

Welcome, Class of 2019, transfer students, and IDP students who are joining the Trinity family today!

Are you ready? You are the reason we are here today, the day that marks the start of your journey at Trinity College. I also want to welcome parents, families, and friends. Your support and guidance throughout the years have been invaluable to these students as they made their way here. And welcome to faculty, staff, and student leaders. You will play an integral role in the lives of our new students now that they have joined us 'neath the elms. I know that everyone – including me – is energized and ready to get started.

I have to tell you that just about 10 days ago, I dropped my daughter off for orientation as a first-year at Wellesley College. So parents, I *know* how you feel. Parents, it's okay to cry as you let go and say goodbye. Secretly, your kids are expecting it and will be disappointed if you don't.

Students, you have made a most excellent choice to come to Trinity College and pursue the liberal arts. To reach this point in your academic careers, all of you undoubtedly have been reading – maybe for your classes, maybe just for fun. I love reading, and one thing you'll quickly learn about me is that I like to talk about books that I have read and why they resonated with me. Today is no exception.

One of the books I read this summer, *The Boys in the Boat*, by Daniel James Brown, was probably my favorite book of the summer. How many of you have read *The Boys in the Boat*? The book tells the story of the eight-man crew team from the University of Washington that exceeded all expectations and won gold at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. This group of working-class boys, the sons of loggers, farmers, and shipyard workers, showed the world that through teamwork, anything is possible.

Before I go any further, I want to interject a Trinity pride point. We at Trinity know what it takes to win big at crew ... our "girls in the boat" – the women's varsity-eight boat – won its fourth national title and its second in a row this past spring on the heels of the entire team being crowned NCAA Division III champions the year before. Go Bantam crew!

But back to the boys in the boat. The book draws the interesting contrast between Germany, in 1934-36, building a propaganda and war machine and these hardworking American kids (at the same time), who were building dams and infrastructure in the United States. The working-class boys in the U.S. boat triumphed over Hitler's German rowing team in Berlin. They were physically strong, to be sure. Several of them had bonded the previous summer while doing backbreaking, dangerous work to make money building Coulee Dam. The coxswain for University of Washington was an intellectual, a member of Phi Beta Kappa who by all accounts was a brilliant strategist. Each member of the crew brought to the table – or to the water – his own unique talents, and each understood and *respected* the talents of the others in the boat.

Respect was key. These men had enormous respect for each other's abilities, which led to an unbreakable trust that was essential for their team success. Each trusted the next to put his oar in the water at exactly the right time to match each other's strokes, to glide perfectly to victory.

Brown writes, "The team effort, the perfectly synchronized flow of muscle, oars, boat, and water; the single, whole, unified, and beautiful symphony that a crew in motion becomes – is all that matters. Not the individual, not the self."

*There are lessons here for us all.*

As you join the Trinity community of learners, you, too, become part of a team, in fact, more than one team. The first team is the alumni body – more than 21,000 strong – all people who once sat where you are today looking up at the bishop with downtown Hartford in the distance. They went before you, forming bonds of friendships and commitment that continue to endure. These alumni, who connect with each other as friends and professionals, also will be on the lookout for you to help support your career and more generally your life aspirations.

The other team, and maybe even more exciting today, is one with a bit of a twist. You probably have heard that this is the inaugural year of the Bantam Network – a mentoring program designed *by* students *for* students – that will help guide you on your journey here. Your class has been divided into 10 groups that we call “Nests” ... and very, very soon you will learn which one of these Nests will be your home. I’m trying not to pick a favorite Nest, but I have to tell you that one of them is named after my yellow Labrador Minty, so that Nest will always have a special place in my heart.

Respect will be important for you here at Trinity, in your new Nest. Respect for yourself, for your new friends, for your professors, and for others with whom you will interact here on campus, in surrounding Hartford, and beyond. Each Nest is supported by a team of mentors who work together to create a range of activities (both on campus and in Hartford) to provide you with a sense of belonging. Always remember, you belong here.

Your Nest, much like the University of Washington crew, will offer you a small-group setting of support, trust, and respect that will make your Trinity experience rich and meaningful. Those boys in the boat came to know each other well, and they had each other’s backs – they had built a support network – and I am confident the same will happen within each of your Nests. The relationships you form starting today with others in your Nest will provide you with a base, a trust point to which you may always return. It will be your college home, where someone knows your name.

Your Nest also will offer a diversity of people, coming from different hometowns, bringing a variety of abilities, mindsets, interests, and perspectives on life. As Daniel James Brown said in *The Boys in the Boat*, “Good crews are good blends of personalities.” Your Nest here at Trinity will be fortified by the diversity within it and the respect for others that it commands.

I know that this is the right time to be thinking about respect. It is easy to see what happens when understanding and compassion between parties break down; we have Ferguson, Missouri, and similar situations that mirror it, as well as disrespectful behaviors on social media. We all have learned how quickly a situation can ignite if the trust between constituencies breaks down. Learning to purposefully build respect, listening with compassion, and trying to understand different perspectives are life skills that you will practice here at Trinity and will take with you when you graduate.

With this in mind, we are launching Trinity’s “Campaign for Community” this fall. The goal of this initiative is to promote an inclusive and respectful campus.

Our students have expressed their desire for an even more tolerant and inclusive community. These are the feelings of our students, and we are engaging them in the discussion right from the very

beginning. We have heard student concerns about campus climate in relation to issues of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. And you will find that when the students speak with one voice, I listen!

About 50 students, divided into five groups, will be leading the way, defining strategies and identifying programs to create a positive campus culture. We recognize that developing a vision of community for a complex academic organization such as ours is not an endpoint but rather an evolution and an ongoing process, a process that is an opportunity for our students, for you, to take the lead on articulating the Trinity community of tomorrow.

As with the Bantam Network, and as it was with the boys in the boat, respect for others is vital to the success of our Campaign for Community. It lies at the heart of what the campaign hopes to accomplish and which bears repeating now: a safe, inclusive, and respectful campus community.

Parents and families, please know that everyone here – the faculty, the staff, and our student leaders, through our Bantam Network and our Campaign for Community, in our classrooms, and throughout our campus – are waiting to support your children. They are figuratively surrounding them to serve as a safety net *as they spread their wings and take responsibility for their own intellectual and social development*. Parents, I know that it is tempting to protect them, but this is their time to mature.

Chapter 16 of *The Boys in the Boat* opens with a quote from George Pocock, a famed designer of rowing shells. “Good thoughts have much to do with good rowing,” he says. “It isn’t enough for the muscles of a crew to work in unison; their hearts and minds must also be as one.”

And so today, as you embark on your time at Trinity College, I wish for all of us to work together, for our hearts and minds to be as one in support of our intellectual and social community. You deserve to be here. Respect one another. Respect the faculty and staff members who are here to support you. And respect this beautiful campus that we all call home.

Welcome Class of 2019 and all the students, families, and friends who are joining the Trinity College family today. I can’t wait to get to know you better!