

## Updates following the Board of Trustees Meeting—February 2022

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

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



February 17, 2022

Dear Trinity College Community Members,

Our spring semester is well underway, and the campus is buzzing with energy and optimism. It is wonderful indeed to be back together again. Today, I am writing to provide my regular update after the February Board of Trustees meeting, which took place last weekend. Due to the Omicron surge, the board chose once again to meet virtually, but energy and optimism remained evident.

### **Congratulations and Gratitude**

I continued the theme of “spiraling up,” given the momentum and progress that we are making despite an ongoing pandemic. So much of our growth is due to the care and mindful mentorship that our faculty members bring to campus to fulfill our academic mission. As a reminder of our primary academic mission and the excellence of our faculty, we celebrated the promotion to full professor of Christopher Hoag (economics), Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre (history), and Mark Stater (economics). It is noteworthy that Jennifer and Mark also offered significant service to the community as faculty secretaries. We also recognized devoted, outstanding years of service, awarding emeritus status to retiring faculty members Joseph Byrne (professor of fine arts), Sheila Fisher (professor of English), Thomas Harrington (professor of language and culture studies), Dan Lloyd (Brownell Professor of Philosophy), Giuliana Palma (principal lecturer in language and culture studies), David Reuman (associate professor of psychology), John Rose (John Rose College Organist-and-Directorship Distinguished Chair of Chapel Music), George Suitor (associate professor of physical education), and James Trostle (Scott M. Johnson '97 Distinguished Professor of Anthropology). Congratulations to all!

### **Updates**

We explored a range of topics, including the college’s impressive progress on numerous markers of success, despite the pandemic. We shared with pride the [learning goals](#) for students that the Trinity faculty adopted just last week. These goals beautifully articulate what we want students to learn during their time at Trinity and eloquently express the unique value of Trinity’s brand of liberal arts education. We highlighted faculty and student success, including a recent Beckman Scholars award to support some of our top science students through faculty-mentored research. We shared the success of another round of special opportunity faculty hires; we have

made 12 hires in two years, on track toward our promised goal of 18 hires in three years. We described a road trip made by Trinity trustees, faculty, and administrators to Dartmouth College to visit its entrepreneurship center, with a desire to create an innovative, cross-disciplinary center here at Trinity. We heard an encouraging fundraising update regarding the first half of our fiscal year: We've seen increased participation; our Trinity Athletic Giving (TAG) effort exceeded its donor participation and dollar goals (\$1.2M); and we have raised \$239 million toward our comprehensive campaign thanks to the incredible generosity of alumni, parents, and friends across Trinity, putting us at 48 percent of our goal during the quiet phase. We also provided an update on some of our latest projects, including a flexible-work pilot program for staff, a potential partnership with the City of Hartford's hub for culture and workforce development in the Parkville neighborhood, and our plans to extend our successful alliance with global technology firm Infosys, which has led to exciting student and faculty opportunities while benefiting the college's bottom line through new revenues.

### **Enrolling and Retaining a Class**

We have made excellent progress in enrolling the Class of 2026 ... yes, that's right, the Class of 2026! Our applicant pool this year increased to 6,155 (a five-year high), with increases in student quality, international students, U.S. students of color, and athletes. Our applicants also are proving to be very engaged in the admissions process, which typically is a positive indicator of their likelihood of accepting our admissions offers. This includes a significant increase in campus visits and strong interest in the array of virtual events hosted by our admissions office. Perhaps most encouraging is that 1,206 students have participated in admissions interviews, which is slightly ahead of pre-pandemic interview numbers.

I must stress here that the admissions process is an all-community effort. As students are evaluating where to apply, they consider every aspect of a college, including the culture they encounter and the people they meet or learn about across Trinity. Our alumni and parents, along with our faculty, admissions and student services staff, and current students, influence prospective students' college choices, and we appreciate everything you are doing in ways large and small to continue shaping Trinity's bright future.

We are grateful to all members of our enrollment team for their dedication and hard work to bounce back after a difficult COVID year. I also appreciate the great work of the student success team in helping to build a retention ecosystem that resulted in a 91.4 percent first-year retention rate last year. Moving forward, we will continue to examine trends in student retention and to invest in ways to best support our students.

### **Multiyear Financial Planning**

We dedicated a special session of the board meeting to early development of the next multiyear budget model (FY23 to FY26). Many of the challenges we face are common to private institutions of higher education, but Trinity also has opportunities all its own. Trinity's plan to "spiral up to meet the Summit" is unchanged, but the pandemic has had an impact on our financial model. We are making budgeting assumptions that keep us keenly focused on student enrollment, competitive employee compensation amid a tight labor market, and campus maintenance and capital improvements. As we emerge from the current Omicron surge, we are taking an approach to the future that includes elements of the pre-COVID world combined with the lessons learned during the last couple of years.

This includes our attention to the financial implications of the pandemic, which resulted in a Class of 2025 that is smaller and has greater financial need than is typical while also being stronger academically than previous classes. We enrolled this class during a year when fewer students were applying to private colleges and universities nationwide, a rise in the number of test-optional institutions was driving some applications away from Trinity, and we were in transition in our dean of admissions position, our primary strategic contact with the external

admissions community. Clearly, this was reversed for the Class of 2026. Nevertheless, having changed the financial baseline, the pandemic may require us to change the pace at which we invest in our goals. I appreciate the in-depth analysis by the board, along with our internal governance committees, as we formulate our plan for the years ahead.

### **New Members of the Community and Telling Our Story**

In this competitive context, with outreach and market differentiation so critical to Trinity's future, I was pleased to introduce to the trustees our newly recruited vice president for strategic marketing and communications, Hellen Hom-Diamond, who officially joined us in January. Hellen previously served as chief communications officer at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C., and in key communications roles at Yale University and the University of California, Los Angeles. We are enormously excited about Hellen's joining my senior team and helping us tell our distinct Trinity story.

Furthering work in this area, Ologie, a branding and marketing agency currently reviewing our visual identity and branding platform, presented to the board its comprehensive brand assessment. Ologie's work touched more than 2,000 individuals and groups across our community and will build toward a new approach to outreach that strengthens the visibility, clarity, and impact of Trinity's message. Hellen will play a key role in the ultimate direction of this new effort and how we incorporate it into all of our communications.

Finally, entering the third year of COVID, we are taking stock of what is most important—community. Together, we will continue to move forward with our ambitious vision to spiral up. Thank you for all you do to make Trinity the best it can be.

Sincerely,

Joanne Berger-Sweeney  
President and Trinity College Professor of Neuroscience