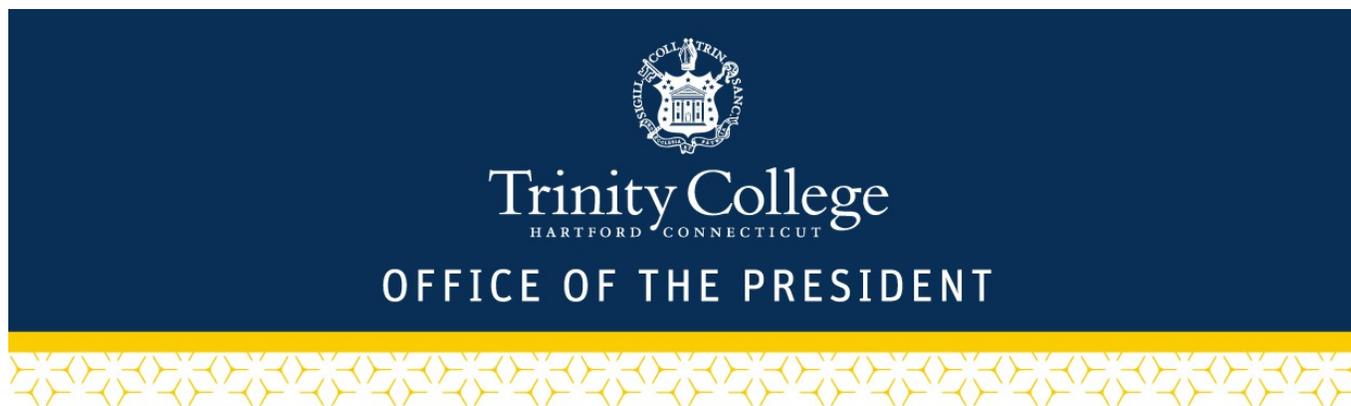


An Update on "A Message of Hope and a Call to Act"

President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>

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To: President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>



November 2, 2020

Dear Members of the Trinity College Community,

Over the summer, I [wrote to you](#) about how the college would address systemic racism and committed to a series of actions to create the Trinity community we wish to be. Today, I write to share an update on these commitments.

We also wrote to you separately about our [work to end sexual misconduct](#) at Trinity. Updates on our commitments to that work will be shared on the Title IX website.

The commitments announced in July were not made in a vacuum. They occur along a continuum of change that began before my arrival at Trinity. And these steps, while significant, won't all by themselves end centuries of systemic racism, oppression, and violence within our society and its institutions.

But we can make a big difference, both in the short term and in years to come, in creating a more equitable, inclusive community in which all members can thrive by taking intentional and sustained actions. I'm pleased to share here some of the most significant highlights of our recent work toward this goal. The commitments we made are numerous and wide-ranging. To keep up-to-date on our work on these issues and to see a more detailed reporting of our progress, please visit the [Campus Climate Task Force website](#). The creation of this task force was one significant step in the right direction to assess our problems and to create a structure to address them. We also hosted a community-wide webinar in August sharing the results of last year's campus climate survey.

Nearly 300 individuals applied to serve on the task force; 28 were chosen. Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Anita Davis and I chair the group, which has now met three times and is beginning by documenting some of the progress the Trinity community has made over the last decade to improve campus climate. The task force will be seeking your feedback and input in the coming months as we identify priorities focused on improving the racial climate. These priorities will be informed by the constituent action plans and feedback that we have received thus far from students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents.

Highlights of Progress since July

Anti-Racist Education and Programming

- The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is partnering with DiversityEdu in providing a course that focuses on understanding unconscious bias, identifying and responding to microaggressions, and engaging with people across differences. The course is now required for all students, faculty, and staff.
- In September, DEI sponsored a two-day summit, “Exploring the Historical Roots of Racial Inequity: Toward an Antiracist Community,” created by Facing History and Ourselves. More than 120 Trinity community members participated in this groundbreaking event.
- DEI has implemented a number of other training and programmatic opportunities this year, including: required sexual harassment prevention and education training for all first-years and sophomores and required DEI orientation for first-years; social justice mediation training for students; and intergroup dialogue training for faculty and staff.

Hiring, Representation, and Voices

- The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) has created guidelines for Special Opportunity Hires (SOH), and we are committed to creating six such hires each year for the next three years to increase faculty diversity. These positions will be part of the normal allotment of faculty hires at Trinity. Ideally, all of our faculty hiring and retention processes will support the college’s commitment to attracting and supporting a faculty that represents a broad spectrum of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and life experiences. The SOH initiative recognizes the need to accelerate these efforts. Our commitment to hire a more diverse faculty is universal, and we will hold ourselves accountable for doing so.
- DEI has collaborated with EPC, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, and Human Resources to integrate DEI principles and strategies into recruitment and hiring practices for faculty and staff.
- The Board of Trustees has created a trustee committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, led by trustee Michael Gary ’86, that will engage with constituent groups and task forces on campus to assist in furthering our work to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the board.
- The Trinity College Alumni Association and the governance committee of the Board of Trustees have taken up the issue of the racial and ethnic diversity of our volunteer leadership boards and are moving expeditiously toward greater diversity among these groups.

Honoring and Acknowledging Our History

As previously reported, rather than focus narrowly on a couple of buildings, we have decided to embark upon a comprehensive process to consider campus building names. A new initiative called the [Primus Project](#)—named for Hartford native and educational pioneer Rebecca Primus—aims to tell a fuller story of Trinity’s history. It is a research-driven, community-based initiative to better understand the college’s past and to forge a more just and inclusive present. The project’s work will inform the honoring of

Trinity's history for the Bicentennial in 2023 and will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on building names. This project will be funded, in part, by a Luce Foundation Director's Grant.

There's more progress to report, including funding for the International Hip Hop Festival and Samba Fest and plans to renovate cultural houses, with commitments from trustees and alumni to fund the renovations. And there is more work to do. I continue to be hopeful because I believe fervently that higher education can and must lead in studying and addressing systemic racism and inequity in the United States. Indeed, the community's responses to our initial commitments have been inspiring.

Our alumni and trustees are our enthusiastic partners in these efforts. In addition to taking on the shared work to address systemic racism and sexism, they have committed more than \$500,000 to various initiatives to advance racial and gender justice and equity at Trinity.

We will keep you updated on our progress, and we will continue to seek your partnership in this critical work.

Sincerely,

Joanne Berger-Sweeney
President and Trinity College Professor of Neuroscience