Our Idea of Excellence

OUR VOCATION
The conversation between student and teacher is the heart of our school; all that we do must be born of and nourish that relationship. We are called to challenge the minds, fire the imaginations, and train the bodies of the young people who have been entrusted to us; to enlarge their spiritual lives; and to increase their capacity for mutual and self-respect. We intend to prepare them to learn confidently for the rest of their lives and to give generously and joyously to others. We can accomplish these things only if we keep our students safe and well while they are in our charge.

OUR OBLIGATION
We must ask our young people what they believe in so they can know themselves in the world. We must give them the tools of rigorous and passionate intellectual inquiry and self-expression so they can grow. In our commitment to diversity, we must show our students how to be colleagues and friends so they can act out of respect and love. We must lead them to distinguish right from wrong and then do what is right so they can be persuasive and courageous citizens.

OUR PROMISE
As a school community with these purposes and responsibilities, we will engage the larger communities of city, nation, and world of which we are a part. We will serve our neighbors. We will live fully in our city — exploring its byways and playing over its terrain. We will learn its history and traditions, and what it can teach us of the arts and sciences. We will embody and celebrate its diversity.

OUR MEANS
Labore et virtute. The terms of our motto, hard work and moral excellence, are meant to strengthen us as we pursue the promise and joy of Trinity School. We ask Trinity families, alumni, and friends to join us in taking on this high calling.

Trinity School Mission
Statement
Adopted by the Board of Trustees
October, 2000
Strategic Plan

(compound noun): A broadly-defined plan aimed at creating a desired future.
Trinity School is a 302-year-old institution that does many things well. According to the community’s responses to the May 2010 strategic planning survey, our school’s strengths include:

- academic excellence
- strong and dedicated faculty
- successful college counseling and admissions
- intellectual environment
- moral and ethical teachings in Chapel program
- sense of community
- classical, liberal arts education (with particular mention of Latin, the classics, and the humanities)
- school-wide traditions (such as all-school Christmas Chapel and moving-up ceremonies)
- small class-size
- “conversation between student and teacher”
- individualized attention to students
- training students in critical thinking (as opposed to rote memorization)
- intellectual freedom
- deep respect for learning and culture of academic rigor
- strong student body with vigorous work ethic
- fostering a sense of self-reliance in students
- culture of respect, tolerance, and kindness
- diversity
- extra-curricular activities (such as sports teams and performing arts)
- a warm and nurturing Lower School

But Trinity School is not interested in resting on its laurels. Rather, we wish to continuously improve what we do.

For that reason we undertook a comprehensive strategic-planning process during the 2010-2011 academic year. We looked at all aspects of school life, including how we teach and wish to teach; what technology we use and wish to use; and who we are and hope to be.

We have tried throughout to look unblinkingly at ourselves — at the good and at the less good.

This process resulted in many recommendations, from calls to conserve our core values to urgings to change various approaches. Because Trinity School’s Mission Statement, Our Idea of Excellence, was strongly affirmed, this extraordinary declaration of principle has guided us throughout.

It is with great pleasure — and deep gratitude for the help of so many talented people in our community — that we present here the strategic planning goals and recommendations for Trinity School for the next 3-5 years.

Myles B. Amend  
Associate Head of School for Advancement, P’24

Emily F. Mandelstam  
Trustee, P’16, P’19

Co-chairs, Strategic Planning Steering Committee

September 2011
To paraphrase our mission statement, Trinity School must know itself in the world and must be able to articulate who we are in order to continuously create a community devoted to Our Idea of Excellence in the 21st Century.
GOAL

Trinity School will ensure that we are living true to our mission-driven understanding of ourself as a vibrant educational community animated by the core commitments that have defined the Trinity student experience for centuries: the centrality of the conversation between inspiring, challenging, caring teachers and curious, hard-working, engaged students; high academic and ethical standards maintained with integrity and understanding; attentiveness to the intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical needs of students; and a governing vision of education as a lever for societal improvement and a cradle for civic engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Examine the range of academic abilities that Trinity is best positioned to serve.

- Improve the culture and practice of open communication within the school community — among faculty; between faculty and administrators; and between the school and families — that leads to collegiality and shared understandings that serve the best interests of the “whole child” and assures that families, teachers, and administrators build a partnership that supports our students at each stage of their development.

- Examine our requirements, expectations, practices, and assumptions based on the recognition that student success is driven in part by well-being, balance, and social connection; enable students at every stage of their development to experience “the promise and joy of Trinity School”; this will involve scrutiny of:

  > the evolving roles and responsibilities of advisors in the Middle and Upper Schools;

  > the amount of homework; the scheduling of assessments; and the multiple, sometimes competing, demands placed on students involved in the school’s extracurricular activities and programs; and

  > the ways in which the school and families can work together to address issues of stress and balance in students’ lives.

- Assure that our extracurricular offerings provide our students with opportunities to explore their particular talents and interests outside the classroom.

- Maintain the current size of the student population as well as the School’s stated admissions commitments to siblings, children of faculty and staff, legacy applicants, and diversity — while seeking to ensure access for families not already affiliated with Trinity.
As we prepare students for the complex challenges that they will face as adults in a complex society, we strive to offer a world-class education in the disciplines of science, mathematics, history, religion, language, literature, and the arts. We believe that there is room for improvement. Pedagogy changes over time, and the knowledge base of many fields of inquiry is altering rapidly in the 21st century. All excellent schools must work to keep pace with that change.
GOAL

Trinity School will enrich its academic programs by strengthening curriculum and pedagogy in all disciplines, with special emphasis on science, math, and computer science; increasing interdisciplinary studies; and expanding opportunities for students to distinguish themselves in areas of special interest or ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

GENERAL:

• All academic disciplines at Trinity School will regularly conduct comprehensive curricular review, involving both internal and external assessments, with the intention of spurring dialogue about curricula and professional practices which will enhance Trinity’s educational excellence.

• The school will examine the structure and organization of our K-12 course offerings, both required and elective. When not dictated by state requirements, the school’s graduation requirements will focus more on students’ proficiency rather than on sheer numbers of classes taken. Annually, departments will examine their core courses to be sure they provide students with the foundation needed to engage successfully in meaningful elective and interdisciplinary work. Departments will also regularly analyze and update their elective offerings to ensure these align with departmental and school-wide mission and vision.

• The school will provide the faculty with the support needed to integrate, into their teaching, technologies that will enhance instruction and provide students with essential digital skills, while also developing courses that blend in-classroom and online components as appropriate.

• The school will actively seek partnerships with educational institutions and other civic organizations that will augment students’ learning experiences and help students apply what they learn in real-world settings wherever possible.

• The school will explore alternatives to the current schedule that will facilitate the objectives articulated above.
SCIENCE

- To strengthen its K-12 Science program, Trinity will focus more on inquiry-based learning, in which students actively explore and generate questions during classroom discussions and research, rather than passively receiving information from lectures. In this more interactive model, teachers will increasingly guide students in generating the questions that help students discover knowledge for themselves. Whenever feasible, students will learn through research and experimentation, and in so doing will gain a deeper understanding of biological, physical, and chemical processes. To this end Trinity will:

  > Expand in-school opportunities for authentic research, experimentation and problem-solving by students in science courses.

  > Create meaningful science enrichment opportunities outside the classroom from Kindergarten through Grade 12, ultimately including opportunities beyond the school (e.g., research internships in laboratories) for students to pursue advanced work in the natural sciences in preparation for advanced, distinguished scientific work in college.

  > Develop every student’s public presentation skills through frequent communication of scientific understandings and research findings in written and spoken forms, including, at advanced levels, the authorship of publishable research.

  > Offer an advanced curriculum that will engage and challenge students who have a deeper passion for science.

  > Ask students throughout their science education to ponder questions about science-related issues in civic discourse and to explore both the power and limitations of scientific ways of understanding the world.

  > Provide the time, funding, staffing, guidance, and facilities needed to implement this vision of excellence, including re-examining the way science classes are presently scheduled.

MATHEMATICS

- To strengthen its K-12 Mathematics program, Trinity will focus more on inquiry-based learning, in which students actively explore and generate questions during classroom discussions and work on problem-sets, rather than passively receiving information from lectures. In this more interactive model, teachers will increasingly guide students in generating the questions and seeking the patterns that help students discover knowledge for themselves. To this end Trinity will:

  > Expand opportunities for increased process- and problem-centered learning in math courses.

  > Provide greater differentiation of instruction by both intensifying the department’s learning support resources and by offering an advanced curriculum that will challenge students who have a stronger passion and aptitude for mathematics.

  > Enhance opportunities beyond the school for students to pursue advanced work in mathematics and to pursue interdisciplinary work in which mathematical understanding is an essential part of complex analysis and problem-solving, in preparation for advanced, distinguished work in collegiate mathematics.

  > Explore opportunities for the development of online courses, possibly including undergraduate coursework, to enhance the experience of mathematicians who are ready to reach out beyond on-campus course offerings.

  > Enhance meaningful mathematical enrichment opportunities K-12, including opportunities to compete in various local, regional, and national math competitions.

  > Provide the time, funding, staffing, guidance, and facilities needed to implement this vision of excellence, including re-examining the way math classes are presently scheduled.
TECHNOLOGY:

• Recognizing that the use of various digital technologies will be essential to achieving the programmatic aspirations above, the school will:

  > Develop a robust network infrastructure.

  > Hire “technology integrators” who will help teachers use technology in ways that enhance class discussions and classroom projects.

  > Create a comprehensive professional-development program for faculty and staff to smooth the integration of innovative and effective technologies into Trinity’s teaching and learning.

• This will involve, among other projects, completing the wireless network, forming a Faculty Technology Leadership Team, and making time in faculty and staff schedules for technology training.

COMPUTER SCIENCE:

• Create and staff a K-12 computer science department that allows students to explore the use of computers to solve problems analytically. To achieve this objective, the school will:

  > Reinstate the Computer Science department and hire a skilled, visionary computer science educator to head the department.

  > Develop a rigorous Computer Science curriculum and then work with other departments to create interdisciplinary coursework with strong computer science elements.

  > Develop a robust array of extracurricular opportunities such as robotics that enhance computer science skills in enjoyable, engaging ways.

  > Provide the equipment, staffing, and resources needed to support the computer science department’s growth and goals.

“**We prepare students for the complex challenges that they will face as adults in a complex society.**”
Trinity School’s mission statement requires us to “increase [our students’] capacity for mutual and self-respect....ask our young people what they believe in so they can know themselves in the world.... show our students how to be colleagues and friends so they can act out of respect and love....lead them to distinguish right from wrong and then do what is right so they can be persuasive and courageous citizens....engage the larger communities of city, nation, and world of which we are a part....serve our neighbors....live fully in our city....” To meet these mandates, Trinity’s teachers, staff, students, and programs must engage the globe, moving out into the world and actively drawing the world into the School.
GOAL

Trinity School will ensure that its curricular and extra-curricular programs and opportunities actively prepare students to be engaged citizens of the city, nation, and world.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Examine our capacity to begin modern language study earlier; devote more time to it in Lower School; and consider the possibility of increasing the range of language offerings.

- Add global history electives in Upper School; create a more world-oriented curriculum, especially in history and English, through increased incorporation of non-western, world literature and study in the Middle and Upper Schools; broaden and deepen the scope of our geography curriculum, especially in the Middle School; assure that we are exposing our students to current events across the curriculum in order to deepen our students’ awareness and understanding of our rapidly changing and volatile world.

- Re-examine our philosophy and practice around local, national, and international field-trip/travel for students so that these programs provide the richest, and most enriching, possible experiences for students at every level; ensure that funding is in place so that no student is precluded from participating in these opportunities.

- Seek to increase and broaden opportunities for longer-term study abroad and open ourselves to the possibility of having international students spend a semester or year at Trinity.

- Re-conceive our community service initiatives to include service learning (i.e., community service tied to the curriculum and characterized by “research, reach out, and reflection”) that offers internal, local, national, and international service opportunities as appropriate for all students; create a cross-divisional community service committee to support and advise the Director of Community Service and Service Learning in coordinating programs across the divisions; seek additional financial resources to support the community service program and to make all opportunities accessible to all students.

- Examine and address the scheduling challenges that make it difficult for all those who are engaged in global education and service learning to collaborate and for students and faculty to work together across disciplines; provide professional development and education to enhance incorporation of global perspectives across the curriculum in Kindergarten through 12th grade.

“....ask our young people what they believe in so they can know themselves in the world....”
Ongoing learning, improvement, and growth are essential to continued excellence in any profession. This is particularly true in education, a field devoted to learning itself. Thus, any great school must embed within its culture and philosophy a strong commitment to professional development.
GOAL

Trinity School will make professional conversation about excellence in teaching and learning central to the School’s culture and will ensure that this dialogue animates and informs an enhanced professional development program; just as we are committed to “the conversation between student and teacher,” so we will commit ourselves to “the conversation between teacher and teacher.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Identify and then prioritize critical professional development topics that are school-wide—as well as specific to each grade-level, division, and department (academic and administrative)—by examining the curricular and other priorities that emerged from the self-study reports and the strategic planning task-force recommendations.

• Ensure that faculty and staff work with their supervisors each year to set—and re-visit periodically throughout the year—individual professional development goals specific to their areas of scholarship, teaching, or responsibility as well as ones related to identified institutional topics; these individual goals should engage the faculty and staff as they work to “challenge the minds, fire the imaginations, and train the bodies of the young people who have been entrusted to us...enlarge their spiritual lives...[and]...increase their capacity for mutual and self-respect.”

• Create time in faculty and staff’s schedules for individual and collaborative learning on the topics identified, and also for faculty and staff to share with each other the expertise, information, and skills they have gained from both in-house resources (i.e., colleagues here at Trinity) and outside sources (e.g., workshops, conferences, travel, and visits to other schools).

• Increase funding earmarked for faculty and staff professional development to approximately 1% of the school’s operating budget, as recommended by the guidelines of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

• Clarify criteria for professional excellence so that the faculty and administration have a shared understanding about outstanding classroom teaching, effective goal-setting, the importance of continuous professional growth, valuable community contributions, and more.

• Develop a revamped faculty and staff evaluation system which assesses and recognizes faculty and staff for their professional excellence (whether in the classroom, on the field, or elsewhere), including their dedication to continuous professional growth and improvement; consider a more frequent evaluation cycle for faculty (including department heads) and staff than presently exists.
Trinity School is fortunate as an urban institution to have a self-contained “campus” that houses all three divisions, including their classrooms, faculty offices, and arts and sports facilities. Our campus also provides significant outdoor space, and offers many opportunities for students, faculty, and parents to gather as a school community. Nonetheless, the goals of this strategic plan require that the School examine, expand, and improve its facilities in order to meet current and future needs.
GOAL

Trinity School will create a physical environment that improves the efficiency, cohesion, and beauty of the campus, and meets the goals of this strategic plan and the recommendations of the existing facilities master plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Expand and enhance Trinity’s facilities within the current campus footprint in order to provide needed additional space; this expansion may include:

  > additional instructional, learning support, and office space for all three divisions;

  > additional athletic and arts spaces and new Upper School student lounge facilities;

  > exploration of the feasibility of a new building linking the Lower School and the Annex which would provide elevator access to both as well as create additional office space.

• Renovate Trinity’s existing facilities; these renovations may include the following initiatives, which are envisioned in the School’s existing facilities master plan:

  > refurbishment of the Upper School wing, including the library/media center and HVAC system;

  > renovation of HVAC and lighting systems, lavatory facilities, faculty lounge, workroom, and specific classrooms in the Lower School wing;

  > creation of a dining commons *cum* flexible meeting space;

  > renovation of the theater facilities in the Annex.

• Address in the expansion and renovation plans the specific facilities needs associated with the science, mathematics, computer science, and technology recommendations contained in this strategic plan.

• Review, revise, and prioritize the elements in the existing facilities master plan in light of the recommendations contained in this strategic plan.

• Develop, with the School’s architects, a time-, program-, and priority-based implementation plan that delineates needed additional square footage and gains in use-efficiency through renovations.

• Ensure expansion and renovation planning is consistent with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines and a commitment to creating — to the greatest degree achievable — an environmentally responsible and sustainable facility.
Trinity School has enjoyed the benefits of prudent financial management and good fiscal health for many years. Nonetheless, the challenges of the 21st Century and the aspirations of this strategic plan require that the School look with fresh eyes at its financial resources and investments and assure that these are put fully at the service of achieving the promises of Our Idea of Excellence. Achieving several of these goals will require dedicated leadership, long-term effort, and broad participation.
GOAL

Trinity School will develop a financial model that enhances access to the School for the broadest pool of qualified applicants; reduces dependence on tuition; and adequately funds the School’s programs and the goals of this strategic plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Provide the resources — compensation, professional development, technology, and facilities — that will enable Trinity to attract and retain teachers, administrators, staff, and students who will continue to build the dynamic learning environment expressed in Our Idea of Excellence.

• Consider compensation models, in addition to Trinity’s traditional model, that emphasize and reward excellence in teaching and continuous professional growth as well as contributions to the life of the school.

• Maintain our present budgetary commitment to tuition assistance (as a percentage of tuition revenue) while seeking new endowment resources that would enable expansion of the financial aid program consistent with other strategic initiatives; seek, as a matter of priority, to increase socio-economic diversity through appropriate re-allocation of current funding and expanded outreach efforts.

• Develop a long-term financial model aimed at reducing Trinity’s tuition dependence and increasing our ability to respond to new and emerging educational opportunities.

• Provide the resources necessary to achieve the goals and aspirations of this strategic plan through enhanced fundraising efforts and endowment growth.

“Provide the resources that will enable Trinity to continue to build the dynamic learning environment expressed in Our Idea of Excellence.”
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