adjusted by the college after our visit) and observed that the number of employees has essentially remained steady since 2000, with 612 full-time and 162 part-time employees at present.

A review of the *Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual* shows that the *Manual* is comprehensive and well organized. While aimed primarily at staff members, it also contains information useful to faculty. The *Manual* was last revised in April 2010 but a small number of policies have been revised since and are included in the *Manual*. The *Manual* is available to employees on the Current Employee Information page of the college's website. The *Manual* contains information on terms of employment and grievance and complaint procedures, as appropriate to each group. It is notable that the college provides a formal mechanism for staff concerns, issues, and ideas to be brought forward to the appropriate administrators and officers through the Exempt Staff Council and the Non-exempt Staff Council.

The college reports that faculty and staff compensation medians have traditionally lagged their peer groups, with staff \$500,000 below in the aggregate, but the Team was unable to verify this figure. Other studies reviewed (Trinity and the compensation gradient in the rankings, December 2014, and Inflation-Adjusted Faculty Salaries, March 2014) show that Trinity faculty salaries and benefits are above the "gradient" for similar *U.S. News and World Report* schools, although they have been relatively flat for the past few years on an inflation-adjusted basis. Attempts to close these gaps through the use of market and equity adjustments were underway, but that program has been suspended in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 due to budget constraints. A review of the 2016 Summary of Benefits shows a complete set of benefits offered to employees at a level that is comparable to those offered at other institutions. Particularly noteworthy is the availability of funding for staff to take job-related courses offered outside of Trinity, although the college acknowledges that it needs to provide more on-campus professional development opportunities. As described in Standard 4, Trinity also makes enrollment in its graduate programs accessible to employees, and may need to consider clarifying the line between the academic mission of these programs and staff professional development.

Team conversations with representatives of the staff councils and with approximately twenty staff during the open meeting revealed a staff who recognize the challenges facing the college but remain committed and dedicated to the college and to providing superb service to their customers. However, they also expressed some concerns about the performance evaluation process and a desire to have more of a voice in college governance and planning activities.

Financial Resources

A review of the college's financial statements shows a strong balance sheet with \$668 million of net assets as of June 30, 2016, including an endowment valued at \$525 million. However, only

approximately \$6 million of the endowment is unrestricted, which may limit the ability to make special draws. Total net assets declined by approximately 7.6% from June 30, 2015, primarily due to an 8% decrease in endowment value. In addition, the Bonds and Notes Payable liability increased by 15%, or approximately \$19.5 million.

The most recent reports (2016) from Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's were reviewed by the Evaluation Team. Moody's affirmed their A1 (stable) rating and S&P affirmed their A+ (stable) rating. Both reports noted strong student demand and academic reputation as credit strengths. They also highlighted concerns about recent declines in enrollment and operating deficits.

The college's operating budget for the current fiscal year 2017 is \$138.4 million, which compares to \$129.8 million in FY16. A review of the college's Five Year Budget History shows that the expense budget has increased 20.8% over the five-year period. The college is very dependent on net tuition revenue. During the five-year period of fiscal years 2012 through 2016, net tuition averaged 73.8% of all revenues. For FY17, the budgeted net tuition drops to 67.2% due to the addition of an \$8 million Special Gift Funding line in the revenue budget. Further analysis of the Budget History shows that while gross tuition and fees grew 15.3% during the six year period (fiscal years 2012 through 2017 budgeted), net tuition only grew by 6.5% due to a 37.8% growth in financial aid.

Financial affairs of the college are managed by the vice president of finance and chief financial officer (CFO), who reports directly to the president. The current CFO joined Trinity in July 2016 after 25 years of senior financial management experience at other universities. Assisting him are two senior-level staff—a comptroller and a budget director—plus 17 other staff.

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the oversight of the college's finances and carries out those responsibilities through four trustee committees: Finance; Audit and Risk; Investment; and Information Services and Facilities. Annual budgets and capital plans are approved by the Finance Committee and the full Board. The Audit and Risk Committee has engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to perform the annual audit of the college's financial statements and the committee is also responsible for oversight of the college's risk assessment and management activities. The Investment Committee works with Investure, a well-regarded outsourced chief investment officer (OCIO) firm, to manage the endowment. The Information Services and Facilities Committee oversees the college's capital plan, real estate investments, and capital projects.

The chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that the college has an enterprise risk management program that is being developed to focus more on strategic over tactical risks. There is currently no internal audit function at the college but work is underway to obtain these services.

The Team reviewed a variety of financial reports. Of particular note were the quarterly interim Trinity College Financial Statements. These very comprehensive reports approach 50 pages in length and contain detailed information on current operations, performance against budget, fundraising, endowment, and other financial indicators. While these reports are not presented to the Board, they are made available to all Trustees through the Trustee portal. Also noteworthy were the meeting materials provided to the Board Finance Subcommittee and Financial & Physical Resources Committee. Both sets of materials contained informative narratives, current and forward-looking projections and financial models, and benchmark comparisons. The Trustees told the Team that they have asked the administration to develop a dashboard of strategic indicators.

The Board and administration have adopted a set of high-level policies and ethical guidelines. The Team reviewed a number of the policies that were included in the *Faculty Manual*, *Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual*, and other locations. The Team was pleased to see that the Board itself has a Trustee Code of Conduct. Other financial policies including an Investment Policy, Gift Acceptance Policy, and general operating policies and procedures were reviewed by the Team.

The Team reviewed the annual budget development practices and found an inclusive process that involves soliciting input from departments, members of the Cabinet, the Faculty Financial Affairs Committee, the Planning and Budgeting Council, and other sources. Final approval of the annual budget is by the Board of Trustees. The Team was also pleased to see a recent linkage between the college's strategic and financial planning. Two of the five subcommittees of the Bicentennial Strategic Planning Commission are focused on financial and facilities issues, each co-chaired by a senior administrator and a member of the faculty.

The college reports that 62% of the FY17 budget is allocated to instruction, academic support, and student services, although this number could not be confirmed by the Team from the documents provided. An analysis of the audited financial statements shows corresponding numbers of 67.6% and 66% for fiscal years 2016 and 2015, respectively.

Fundraising has been an important part of the college's finances. An analysis of the Trinity College 10-Year Advancement Summary shows that on average the college received \$30.1 million in cash each year, 45% for current use and 55% for capital and endowment. The annual totals ranged from a high of \$39.8 million in FY09 to a low of \$22.3 million in the most recent fiscal year, 2016. The college is currently in the first year of a three-year effort to raise \$25 million of additional current use funds, The Bantam Bold Fund, to help offset projected operating budget deficits and reports that the initial results are good.

The college has developed a long-term financial plan encompassing fiscal years 2018–23. The model included a reasonable level of detail to support the revenue projections but little detail to support expense projections. The Team was pleased to see very detailed projections of the enrollment and financial aid components in the model.

A review of the self-study, meeting minutes, committee reports, and other documents clearly demonstrates a widespread acknowledgement of the financial challenges facing the college in the years ahead. The problems appear to have become more acute due to recent enrollment shortfalls but there are also structural elements of the financial model that result in projected annual deficits in every year of the model (fiscal years 2018–23) despite anticipated efforts and initiatives to increase revenues and reduce expenses, as outlined below. While the FY18 budget is nearly balanced, future year deficits range from a low of \$1.3 million in FY23 to \$9.9 million in FY20.

Revenue assumptions in the model assume modest growth in fall new student enrollment plus the introduction of a January cohort in FY18, but these positive enrollment trends are accompanied by intentionally higher aggregate discount rates to improve student quality and diversity. The discount rate is projected to increase to the 46–48% range from the current 40% level. A review of Trinity's comprehensive fees compared to NESCAC and other comparable institutions shows Trinity at the high end of both comparison sets, which may limit the ability to significantly increase these fees. The model also includes expense budget reductions in each year. The model does not include funds to address the significant and growing deferred maintenance problem detailed later in this section.

Information, Physical and Technological Resources

Library and Information Services: The college merged the library with Information Technology Services (ITS) in February 2015 following the retirement of the college Librarian and in recognition of the increasing synergies between information technology and library services. The combined organization is called Information Services (IS) and it reports to the Vice President for Information Services and Chief Information Officer. A Library Transition Advisory Committee was formed to help guide the merger of the two organizations and to assess its effectiveness over a longer period of time. The merger was met with some faculty disapproval. Additional input from the campus community has been gathered by means of the Measuring Information Services Outcomes (MISO) survey, which was administered in February 2016. The survey revealed generally favorable results for library resources and services and for information services with the exception of the wireless network. Some faculty concern remains regarding the college librarian position and how it relates to the provisions of the *Faculty Manual*.

The Trinity College Library, the Watkinson Library (which serves as a public research library and houses the rare book and special collections), and ITS are all housed in the Raether Library and Information Technology Center. The library provides all of the services and resources generally found in an academic and research library and a review of its website found many useful tools and resources, including links to the eight research librarians and their subject specialties. However, the Team did note on the Data First forms that the number of full and part time librarians decreased from 17 in FY15 to 10 in the current fiscal year. In addition, the website lists three instructional technologists and the academic departments that each of them supports. The Center also houses four computer labs and a Student Technology Assistant Program where trained undergraduate students provide instructional technology assistance to faculty and students. Some areas of the Center, including the computer labs, are available to students 24 hours per day (although the MISO survey reports relatively low use by students).

The library is engaged in an ongoing transition from having a primarily print collection to a primarily digital collection. It is reported that in 2012 spending on the collection flipped and since then more has been spent on digital than print resources in the collection. The library has also made good use of the Connecticut College, Trinity College, and Wesleyan University (CTW) Consortium by eliminating duplicate print purchases, exploring and negotiating digital purchases, implementing a common integrated library system, and facilitating sharing of the print collections.

Information Technology Services provides wired and wireless network access throughout the campus. A review of the Spring 2017 ITS newsletter shows that efforts are underway to expand the bandwidth of the college's internet connections to alleviate slow speeds during peak periods and that the upgrade to the wireless network reported in the self-study has been paused while the infrastructure in many buildings is upgraded to support an enhanced wireless network. The Evaluation Team learned in a meeting with the ITS staff that one of the two campus connections to the internet has now been upgraded and has significantly increased bandwidth. They also reported that a revised disaster plan was completed in late 2016.

A review of the list of software used to support enterprise activities found a PeopleSoft environment supplemented with application-specific packages in certain areas such as Admissions, Campus

Safety, and the Dean of Faculty's office. A similar review of the supported software available for faculty, staff, and student use found many of the typical and standard packages along with user guides and videos for many of them. The list of software on the computer lab machines is extensive and wide-ranging.

A review of the Information Services organizational chart shows a large and diverse team of people supporting the library activities, technological infrastructure, information security, application development and support, and educational technology. The college collaborated with Wesleyan University to create and co-hire a chief information security officer in January 2016, although the Evaluation Team learned that this person recently resigned. Information on data and computer security, including the Acceptable Use Policy, is posted on the ITS website.

The *IT Plan 2011-2015* dated November 2010 was provided for review. It included a gap analysis for infrastructure costs, a summary of the then current IT deferred maintenance problem, and a plan for dealing with these issues. The ITS staff plans to complete a new strategic plan once the Bicentennial Strategic Plan is completed. A review of the ITS website found the Information Technology in Education Committee comprised of members of the faculty, which is responsible for providing a link between the faculty and ITS and for providing input to improve the teaching and research information technology environment. The Team confirmed that this group exists and meets monthly and learned that the committee charter is being revised to reflect the merged organization.

Facilities

The Trinity campus is situated on approximately 100 acres of land in Hartford. The college's academic and residential buildings principally exist within four quadrangles. There are 90 buildings on campus and the college owns 16 other buildings and properties in close proximity to the campus. In addition, the college has entered into long-term leases for academic and programmatic space in downtown Hartford. The campus is very attractive, particularly the Chapel and Long Walk buildings.

Interviews with various members of the community highlighted the recently renovated first-year student residence halls and the admission building as very nice spaces. Other residence halls were identified as needing work, and the Evaluation Team also received numerous reports of overcrowding in the athletic and recreation building. The Team received a number of anecdotal reports about the campus not being fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Team reviewed the list of major renovation projects provided in the self-study data forms and was pleased to see that classroom, residence hall, and student social spaces were included on the list in addition to campus infrastructure projects. It is also noteworthy that a new building currently under construction was repurposed mid-construction from a bookstore and café to a building that will house labs, offices, and arts spaces.

Facilities and environmental sustainability are the subject of one of five committees of the Bicentennial Strategic Planning Commission. The self-study reports that total deferred maintenance is estimated at \$125 million but the recently published Facilities and Environmental Sustainability Committee (FESC) Report puts that number at \$135 million with off-campus properties and technology included, an increase from an estimated \$46 million in 2001 and \$77 million in 2006. The current College budget has \$5.8 million for plant renewal and a review of the long-term financial

model shows very small, inflationary annual increases to this figure. The college acknowledges that campus renewal is significantly underfunded. The FESC Report states that the college should spend no less than \$12.5 million on annual maintenance (excluding deferred maintenance) and begins to address the deferred maintenance issue with recommendations for a collaborative and transparent process for prioritizing projects, creating a strategic plan for facilities, and creating opportunities for dedicated fundraising for facilities projects. The Team made numerous inquiries about a financial plan for addressing the deferred maintenance problem, and found that no current plan exists—other than, perhaps, that some funds raised in a potential future capital campaign could free up operating budget funds to use on maintenance.

Standard 8. Educational Effectiveness

Trinity College's mission and focus are offering excellence in liberal arts education. In the last ten years, the institution has made progress in initiating an assessment system consistent with NEASC/CIHE standards and in responding to the Commission's Fall 2007 requested emphasis on "developing and implementing the means to assess student learning in the core curriculum and each of the undergraduate majors." The Spring 2010 emphasis also discussed "continuing to engage faculty in using assessment to understand what and how students are learning and using the results for improvement" and "deciding what graduate programs the institution will continue to offer, in light of the college's mission and its commitment to academic quality." As described below, progress is still in a developing stage as learning goals for all undergraduate majors were established by the end of 2011, but direct measurement of verifiable statements about what students are expected to demonstrate or know, as evidenced by review of annual departmental reports, appears to occur in about 50% of majors. Assessment of the core curriculum depends primarily on indirect measures. Graduate programs have yet to establish learning goals, or to assemble sufficient data to effectively assess program quality.

Senior leadership is data-driven and focused on assembling verifiable information for the purposes of planning and improvement and the allocation of resources. Examples of the college's commitment to improving data collection and utilization are the formation of the Analytics and Strategic Initiatives Center and the authorization of two staff positions: a new analyst position who will work with the Director of Institutional Research and refilling the Director of Assessment position reporting to the Dean of Faculty who will support the Assessment Advisory Board.

As stated in the self-study, Trinity sees assessment as a "continuously evolving project, which we work actively to strengthen" by "creating processes and structures, and shaping perceptions about the importance of evaluative practices." The goal of deepening the quality of assessment practices is hampered by what was identified in interviews with senior administrators as significant data deficits and staffing turnover that is now in the beginning stages of remediation through new staffing and collaborations that will require a steady and continuous financial and leadership commitment to continue, in the context of other pressing staffing and resource needs.

Standards of Achievement

The Evaluation Team's review of departmental learning goals, assessment plans, and course syllabi, supported by discussions with faculty and deans, verifies that Trinity's standards of achievement are

appropriate for the undergraduate degree. Trinity College's engineering major was reaccredited in 2012 by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), with no deficiency or weaknesses identified. A review of the limited number of graduate course syllabi available in the electronic workroom does not demonstrate a clear differentiation in the amount and level of work required for undergraduate and graduate students in dual-numbered courses (e.g., 401–801). The standards of achievement in some graduate programs are not easy to assess due to insufficient graduation and post-degree employment and outcomes data.

Assessment of Student Learning

Since its last review, Trinity College has taken several steps to create a culture of assessment throughout the institution. With the assistance of funding from a 2009 Teagle Foundation grant (pursued in response to 2007 Commission actions), Trinity aimed to create “faculty-driven learning assessment and to establish learning goals and rubrics to measure learning progress related to improving educational weaknesses and teaching effectiveness for all majors and the general education program.” The learning goals of all majors are now posted online in departmental websites, referenced in the E-Series Form. Teagle grant activities included conference attendance, consultant- and faculty-led workshops for departments and programs in the fall of 2011 and spring of 2013, and transcription of senior exit interviews and rubric coding.

In 2010, senior leadership established an Assessment Advisory Board (AAB), consisting of four faculty members, one from each division, plus evolving ex officio membership that now includes one of the Deans of Academic Affairs and the Directors of the Writing and Quantitative Centers. The AAB will eventually be assisted by the Director of Academic Assessment, a reconfigured position for which a search is now underway. The Board has been charged with guiding the development and implementation of assessment policies and procedures, and reporting on these matters to the Dean of the Faculty, the Curriculum Committee, and the faculty at large. According to the self-study, and verified in conversations with members of the Curriculum Committee and Office of the Dean of Faculty, communication with the Curriculum Committee and reports to faculty have not yet been regularly implemented, and “(M)ore coordination between the committees within the faculty governance structure needs to occur.”

In 2010–11, all academic departments were asked to identify two learning goals for each major and to outline sustainable plans for assessing these goals through the use of direct measures and a review by departmental faculty of collected evidence. In a subsequent year, the AAB created a template for the annual review of departmental reports, which also tracked additional or revised learning goals, revised assessment plans, and resulting changes to the curriculum. The AAB has since provided thoughtful and consistent feedback to departments. Several departments have shown a growing understanding of assessment practices in their annual reports and have used evidence to improve both their practices and student learning. However, though a 97% rate of reply is reported in the self-study, the Evaluation Team found that at least a quarter of departments have either not progressed beyond learning goal identification or do not appear to be regularly submitting annual reports. Others do not demonstrate an understanding of direct measurement, or have identified relatively non-specific goals for their majors such as “Develop public speaking skills,” or “Develop research and analytic skills,” which draw from the college-wide learning goals described below. There is still work to do.

In interviews with the Evaluation Team, members of the Assessment Advisory Board estimated that 50% of departments demonstrate a developing understanding of how assessment can be used to improve curriculum, pedagogy and learning, with most not yet implementing changes related to improvements. A sizeable percentage of departments are resistant to these new expectations. External program reviews, which invite three faculty from peer institutions to review self-studies, departmental CVs and syllabi, began in 2007 and have now been completed by all departments in the first round of a ten-year cycle. The self-studies in recent years have been asked to address whether or not learning goals are posted, what mechanisms are used to evaluate student achievement, and whether departments have changed their curriculum in response to assessment findings, but the linkage to assessment is still in nascent stages.

College-wide learning goals were established by the General Education Council without faculty consultation in 2008 and are now posted on the Trinity website (see Standard 4). While these goals align partially with aspects of the general education curriculum, assessment of the general education curriculum and college-wide learning goals is now primarily dependent on indirect measures such as student surveys, which self-report perceptions of skill development in these areas; faculty surveys, which report perceptions of students' abilities and skills; and faculty opinions on which learning goals are covered in classes they teach. Other indirect measures include exit interviews with seniors and the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) surveys that measure student satisfaction with their oral communication and writing skills and abilities to conduct scholarly research.

The college has also mapped the learning goals of majors against the 10 college-wide goals, and tracks such data points as the number of students participating in poster sessions at on-campus science symposia and the number of co-authored publications of students with faculty.

An example of a direct measure of assessment, begun with support from the Teagle grant, is the Writing Assessment, in which 95% of first years and 50% of juniors write short papers in response to the same prompt, with all papers then evaluated by the same rubric. The self-study notes that the Writing Assessment initiative might next inform faculty about the extent to which students are developing as writers (juniors were scored higher in rubric categories of analysis, organization, and use of smooth transitions) and further investigate how faculty might strengthen student writing.

Departments with learning goals related to oral communications have developed rubrics to measure oral presentations of theses or other presentations at research symposia. Measurement of learning goals related to diverse cultural traditions and global perspectives and second language competency has yet to begin, and measurement of collaborative learning relies on tracking collaborative research with faculty and involvement in service-learning initiatives. Trinity is considering revisiting the general learning outcomes of the college in the near future.

Co-curricular learning goals (e.g., a sense of community on campus, student satisfaction, engagement outside the classroom, drug and alcohol violations, and climate for diversity) are in preliminary stages of development, with metrics still to be identified. Initial conversations about measurement refer to utilization of senior exit and other surveys.

Among the surveys Trinity employs are the COFHE Enrolled Student Survey, Senior Survey, Survey of New Students, and Parent and Alumni Surveys; the College Board Admitted Students Questionnaire; the Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshman survey (every other year);

and the Consortium on High Achievement and Success Survey (about every four years). The college has also administered its own Title IX climate survey, a drug and alcohol survey, and a survey of spiritual life, and—from 2009 through 2015—an annual exit interview with a sample of seniors.

The Higher Education Research Faculty Survey was administered in 2011, and staff climate surveys in 2008 and 2011. Seniors are annually surveyed about their postgraduate plans, and alumni two years out are surveyed about their current employment. Graduate students were also surveyed in 2012 and 2016 about such topics as quality of instruction and advising, satisfaction with the program and related resources, and reasons for enrolling.

Though learning goals have now been posted on the websites of each major, learning goals are not included in the online or pdf versions of the *Trinity College Bulletin* course catalog, which does list the requirements for majors. Learning goals are also not publicly stated for the four M.A. programs in American Studies, English, Public Policy, and Neuroscience or for the 10 study-away programs.

Interdisciplinary minors do not appear to have web pages, which is where learning goals have been posted for all majors, and the learning goals for these 27 programs also do not appear in the *Bulletin*. Learning outcomes for General Education requirements are also not included in the *Bulletin*.

Retention and Graduation Rate and Other Measures of Tracking Student Success

Trinity's Office of Institutional Research tracks four-, five-, and six-year undergraduate graduation rates, and one- and two-year retention rates, and compares these rates to those of peer institutions. Graduation and retention data are also sorted by categories of gender, race, ethnicity, and special scholarship status (e.g., Posse, international students, athletes). Data First IPEDS retention data is reported as ranging from 91% in FY14 to 88% in FY16. IPEDS six-year graduation data reports an 86% rate in both FY14 and FY16. The self-study notes that its undergraduate retention rate dropped in 2011 below 90% and presents perceived reasons for this drop (deteriorating social climate and a tuition-driven admissions strategy) as well as steps taken to ameliorate the situation, which included new staffing (e.g., the Director of Student Success) and programs to address the reasons students gave for departing.

Graduation rates for M.A. programs are not reported in the Data First Forms.

FY14 to FY16 Data First Forms state that 6 to 8% of alumni are enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation, and that 333 of 540 graduates had jobs within six months in FY16. The self-study reports that the number of students applying for and receiving prestigious grants, such as Fulbrights, has risen since 2007, but that data could be collected more systematically. The Career Development Center and some academic departments have begun tracking the professional careers and graduate degrees of alumni.

The online *Public Factbook*, last updated in October 2015 due to staffing shortages in Institutional Research, reports undergraduate graduation and retention rates of “Traditional Students” while the 2016–17 *Trinity College Fact Sheet* reports the one-year retention rate for the 2015 undergraduate cohort as 90% with the six-year graduation rate for the 2009 cohort at 86%. The *Fact Sheet* also provides Fall 2015 achievement of post-graduate degrees five years after graduation (60%), and ten years after graduation (65%). Top career fields are reported as: finance and financial services, 17%;

communications and media, 16%; education, 12%; science and health care, 12%; management, 11%; and law, 10%.

Standard 9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity

Founded as Washington College in 1823, Trinity College has continually reaffirmed its commitment to liberal arts education. One of the college mission statement's highlighted phrases, "As the preeminent liberal arts college in an urban setting..." links the education of students to the needs, challenges, and opportunities of its location in downtown Hartford. In pursuit of its mission, the college ascribes to high ethical standards and accountability for students, faculty, and staff.

Grievance procedures are formally described and apply to students and all employees. Each constituent group (students, faculty, staff) has its own policy manual. As the college notes, separate manuals are a natural way to provide information, although those divisions raise the bar on internal procedures for assuring uniformity. The recent College-wide Policy on Sexual Misconduct may offer possibilities in the future for the adoption of College-wide procedures. Campus Safety reports are readily available via the website. The Board of Trustees is involved in these issues through its Audit and Risk Committee and there is a Trustee Code of Conduct consistent with fiduciary responsibilities, free expression, and high standards of personal integrity.

Students are knowledgeable about the Student Integrity Contract and the Honor Council judicial process for alleged violations of social/behavioral codes of conduct and allegations of academic dishonesty.

Particularly for staff, the Trinity community is open, supportive, and welcoming. There is a deep sense of commitment to the mission, and a willingness to work hard toward common goals. The Bicentennial efforts offer a timely opening for the community to affirm values and to recommit to a healthy campus climate.

Transparency

The college has stated policies and practices to provide services and accommodations for students with physical and learning disabilities. Buildings on campus, however, appear very difficult to access for people with physical disabilities and mobility issues. For example, there is no disability access to the Dean of Students' office. Accommodations for students with learning disabilities appear to satisfy federal requirements.

The *Bulletin* (course catalog) lacks a comprehensive discussion of all student academic policies and the absence of a description and discussion of learning goals is notable. Although all the policies can be found on the website, the *Bulletin* is an important and natural place for these policies to be found. In addition, the *Bulletin* is often the archived history of the academic program of the college—therefore, it is an important document.

With new leadership, there is understandable uncertainty about planning and priorities, highlighting a need for clear and concise communications. Messaging to staff appears to be particularly important. The sense of President Berger-Sweeney's commitment to transparency and inclusion is clearly felt while the details may not yet be landing in a way that is broadly understood.

Public Disclosure

President Berger-Sweeney's regular communications with the campus and local community help build an environment of openness and trust. The honest and candid communications about the September 2016 "porch collapse" accident involving students was a solid step. Information is relatively easy to find via the college website, via both navigation and the search engine. The timeliness of available data is mixed, likely due to inattention paid to the importance of a data infrastructure and data warehousing. The two-page Factbook contains up-to-date data, but the more detailed links appear to have data that is more than a year old.

The arrival in January 2017 of a new Vice President for Communications and Marketing provides an opportunity and moment for a thorough appraisal of platforms, digital and social media strategy, and the external-facing elements of that unit. With new leadership in Communications, combined with the many leadership changes in the President's Cabinet, there is an awareness of the need to provide training in crisis response and communications.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the Evaluation Team reviewed Trinity College's Affirmation of Compliance form, signed by the President. As noted in this report, Trinity College publicly discloses on its website, in the Student Handbook, and in other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made one month prior to the visit on the Trinity web site and in the *Trinity Reporter*, *Trinity Tripod*, and *Hartford Courant*. As described in Standard 9, the handbooks for students, faculty, and staff all contain detailed information about the college's grievance procedures. Finally, as discussed in Standard 4, Trinity is currently engaged in a process to determine the appropriate number of semester hours for its courses, with a plan expected in Summer 2017. Given that these matters are still very much works in progress, evaluation of Trinity's conformity with credit hour requirements will need to be revisited once new policies and practices are in place.

SUMMARY

Trinity College used the self-study process, including the Data First and E-Series forms, effectively to review several key aspects of institutional functioning. The self-study was admirably detailed and candid. It revealed an institution that is self-aware and, in the areas of greatest need or weakness, working on ways to address and ameliorate these issues.

It is the view of the Evaluation Team that Trinity College is focused on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs and the success of its students. It is accomplishing its mission under the leadership of a dynamic and talented president, an enthusiastic and committed Board of Trustees, and a highly qualified faculty and staff devoted to serving the needs of Trinity students.

The Evaluation Team found, in the self-study and in our visit to campus, that Trinity finds itself at a promising moment in its long history. It has new leadership and a renewed sense of momentum and optimism, and is remarkably consistent in its strategy and messaging. The Team observed an institution with considerable strengths—academic, financial, cultural, locational—taking a highly competitive higher education marketplace head-on and making strong investments in defining itself as a relevant and engaged liberal arts college.

Trinity is conscious of the recent strides it has made and aware of where work remains to be done. As such, the institution is unlikely to be surprised by the strengths and concerns outlined below. The Evaluation Team has every confidence that, where needs and issues remain, the college will be able to take action and make meaningful adjustments and improvements.

Strengths

- The college community has a sense of renewed optimism under President Berger-Sweeney's strong leadership, clarity, and forward-looking strategy focused on improving the quality and diversity of the student body and emphasizing Trinity's position as an excellent liberal arts college in an urban setting.
- President Berger-Sweeney has assembled a talented and experienced senior team that delivers a consistent message, has an inclusive, team-oriented approach to decision-making, and devotes growing attention to data-informed planning.
- The college has an excellent faculty dedicated to their fields and their students, including an exciting generation of new hires of outstanding quality and increasing diversity.
- Trinity is working on improving campus culture and support for all students.
- The college has dedicated and committed staff across the organization, despite leanness of staff in almost every area.
- Trinity has an admirable entrepreneurial spirit, and is willing to try new things.
- The college has a strong balance sheet anchored by a \$525 million endowment and a donor base with high capacity.

Challenges

- Once the Bicentennial planning process has concluded, it will be important to institutionalize the alignment of academic planning processes and resource allocation with strong leadership and staffing in data analysis and planning and the advancement of a culture of assessment.
- Budget projections show operating deficits in each of the next six years (FY18–23), even with projected Bantam Bold funds in the next three years. (Trinity has indicated that these projections have been revised since the Evaluation Team's visit.)
- Strategies for enhancing operating revenue are commendable for their creativity but require careful market analysis, program design, and financial modeling.

- The problem of deferred maintenance will continue to grow if the college does not start to tackle it in a more aggressive way.
- The development of alternative sources of revenue is vital and requires leadership attention, detailed program design, financial investments, and staffing. Thus the college faces the risk of diffusing energy and resources away from the core academic program to more tactical initiatives.
- The college has made progress recently in increasing the diversity and excellence of the faculty through new faculty hires, and in the diversification of the student body. Moving forward, Trinity could benefit from greater structure and intentionality in diversity and inclusion efforts.
- The Hartford engagement strategy seems to provide many promising opportunities for enriching the experience of Trinity students and generating revenue. However, as it now stands there is no guiding philosophy or senior leadership to frame the strategy with a consistent narrative that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
- The college is currently working to ensure full compliance with federal credit hour standards, and that process should involve broad and systematic engagement with faculty to make sure that the standards are understood and being followed.
- The graduate programs have not been assessed rigorously for academic quality or financial sustainability, despite calls for this assessment in accreditation reports since 1986.