

## **Review of the Administrative Structure at Trinity University**

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### **Executive Summary**

#### **Background:**

The primary focus of the review was “the preferred organization of the Office of the President and the administrative portfolios of the Vice Presidents.” Three basic questions guided the inquiry:

- Is there integrity and logic in the number and scope of the vice president positions reporting to the president?
- Is there integrity and logic in the number and scope of units/direct reports assigned to the various vice presidents?
- Are there alternate organizational schemes/ structures that would enhance efficiency and effectiveness?

#### **General Observations**

Trinity University is a strong university. It has an exceptional faculty and sound financial resources. The time is right for to review administrative structure because of the opportunities and challenges: support for a capital campaign; the recruitment and retention of students in a highly competitive admissions environment; rapid advancements in technology, which affect both the academic and administrative functions on campus; high expectations from parents and students for services such as counseling, career advising, and student discipline; the evolution of academic programs and curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and financial, facilities, and strategic planning for a the future.

#### **Recommendations**

1. *Establish a Vice President for Communications, reporting to the President.*

The adoption of a strategic plan, the anticipation of a capital campaign, Trinity’s competitive admissions environment, the rapid advances in communications technology (including social media), and an increasing need for alumni engagement and awareness of the University’s plans and accomplishments require an integrated and consistent communication approach. The individual should be a member of the executive staff to ensure that the person is aware of the strategic discussions and the rationale for high-level decisions about the University’s future. The individual should provide support for the various divisions—such as advancement, admissions, academic affairs and student affairs—but also leadership in how to communicate consistently and effectively with multiple audiences that are relevant for the University.

2. *Create a Vice President for Enrollment Management, reporting to the President.*

For highly selective universities, the need for complex and effective recruitment and admissions strategies is critical. To retain these students and ensure their progress, enrollment management also must consider both financial aid and financial services. Enrollment management is part and parcel of a university’s financial planning, academic growth, and student development. The Vice President for Enrollment Management should oversee the Office of Admission and the Office of Student Financial Services, which includes both Financial Aid and Student Accounts. The

collaboration between Admissions and Student Financial Services ensures the flow of data between these units in order to facilitate a nimble, strategic approach. This individual should be part of the President's Executive Staff.

3. *Create the position of Chief Information Officer, reporting to an appropriate Vice President or the President.*

We recommend the establishment of a Chief Information Officer to assume broad oversight of this area and to have at least periodic involvement at the level of the President's Executive Staff. However, even though there is a broad consensus about the centrality of information technology in the University's future, the details and the focus remain to be determined. There may be a transition period led by someone who thoroughly understands academic and administrative computing in an academic setting, is aware of new roles for technology in offices and classrooms, is a strategic thinker regarding the use of technology, can translate the technological solutions to the users across departments, and is aware of the current context at Trinity. This individual will have the primary responsibility for leading the University in the strategic analysis, planning, and improvements in information technology that are necessary at Trinity at this time. As the scope and responsibilities of this position evolve and the strategic direction for information technology comes into focus, alternative reporting relationships may be considered at that time.

4. *Assess the Structure of the Office Vice President for Academic Affairs and Number of Direct Reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.*

We acknowledge the irony of being asked to conduct an assessment and then recommending that another assessment be made. But our reasoning is as follows. The newly reconfigured position of Vice President for Academic Affairs (that resulted when student affairs was separated from academic affairs) has indeed led to a more manageable arrangement for the University. But the number of individuals still reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs as well as the asymmetry of having long-standing departments and one newly-established school creates leadership challenges for Academic Affairs. The current structure puts very capable administrators in the position of devoting time and energy to navigating the administrative structure at some cost to their desire to engage in strategic thinking, promote cross-departmental collaboration, and foster curricular innovation. It is a testament to the capabilities of the administrators and the commitment of faculty that they are able to accomplish many of those things; but they do so despite the organizational structure, not because of it. We encourage an evolutionary approach—one might say a continuing evolutionary approach—to facilitate the central role of Academic Affairs.

5. *Strengthen Communication about the Collaborations between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.*

With the re-configuration of the Student Life division after a period in which it was merged with Academic Affairs, there are some lingering questions about overlapping responsibilities in the two divisions. One example is the assignment of faculty responsibilities for some activities now administered by Student Life. Many of these topics relate to the structures of the centers created by the strategic plan, which intentionally connect Academic Affairs and Student Life in new ways. Clearer explanations of the reasons for and the importance of these connections will strengthen the execution of the strategic plan. Also, strengthened communications between these areas would eliminate some confusion over staffing and budgetary decisions.

#### 6. *Additional Reflections*

There are two areas—endowment management and legal counsel—where it seems inevitable that you will need to consider adjustments. The size of the current endowment and the prospect of greater growth in the campaign may make it necessary to have the endowment managed externally or by a dedicated internal endowment team. The current arrangement places an increasingly demanding set of complex responsibilities within the finance area. The second area is the possible hiring of an internal legal counsel, in recognition of the growing compliance and risk management tasks. This also is a case where an increasingly complex set of responsibilities is currently parceled out among several individuals in a way that may not be sustainable long term. Trinity needs to be prepared to address these clear areas of need.

#### **Conclusion**

Trinity University is indeed positioned well for the future. There is a strong culture and sense of mission. The new strategic plan will only add to the University's existing strengths. The organizational structure can facilitate the achievement of important goals and initiatives, but it is secondary, of course, to having dedicated faculty, staff and administration, which Trinity University fortunately has.