Introductory Remarks
Xiangming Chen, Dean and Director

In this somewhat abbreviated issue, we draw the reader’s attention to the two important events taking place on April 1 and April 3–4, respectively. The first is a workshop featuring a set of research presentations on urban topics by both Trinity faculty and students including two keynotes by invited scholars. The second is an international symposium celebrating the cumulative activities and accomplishments supported by a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to Trinity College. In the remaining space of this issue, we report on a few other news items representing what is going on at CUGS and its partners.

Luce Initiative Celebration
Xiangming Chen, Dean and Director

Four years into the Henry Luce Foundation’s Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE) grant to Trinity College, we are celebrating the main activities and accomplishments supported by this grant administered by CUGS through an international symposium on campus on April 3–4, 2017. Entitled “Urban Sustainability in Asia: Many Dimensions, Multiple Disciplines, and Diverse Approaches,” this symposium highlights a number of Luce-funded curricular activities.

First, several Trinity faculty will share their experiences teaching the summer study-away programs in China, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Second, we will learn from three peer institutions (Bard College, Bard College at Simon’s Rock, and Hobart & William Smith Colleges) that were also awarded the LIASE grant. The symposium concludes with a set of research presentations by faculty members, including the current Luce Foundation visiting scholar (see p. 2).

The LIASE grant not only has allowed Trinity to launch a set of new curricular initiatives and activities but also to reinforce and amplify distinctive existing programs. With the Luce grant, we have been able to expand the geographic scope of our earlier China-focused summer program to Southeast Asia and Japan and thus bring in more faculty members as instructors. The opportunities for Trinity students to conduct summer research in Asian cities through the Luce grant have infused and enriched the steady growth of a student summer research program at CUGS. The four Luce Foundation visiting scholars from China and Great Britain have brought new and local expertise to Trinity through the teaching of Sustainable Urban Development, which in turn has strengthened the already vibrant Urban Studies program.
A group of Hartford middle school students recently visited Trinity’s campus to learn more about the college experience as part of the Capitol Region Education Council’s Open Choice Youth Empowerment Summit. The participants went on a tour of campus, ate lunch in the dining hall, and had the opportunity to hear from current staff and students.

The Youth Empowerment Summit (YES) offers leadership development and encourages students to think about their future and personal goals. Visiting a college campus was a priority for the middle school cohort of YES participants. The February 20 event was designed to introduce the students to college and to inspire them to consider what they can be doing now to set themselves up to be successful in high school and college.

During their campus visit, Hartford middle school students had the chance to speak with Trinity students (front, left to right) Daniel Garcia ’17, Tyler Gibbs ’19, Mark Ferreira ’17, Denzel Munroe ’18, and Selina Ortiz ’19. Photo by John Marinelli.

The day began with a discussion of student life and the Bantam Network with Trinsition Fellows and Trinity alumni Alex Conaway ’15 and Chanel Erasmus ’15. The Hartford students asked questions about the college application process, athletics at Trinity, and what an average day as a Trinity student might look like. The day concluded with a panel of five Trinity students involved in multicultural affairs at the College. The panelists answered questions and gave advice to the middle-schoolers as they begin to think ahead to high school and college. Topics of discussion included the experience of first-generation college students and the importance of extra-curricular activities, work ethic, and being an engaged citizen.

Denzel Munroe ’18, a member of Trinity’s football team, encouraged the students to keep working hard and to get involved with clubs, sports, and their community. Tyler Gibbs ’19 reminded the group, “Don’t be afraid to ask for help.” Daniel Garcia ’17, council chair of multicultural affairs of the Student Government Association and House of Peace president, urged students to read and keep up with current events, explaining, “The mind is a muscle and the more you use it, the stronger it gets.” He also highlighted how Trinity’s environment is very different from the one he grew up in. Garcia explained how this has been a valuable learning experience for him. He shared, “It’s important that you’re able to listen to and speak with someone with a very different perspective.”

Na Fu’s research interest focuses on urban transformations in China and Southeast Asia, with particular attention to understanding migration in relationship to urban renewal impacts on spatial and social gentrification. She began her practice to participate in the urban village (lower income settlement) redevelopment process in Shenzhen during early 2010s. As a graduate student at University of Texas, Austin, she studied public participation theory in relation to the stakeholder power relationship during the rapid urbanization in China. Na has been accepted to New School in New York where she will pursue her Ph.D. in Politics.

INTRODUCING THE LUCE VISITING SCHOLAR

Fu Na, Luce Visiting Scholar, Spring 2017
This spring term, Trinfo.Cafe is embarking on two new student-led initiatives. With the support of the Margaret C. Jacobs Charitable Trust and William Levy ’71, Trinfo is overseeing the development of a new student-led program using unmanned aerial vehicles (or drones) to expose a small pilot group of high school students at the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA) to videography on one track and spatial mapping on another. In addition, Trinfo.Cafe is partnering with a new student club called C3 (the Community Computer Cooperative) on a joint project to distribute laptops to families with children in the Hartford Public School system.

Trinfo.Cafe, the College’s community technology center, has been working for 17 years to bridge the digital divide that separates the campus from the neighborhoods surrounding it. While Trinfo has evolved over that time to meet the changing needs of the College, community, and the technological landscape, its core mission remains unchanged and these two initiatives illustrate how Trinity students are central to Trinfo’s operations. Trinity students staff Trinfo into the evenings and weekends, develop and revise adult computer literacy workshops as well as youth tech-based programs in both English and Spanish and teach those programs and workshops at Trinfo and public schools throughout the neighborhoods surrounding the College. Trinity students also assist with refurbishing decommissioned Trinity computers which are distributed to adults who complete Trinfo’s introductory set of computer literacy workshops and occasionally to community partners for joint programming.

Currently under development, the drone program will kick-off in September and run throughout the Fall term with two teams of three Trinity students paired to an equal number of high school students from HMTCA. The Trinity students will act as mentors and tutors throughout the program. From learning the mechanics of how to pilot the drones to the proper rules and etiquette of flying, the program endeavors to create a baseline experience for all the participants before breaking off into their respective program tracks. The videography track will produce a promotional video of the campus’ main quad – from the library to the chapel. The spatial mapping team will develop a virtual campus map of the same space with integrated content for each of the pin locations representing all of the buildings surrounding the main quad. This content will include text, a voice-over narrating the building and its history by a Trinity student tour guide from the Admissions Office, and a video fly-by take with the drones. The products will be displayed on Trinfo’s website, however, the program, after evaluation and revision, will be offered to community partners as part of Trinfo’s array of youth-based technology programs.

The C3 Project is brand new and the students leading that effort are in the early development stages of formulating relationships and determining its goals, but it’s mission is similar to Trinfo’s and bridging the digital divide is central to their program. The student leaders have determined that while the divide that exists today is centered on how the internet is accessed – home Wi-Fi vs cellular access through mobile devices, today’s divide leaves low-income households lacking the traditional tools higher-income households take for granted. Starting with addressing the hardware gap, the C3 will be working with the Hartford Public School system to distribute refurbished laptops from area businesses large and small to families with children in public schools. Trinfo will be providing C3 a home base for their refurbishing and distribution operations. Longer term, C3 is striving to raise funds to help subsidize the in-home internet costs for Hartford families.

This phase is still under development, but with the success of the laptop distribution program, C3 leaders feel confident that they will be able to eventually add the internet access component to their program’s portfolio. These activities illustrate the variety of student-led partnerships Trinfo has been able to foster as part of its strategic mission to not only bridge the digital divide between the College and surrounding neighborhoods, but to blossom beyond its original mission into a broader community space that links the College and surrounding community to a common mission.

Carlos Espinosa, Director, Trinfo.Cafe

Photo by Rosangelica Rodriguez.
The big excitement for URST this term all happens April 1-4! On April 1, the Urban Studies Program hosts a workshop on “Engaging the Urban in the Liberal Arts.” Three of our stellar seniors (Chinmay Rayarikar, Austen Peterson and Joy Kim) will be presenting the initial findings from their Honors theses, and four of our faculty members (Emily Cummins, Alex Manevitz, Aidali Aponte-Aviles and Garth Myers) will present papers from their ongoing urban research. We will begin and end the day with keynote lectures from excellent scholars, Dr. Liza Weinstein of Northeastern University and Dr. Joseph Nevins from Vassar College. Please JOIN US!

With a Sunday in between to recover our wits, we resume on April 3 and 4 in the context of CUGS’s celebration of the achievements of its Luce Foundation-funded curricular development and faculty development work on Asian urban environments (see more elsewhere in these pages).

Both before and after these peak days, there is, as usual, a lot going on in Urban Studies, as we move our largest class of majors (20) forward to graduation in May – followed by an even bigger class of seniors (24) in the class of 2018.