

Message to the Community from Cornelia Thornburgh, Chair of the Board of Trustees

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Dear Members of Our Trinity Community:

While many of you have been busy on campus addressing the immediate challenges that COVID-19 presents to our community, as trustees, we recognize that this pandemic will have long-lasting implications for our college and its place in the higher-education landscape. In the short term, we are reacting to planning scenarios to return our students to campus in a safe manner. We are addressing near-term cash management issues and supporting remote learning and the ongoing education that our students need and deserve.

What this crisis has clearly demonstrated is that our world will not be normal for a long time, if ever. For the next 15 months, we may face multiple interruptions in our ability to teach and to work on campus. And having entered into an economic recession, we will continue to see pressure on our finances.

As trustees, we take our role as fiduciaries of the college very seriously. This pandemic confirms that our financial model is challenged. As we emerge from this crisis, therefore, we will need a clear vision of how Trinity can be even stronger in its third century and more sustainable financially.

This is one of those “disruptive” moments in history that visionaries relish. It is both an unprecedented challenge and a necessary opportunity to reimagine and reinvent Trinity—consistent with our mission of preparing bold, independent thinkers who lead transformative lives. As we adapt to a new normal, we recognize the need for a think tank charged with focusing on these longer-term issues. Accordingly, we are launching a commission to best advise President Berger-Sweeney as to how to position our college to thrive in the changing landscape of higher education. President Berger-Sweeney has led a revived shared governance model for our internal constituencies for the last two years, and in the spirit of that model, we are pleased to announce the convening of a multi-constituent think tank that boldly can envision Trinity after the pandemic.

The President’s Commission for Trinity’s Future will be charged with assessing pressures in the external environment and developing a new architecture to ensure Trinity’s success as a distinctive and excellent liberal arts college. Membership on the commission will include trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. We are pleased to announce that Trustee Lisa Bisaccia ’78 will chair this endeavor, and trustees Lou Shipley ’85 and Craig Vought ’82, ’17 have agreed to serve, along with acting Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Sonia Cardenas and Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer Dan Hitchell representing the administration. We will appoint seven additional members of our community—faculty (3), staff (2), and students (2)—who have college governance

experience but may not be directly involved in short- and medium-term planning. We want to ensure that we hear a broad spectrum of voices from our community.

Managing change requires the collaboration of our best minds to develop models that will ensure our success. We have extended invitations to the President's Commission, and in the coming days, we will announce its membership and guiding principles. We know that to be successful we will need to create a nimble structure with a specific mandate that does not duplicate the work of our current operational committees.

The President's Commission will be in place to accept its charge from President Berger-Sweeney at the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting later this week. The president will expect updates to begin in June and to continue throughout the summer, with a final report due in the fall, at which point the commission will disband.

While these circumstances have been distressing, they have brought our lives into sharp relief. Our community has responded with great care and incredible determination every step of the way. We applaud the members of the administration for their transparency and compassion in these challenging times. We also wish to single out the faculty and staff for their enormous effort to ensure we continue to provide a quality education for our students. And to all of you, we thank you for working together with us and for all the many things you are doing to make these days memorable for their successes and not for their disappointments.

In gratitude,

Cornelia Thornburgh '80, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Michael Kluger '78, P'13, Vice Chair
Kevin Maloney '79, Vice Chair