

A Call to Service at Trinity International University
David S. Dockery, President

Those who serve at Trinity International University are called to help prepare men and women to engage in God's redemptive work in the world by cultivating academic excellence, Christian faithfulness, and lifelong learning. Such a calling involves providing distinctive Christian higher education, which is both unapologetically Christian and rigorously academic. It is a call to not only educate students, but to develop resources for engaged Christian thinking, worldview formation, and scholarship in all disciplines. It means developing a learning community where administrators, faculty, staff, and students seek to teach, study, serve, and live in a way that brings glory to the creator and redeemer God.

We believe the time is right for those at Trinity to prioritize this calling because of the challenges and disorder across the academic spectrum. The reality of the fallen world in which we live is magnified for us in day-to-day life in numerous ways such as broken families, confusion in the area of sexuality, conflicts between nations, and the racial and ethnic prejudice we observe all around us, among many other examples. In this context, the Trinity community has been called to serve faithfully in the world of higher education, in the church, and in society.

The mission of Trinity International University offers a distinctive and hopeful vision, helping us to understand that there is a place for music and the arts because God is the God of creation and beauty. At Trinity we acknowledge that an understanding of God includes the knowledge we gain through scientific investigation with the lens of faith in place, a picture of God's world emerges that complements and harmonizes the findings of science and the teachings of scripture. We recognize that the social sciences can make observations to strengthen society, families, and religious structures by recognizing the presence of the image of God in all men and women. Those who study business and economics can help address problems facing communities and society at-large, as well as expand our awareness of how wealth is produced and how good stewardship calls for it to be used. Interdisciplinary scholars can strategize about ways to address issues of government, public policy, war, justice, and peace. Ethical challenges in business, education, legal studies, social sciences, and healthcare can be illuminated by reflection on the implications of the institution's mission. The study of Bible and theology not only frames the

entire discussion of our shared calling, but particularly provides enablement for those who are called to offer leadership for the churches in this country and around the world.

Exploring every discipline, whether in the college, the law school, the graduate school, or the divinity school, from the confessional perspective that proclaims Jesus as Lord will both shape and sharpen our focus and our work. We want to invite administrators, faculty, and staff to embrace truth where it has been made known in God's Word and God's world, following the lead of faithful Christ-followers through the ages who have proposed that all that is good or true or beautiful or beneficent, be it great, small, perfect, fragmentary, natural, supernatural, moral or material, finds its source and meaning in God.¹ This proposal is rooted in the conviction that God, the source of all truth, has revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ.

We recognize all knowledge has its source in God. We want to respond rightly to this recognition by loving God with all our minds and our hearts. We want to promote intellectual seriousness and intellectual curiosity among our students. We desire to avoid the pitfalls of disciplinary "overspecialization," while seeking to interact with issues and trends in our changing world. We are excited to think that this changing twenty-first century world will bring new opportunities and new global partners for the multi-faceted work of Trinity International University.

At Trinity we, rejoice to recognize that our shared work around a common mission will help to promote Christian faithfulness, while encouraging academic excellence and lifelong learning within this dynamic learning community. In doing so, we gladly confess our belief that God has revealed himself to us in creation, in history, in our conscience, and ultimately in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15-18). This God-revealed truth provides the framework for understanding and interpreting the world, the events of human history, and our responsibilities toward God and one another. It is our hope that as we wrestle with the great ideas of history and the pressing issues of our day that the Trinity faculty and staff will provide both the resources and the examples for both undergraduate and graduate students that will encourage their faith and shape their significant intellectual pursuits. While our

¹ See John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*; also, Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*

approach to Christian higher education values and prioritizes the life of the mind, it is important to note that our work also includes a holistic call for the formation and transformation of head, heart, and hands in our shared service.

Often accolades come when outstanding faculty members provide noteworthy lecture series or write award-winning books, or when bright young students achieve success. At other times attention comes to administrators or the Board of Regents when key decisions are made to advance the work and mission of Trinity International University in a significant way. Yet, it should never be forgotten that it is the "team oriented" work of faithful staff members who daily serve behind the scenes, with little fanfare, to make things happen.

These faithful employees answer the phone, keep the records, clean the buildings, prepare the classrooms, care for the students and faculty, support the administrators, and advance the mission of the University in a collaborative way through what we sometimes call "the hidden curriculum." This amazing group of dedicated individuals serve in an untold number and variety of ways.

Many aspects of the work are now carried out through the enablement of technology. In any and all of these many and multifaceted ways, Trinity staff members and administrators seek to shape a context where theological, legal, professional, and undergraduate education for traditional and non-traditional students can be carried out with Christ-centered excellence. With the growing emphasis on "high tech," many Trinity faculty and staff are called upon to offer the timely "high touch" for students and others across the Trinity community.

We joyfully acknowledge that in all that we do we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us in previous generations. We count it a privilege to learn from their models of serious scholarship and faithful service. We trust that knowledge informed by faith will lead to an ethic and formation of character among the Trinity community that will help us serve individuals, families, churches, and society, while promoting integrity, justice, and generosity. Not only do we wish to see individuals, families, and churches strengthened through these efforts, we also want to work together to strengthen all aspects of Trinity International University so that the next generation of Christian leaders will be prepared to make a difference

for the cause of Christ in both church and society.

We believe that these ideals and commitments are not culturally confined, but are made known to us in the gospel itself, as well as in its applications and implications. We believe that these things that cannot be easily expunged without great peril to ourselves personally or to the distinctive mission of Trinity International University. In the midst of the confused culture and ethos of our day, we need commitments that are firm and loving, clear and gracious, convictional and civil, encouraging the people of God to be ready to respond to the numerous issues and challenges that will come our way, without getting drawn into every intramural squabble in the church or in the culture.

We believe this vision can best be implemented by laying hold of the gospel, as well as the best of our Christian heritage, carrying it forward with faithfulness for years and decades to come. We gladly join hands together with those who desire to join us on this journey, seeking the good of all concerned as we serve together for the glory of our great God. We conclude with the famous words from Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, words that continue to provide illumination for our day:

Some seek knowledge for
The sake of knowledge;
That is curiosity;
Others seek knowledge so that
They themselves may be known;
That is vanity;
But there are still others
Who seek knowledge in
Order to serve and edify others;
And that is charity.²

² See F. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987).