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### Spending Money in the Neighborhood? Trinity College, the Hartford Economy, and The Spending Habits of College Students

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**Spending Money in the Neighborhood? Trinity College, the  
Hartford Economy, and The Spending Habits of College Students**

A thesis presented

by

Jack Godin

to

The Political Science Department

Trinity College

Hartford, CT

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

As a senior at Trinity College, throughout my experience, I felt that students did not take advantage of the local businesses in Hartford and would go elsewhere when spending their money. Given that Trinity is located in a diverse capital city, it seemed that students ultimately would leave the immediate Frog Hollow neighborhood for more expensive and possibly safer areas. What those areas were, I did not know.

Moreover, I look back to conversations with my friends around this topic of where to go off campus. Oftentimes this would take place towards the end of the week, as we wanted to do something fun instead of staying on campus, and very rarely would we go to the immediate Frog Hollow neighborhood. Questions about where we even go around Trinity because we have never heard of good local businesses or any notice of businesses that Trinity students can go to circulated. Thus, we would fall back on the businesses that we know of from other students either alumni or just word of mouth amongst the student body, most of which are outside of the neighborhood. Even though this was more expensive, not knowing of businesses in Hartford from Trinity itself pushed us away from the area when spending money.

Frankly, this issue I have found in terms of Trinity students not spending money in the Frog Hollow neighborhood is a byproduct of the college's representation as an engaged community partner. Trinity says that is involved in the community, and it is but purely through education and community learning initiatives based on their developments in the neighborhood. Through the development of the Learning Corridor and its downtown campus, as well as its partnership with SINA, Trinity College is an engaged partner in the classroom but not out of it. Based on the lack of advertisements on campus from the college, the internal business review system among the

student body, and the effect of college policies on its students, Trinity students are not encouraged to remain local when spending their money and are pushed elsewhere.

Furthering the college's representation as an institution to the community, on campus the Tripod acts as a voice for the students. Additionally, ever since the third edition the paper has featured advertisements to its students. This does a few things, on one hand, it caters to student needs and wants as many of the advertisements featured were a demonstration of culture changes. On the other hand, it creates awareness amongst the student body of businesses in the Frog Hollow neighborhood and encourages student consumption through discounts with student IDs or coupons. Yet in 2015, these advertisements ceased to exist, and the issue of student consumption was furthered at this time.

Trinity students increasingly became unaware of local businesses in Hartford, and we see a shift to spending money outside of the neighborhood. This shift ultimately is the student's fault and the school's fault because the college does not provide resources to students on where to go in the local area, and students continue to go to the same businesses outside of Hartford, even though it is much more expensive. Yet a reason for this is due to Trinity College policies. A major policy for students is during a student's first year they are not able to have a car on campus. This does not allow students to explore the area and get familiar with what Hartford has to offer. Moreover, the lack of transportation for first-year students inherently makes them more reliant on the word of mouth of other students about where to go off campus. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Trinity's policy heavily encouraged students to remain on campus, furthering the lack of awareness of local businesses. Since students were unable to be in other dorms or in a group larger than 10 on campus, it led students to look elsewhere when building a community and spending money.

Yet, when Trinity policy began to lessen Trinity Restaurant became a hot spot for students to go. Reasons for this are because it was so close to campus, it gave students a feeling of safety and the college as well since students were able to walk there. But due to COVID Trinity Restaurant closed down and a new restaurant took its place, American Mexican Diner. The new restaurant has not gained as much traction amongst students, and ultimately this is because following the pandemic students gained access and more freedom to explore the area. Since there is an internal review system through word of mouth and discussions of where to go off campus that are outside the Frog Hollow neighborhood rather than policy encouraging student consumption in Hartford, students don't think of American Mexican Diner as a place to go.

These policies create an inherent divide in what Trinity says it does as an institution and what is actually does as an institution. In addition to Trinity pushing students away from the local area when spending money, the college also aligns itself with a majority of the literature on higher education economic impact studies. Trinity does not incentivize students to remain local when spending their money, and they focus more on their expenditures as an institution to benefit the larger community as seen by the projects undergone over the last 20 years. This leaves students to figure out where to go on their own, and often decision-making is based on what other Trinity students have either done or mentioned on campus. Moreover, these studies show the importance of institutional expenditures and the development of human capital as a major factor of growth in the local economy, and like Trinity neglect the importance of student consumption as an aspect of economic growth and community building.

Additionally, when thinking of policy, it affects the way students interact with the community. A perfect example of this is Skidmore College, as its policy of the usage of the student ID card on local businesses in Saratoga Springs, New York encourages and incentivizes

students to spend money locally. This policy has been adopted at Trinity but not many students are aware this even exists, as the college does not promote it. However, through interviews with students, many would like the college to fully adopt this policy. Thus, as it is proven successful at Skidmore, Trinity should adopt this policy which would encourage students to remain local when spending money.

*Literature Review: Lack of Student Spending as Economic Growth Indicator*

Throughout colleges and universities over the last few decades, there have been increasingly more studies done to show the economic impact of the institution on the regional and local economy. In these studies, researchers mainly look at large research universities and their institutional expenditures and the development of human capital to determine long-term economic growth for the economy. However, very few studies have been completed on the importance of student spending as an indicator of growth in the economy. This is a major piece of economic growth in a region, especially for a small college, where they cannot produce massive amounts of institutional expenditures out into the local area, or the region can meet those expenditures. Moreover, this missing piece in the literature is critical for my thesis as Trinity operates like a large university and misses a major factor of growth in student consumption, which can lead to more partnerships and ultimately be a fully engaged neighbor to the Hartford community.

*Large Urban Research University Expenditure as Means of Economic Growth*

Traditionally these studies have been done on colleges and universities in major metropolitan areas. Scholars argue the importance of institutional expenditures as a way to boost the local economy of the area surrounding the institution. There are many examples that I will highlight



that focus on the university as a major driver of economic growth in the local area through its expenditures and formation of human capital.

In Chicago, there was a study completed by Daniel Felsenstein of Northwestern University on its impacts on the larger metropolitan economy through its institutional expenditures. This was done through linkages between expenditures and human capital formation that were directly attributed to Northwestern. Given Northwestern is a major research university, the university has developed into a major economic actor for the region and city as a whole. To properly see this through, Felsenstein argues that the university is an institution operating in receiving inputs to produce outputs. The inputs and outputs discussed come from the payment of households and businesses through salaries and services to be sold out to external sources in the local and public arena, such as the development of a hospital or research center which creates jobs for the community, and in turn more income circulation. Its presence and massive complex of housing and research combined with wages higher than the county average and direct university expenditure exceeding \$100m puts the university in a major growth factor for the economy. Furthermore, over 60 percent of all demand generated by Northwestern is met by the local Chicago economy itself, which allows for the institution to continue operating as an export base sector in the region. (Felsenstein 1996) Conclusively, Northwestern from its expenditures in the local Chicago economy has a major role in its economic development. This is furthered from Chicago meeting over half of the need created by the university through outside revenue sources.

Similarly, in Cincinnati, there was a study taken at Xavier University, but rather than focusing on institutional expenditures, Blackwell, Cobb, and Weinberg (2002) argued the formation of human capital and increasing the technological base of a region, as a key driver to economic growth. The development of human capital for a college/university is a simple one at

its core, which means an investment in undergraduates to remain in the area of the institution post-graduation and earn a higher income. Now this is an indicator of economic growth because “education increases future productivity and therefore incomes and economic activity” (Blackwell, Cobb, and Weinberg 2002). This study at Xavier aligns itself well with the overall literature on higher education economic impact studies, as well as the role Trinity College plays in Hartford. Through its educational partnerships and programs at the Hartford Magnet School of Trinity College of providing opportunities for students to take courses at Trinity, the college is increasing the productivity of the youth and in turn, providing long-term economic growth in the region, given students remain in the Hartford area.

In terms of long-term economic growth to the region, it is also necessary for universities to petition and appeal for more state funding as a mechanism to maintain their value for citizens and achieve their goals of growth in the region. This is an important part of the university, and part of the reason more economic impact studies have taken place to bolster their value to the economy. Yet according to Siegfried, Anderson, and McHenry, “the value of economic activity to a local area occurs when the activity employs local residents who use their income to enhance their individual welfare” (Siegfried, Anderson, McHenry 2008). Rather the claims of universities regarding returns on investment from the state and university, as well as reporting how much money or jobs are produced are not as imperative or influential. Thus, a proper study of economic impact should be based on the counterfactual due to ambiguity causing for exaggerations of economic impact for public relations goals. Similarly, when determining expenditures, it is important to exclude those that would have happened if the institution was not there, or a choice was made to attend another institution because that activity would still be seen. Thus, in the previous studies of the larger research universities, they are limited in this regard

due to the ignorance towards the level of human choice to attend another institution in the area and the university not even being there in the first place. Yet not every college or university is located in a major metropolitan area that can meet their expenditures to excess revenue of tourists or sporting events, etc., thus these colleges have to do more to further the economic development of the region.

*Power of Community Engagement in Economic Growth*

Secondly, there is a large part of studies done on higher education institutions that showcase the importance of community engagement. This is another major economic growth indicator for the local economy of colleges/universities outside of a metropolitan area. By interacting with the local economy on an expenditure level, it is also important to develop partnerships in the community. This can be done in terms of catering services or other outlets like student internships or workforce development. Green and Venkatachalam (2005) argue that institutional partnerships contribute to the economy by supporting local businesses and attracting state and federal funding. Yet, Trinity College does not do this in the Hartford region, the college partners with organizations on an educational level to increase human capital, but they neglect the value of supporting local businesses to further boost the Hartford community. Which according to Green and Venkatachalam (2005), is an influential part of contributing to national and local economic development because at it can lead to the revitalization of local areas and become a powerful engine of economic growth and development.

Moreover, an engaged university is a critical component to the development of these partnerships, and it is important for the university to uphold their civic missions at all times. On this note universities in the mid-2000s were facing large criticism and scrutiny, even losing their value and faith in the public. This is due to professors focusing more on their research and

personal goals, and in turn, putting less emphasis on their civic mission to the larger community. Bridger and Alter (2006) argue that it is necessary to be an “engaged university that works in partnership with local people to facilitate the broad range of community interaction that fosters individual and social well-being” (Bridger and Alter 170). The university must realize its role to enhance the community’s capacity towards education, information, and expertise, and to achieve this there must be a mutually beneficial exchange. To better understand this the distinction must be made towards development in the community versus development of community.

According to Bridger and Alter (2006) development in the community relates to job creation, and business retention, mainly things that better the overall economy. Development of the community relates to the active process in which groups and local members interact to build connections, work on social projects, and break down cross-cultural boundaries. These two umbrella terms for engagement in terms of the university have been mostly the first, development in the community. Utilizing their resources to better the economic well-being of the locale can lead to disregard towards the members of the community themselves. To continue development in the community while also creating the development of the community requires the encouraged creation of services, institutions, groups, facilities, and the growth of social justice. All of these things require local actions and the university’s resources to realize these goals and increase social well-being.

Ultimately, community development on all levels including educational partnerships, and partnerships with local businesses as well is a key component to realizing economic growth in a region. The larger research universities have a larger capacity to achieve this due to their vast array of resources, research capabilities, and community viewing them as a partner. On the other hand, the small college has to work harder to realize these goals and rely more upon its

partnerships with local businesses and student footprints in the region. The importance of student consumption is rarely looked at in this discussion, but when it is students have a large role in the development of the local economy.

### *The Role of a Small College in Economic Development*

Case studies of large universities make up a majority of the literature but as I mentioned there is very little research done on the impact of small colleges on a local economy. These institutions often have smaller budgets and do not have the resources to conduct an economic impact study, as Khalaf, Jolley, and Clouse (2022) mention. Further, these studies can serve to be very critical to the development of the institution in the region by strengthening relationships with stakeholders and assisting in public relations. Khalaf et al (2022) produced a study of Marietta College and Muskingum University, two small institutions in Ohio using four indicators: operating expenses, student spending, visitor spending, and construction expenses. These metrics were defined as operation costs to run the university, annual spending patterns of full-time students excluding those associated with operations, spending on hotels for visitors, and costs to enhance the university through new projects. To accurately detail the impact these two colleges, have on the region, the researchers used IMPLAN, which is an econometric model for impact analysis. This model measures the relationship between given demands plus the inputs necessary to fulfill them. Thus, creating estimated economic multipliers based on the circulation of dollars spent by the university in the local economy. (Khalaf, Jolley, Clouse 2022)

Given this study, most of the impact on the economy comes from the university operating expenses or just institutional spending, like payroll costs and running the institution. For these two institutions combined, there was a total effect of around 1,000 jobs produced, over \$30 million of labor income, and over \$80 million of output or GDP influx to the economy. Which is

a large number and provides a large marketing benefit to report out for additional funding. Further, this growth attributed to the economy allows for the college and university to be seen as major benefactors to the overall region, allowing for community-based partnerships to be realized. In this instance, we see the institutional power of spending money in the community, but in this study student consumption is accounted for.

When discussing the student spending impact, which is often overlooked in the majority of studies it was seen that students living off campus had a much larger impact on the economy than those on campus. Mostly this was attributed to rent costs in the area which on-campus students do not have to consider. Further, when looking at the visitor impact of the two institutions it was clear the highest reason for visitors was for athletic events which totaled an influx of around 30,000 people to the region and 20,000 people who stayed overnight which increased their spending in the economy. (Khalaf, Jolley, Clouse 2022) This study highlights the importance of doing a study for a small college because given their resources it can be said the impact of visitors, students, and the university to be felt more so given the lack of a major economy. Moreover, this study explains the value of being a fully engaged community member, by spending money in the local economy while also capitalizing on student consumption the university is a major economic engine.

Furthering the lack of impact studies done and the two case studies in Ohio, there is another piece of the puzzle that is important when thinking of the larger discussion of these studies. That is properly defining the geographical area of the study taken place in question because the results can be not as drastic given the presence of a major metropolitan area. This is important because if a college is placed in a large metropolitan area, by conducting an economic impact study it is possible to get skewed findings as some of the output would also be there

without the presence of the institution. To do this you must determine the necessary boundaries of the study, and to consider the breadth of impact vs the depth of impact. These distinctions are necessary because the broader the geographical area then the higher the effect multiplier will be due to a larger pool of vendors and expenditures also in the area, which may construe the actual impact of the institution with other sources of revenue outside the university. (Beck, Elliot, Meisel, and Wagner 1995) This process of defining the geographical area is instrumental for large universities but may be even more important for a small college as it will accurately present the impact. We see this in the case study of Claremont Graduate University conducted by Annette Steinacker.

In her case study of Claremont Graduate University, Annette Steinacker argues the importance of defining the geographic area because Los Angeles is one of the largest cities in the world. It has thousands of tourists coming in every day, dining out and going to sporting events. Similarly, Los Angeles has one of the most expensive housing markets, with multiple celebrities purchasing multi-million-dollar houses, which also drives the economy in the long run. Therefore, by properly defining the geographical area, the effects of Claremont Graduate University students can be properly seen on the economy, as their expenditures are not construed by the larger Los Angeles economy.

To account for a small institution living in a massive urban economy its expenditure was broken up between commuter and resident students. As one might imagine for commuter students the major outlets where they had an impact was in gas stations and retail, whereas with residents it was retail outlets specifically shopping areas. Through this study, Steinacker (2005) determined that CGU had an estimated impact of 4 percent on the local economy when defining the correct geographical area and indicators. In this instance, we see how student spending has a

major role in the growth and impact of a given region, by having an immediate effect on the growth of local businesses. Through this approach, we see the importance of student expenditure as a key indicator of economic growth because student consumption patterns are more easily seen in an institution on the outskirts of a major city. Similarly, since Trinity College is located in a small city this serves as an approach that is successful in accurately determining the impact of students on the local economy.

While it is important to determine the geographical area which this case study shows, for a college/university that is not in an urban economy, the institution and its students must interact with the local economy and community to promote economic growth. Therefore, they need other ways to interact and promote economic growth especially since students are only enrolled for a portion of the year. Due to this, students have more of an impact in terms of attributing revenue to the businesses surrounding the institution. In a case study conducted by Stewart, Prinzing, Dias, Bowden, Salley, and Smith (1989) of South Carolina State College (SCSC), the only historically black land-grant university in South Carolina, thirty-one businesses and all faculty/staff participated. Among the businesses, retail outlets were most affected by SCSC students with 12-14 percent of their sales directly attributed to students. Furthermore, the owners of these businesses concluded that SCSC was a major factor in the growth of the region, as most of the faculty lived in the area and purchased food, medical and personal care, and transportation methods within the Orangeburg area. (Stewart, et. Al 1989) Based on this initiative of promoting its role in the community, local business owners and leaders realized the true impact of this institution and has opened up more ways for SCSC to continue interacting with their local economy by more research and funding capabilities directly from the Orangeburg community.



Based on these two studies from Steinacker and Stewart et. al we see the importance of student spending as an indicator of economic growth, and the institution's role in the larger community. As students interact with the community on a large scale, businesses themselves are benefited and the university is positioned to have more opportunities for partnering with local businesses and community members. Ultimately this allows the institution to be a true neighbor to their community.

### Methodology

The goal of this thesis is to argue that Trinity College as an institution focuses on one aspect of economic impact, community engagement through education. As it does this, it neglects the aspect of student consumption in Hartford as a key metric in being a sound neighbor in the community. To do this, I will look at the following variables: student awareness and school policy. These two variables are the biggest inhibitors for Trinity to encourage students to interact with businesses in Hartford. Further, I collected data through a quantitative and qualitative survey and then conducted qualitative interviews. In the survey sent out to 400 students, I received 67 responses which is a 17% response rate. From this survey, I conducted 7 interviews and to preserve confidentiality participants will be designated Person 1, 2, 3, etc.

Based on these findings, I was able to conclude that my hypothesis was correct that Trinity does not account for student spending when it views itself as an institution. Through its policies for having a car on campus and during COVID, the Trinity Tripod's individual policies, and lack of student awareness towards local businesses it is clear that students want to interact with local businesses, but Trinity College still does not encourage it. Ultimately, Trinity College operates as a large institution focusing on institutional expenditures and furthers the hole in the literature surrounding student consumption. By pushing students away from the Frog Hollow

neighborhood, students are left to spend money in much more expensive areas rather than remaining local and helping to boost the region economically.

## **Chapter 2: What Trinity Says It Does vs What Trinity Actually Does**

Trinity College is a small liberal arts institution situated in Hartford, Connecticut, and a member of the prestigious group of NESCAC institutions. Trinity's peer schools are also small liberal arts institutions but outside of Tufts University on the outskirts of Boston, MA, the other 10 institutions are in small, rural towns throughout New England. Comparatively, Trinity is much different than its colleagues, as it is located in a major city and urban environment. This presents a set of challenges when fulfilling the liberal arts agenda of connecting students with the world and creating well-rounded individuals. Yet, by being in this environment Trinity can be intentional in making a lasting impact on the community while being a sound neighbor. Trinity does just that through its partnerships with local organizations and its mission as “the preeminent liberal arts college in an urban setting” (President Berger Sweeney 2017). Further, the location of Trinity allows for students to be encouraged to be sound members of the community with multiple offerings of community learning courses, and opportunities to interact with members of the community during the school year.

Based on these initiatives, it is clear that Trinity is very deliberate in its efforts to be seen as an institution working with the community, not against it. These actions are furthered by its projects and policies developed during the 21<sup>st</sup> century by building up the Learning Corridor, a downtown campus in Hartford, the creation of the Center for Hartford Engagement and Research, as well as the Summit Plan created at the onset of the bicentennial. All of these projects are efforts to present the college as a working member of the community and create opportunities for students to take advantage of the vibrant city of Hartford in the classroom. Moreover, the goals of these projects are to put students in the driver's seat to build upon the

foundational concepts in the classroom and put them in real-world situations with the larger community. The first development of this is seen in the college's partnership with SINA.

*Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA)*

SINA is a partnership between Trinity College, Hartford Hospital, and Connecticut Children Medical Center, and its mission states, "to work cooperatively with community stakeholders to restore economic vitality and improve the quality of life for the benefit of the people who live, work, visit, study, and play in the neighborhoods of South-Central Hartford" (Sinainc.org, Mission & Vision). The role SINA has played in the development of the community is largely felt, it was created in 1976 and throughout the decades has been instrumental in community-based initiatives. From the creation, its first project was the creation of the Southside News, which was a free magazine that was used for the exchange of information regarding projects being done in the city. Some of these projects included the Broad Park Development Corporation, which made approximately 400 housing units for low-income families. (Knapp 433) Moreover, this group was a large part of Trinity's efforts to strengthen its relationship with the city of Hartford.

Over the coming years following 1976, Trinity took on several projects in Hartford, first by hiring Francis Hartmann whose responsibility was to "strengthen 'Trinity's working ties with the city of Hartford and help the College take advantage of, and contribute to, the educational, cultural, and civic life of the region'" (Knapp 484). What this allowed for, was the College to help alleviate urban problems of the area, particularly when it comes to education. To do this, Trinity partnered with local high schools in the area by offering programs to broaden their educational opportunities and bridge the transition to college. Additionally, with these programs, the college introduced many students to multiple disciplines and encouraged students to be on

track for careers in this area. What this allowed for was a few things, on one hand, it boosted the economic development of the region through education by way of human capital. On the other hand, it solidified the college as a working partner in the region focused on developing the youth and increasing their knowledge base for the future. This partnership still exists today and puts the college in a position to be viewed as a growth-driven neighbor for the city of Hartford and furthers itself as an engaged community partner through education. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the college took this a step further with the development of the Learning Corridor, which opened up more possibilities to partner with local organizations and provide students even more community learning opportunities.

### Learning Corridor

The development of the Learning Corridor brought together multiple organizations including the Trinity Boys and Girls Club, Hartford Montessori School, Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, and the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA). The goal of this project was simple as the college turned the century, being a good neighbor to the surrounding community while also preparing students to be global citizens, and a 'medium for community and institutional change' (Nelson and Cotto Jr 2021) However with this project there was a debate amongst the community regarding the displacement of many of its residents of which the Learning Corridor would sit (Baldwin), but this project symbolized the transition from the infrastructure urban development model to the educational and medical institution economy of today (CHER 2024). Ultimately this project for Trinity served as a way to change with the economy and in turn continue its trajectory of being an educational neighbor to Hartford.

From this development, there were multiple successes. One was that it allowed for an early college program at HMTCA for students to take intro Trinity courses as well as have access to

Trinity spaces. This allowed for students at HMTCA to interact with Trinity students daily, and the college to progress its efforts of community learning and civic engagement. Ultimately though, this program allowed students at HMTCA to feel readily prepared for their next educational steps by feeling a sense of comfort in the college environment. It allowed them to interact with professors and continue to help with the transition into college. This program was initiated by Trinity and SINA, as a way to boost growth in the region and continue their efforts as a member of the Hartford community. While many Hartford residents were displaced for this project, the benefits are being seen today. Due to the closeness to Trinity College, the homes adjacent to the Learning Corridor and the college have boosted housing prices and made the south side of Hartford a more desirable area to live in. So based on this Trinity's initiatives are working to build up the Hartford community. Moreover, by engaging in the community this way Trinity is developing the human capital of Hartford as Blackwell et al (2002) detail as a major indicator of growth for a higher education institution.

Furthering with HMTCA this partnership has pushed for connections and mutually beneficial learning between both students. For students of HMTCA given the ability to participate in the summer writing institute taught by Trinity faculty to teach college writing skills details the success and importance of this partnership on an educational level. Fostering and granting the opportunity for high schoolers to gain valuable skills only prepares them better for their next steps in college and life. In addition, offering students introductory classes in various disciplines such as Mathematics, Computer Science, Language, Humanities, and Sciences allows them to understand the life of a college student and feel much more comfortable in that setting than the average high school student. These two opportunities given by this partnership enhance the

development of a knowledge economy and increase human capital detailed by Siegfried et. al (2008).

In addition, this project headed by Trinity College furthers its position as a neighbor in the community on an educational basis. By continuing its projects surrounding education in Hartford, Trinity shows itself as an institution rooted in community engagement. Thus, Trinity College implemented the Summit Strategic Plan in 2017 as the college looks ahead to its third century.

### Summit Plan 2017

The college in 2017 produced a Summit Strategic Plan ahead of the Bicentennial that was held this past year to set goals to continue innovation and the ideals of a higher education institution. These ideals are aligned in the promotion of curious-minded individuals, academic freedom, and citizens who engage across disciplines and boundaries as well as those who think critically (Summit Plan 2017). This plan set forth three foundational goals designed to continue an education focused on making Trinity a first choice for students and faculty, connecting Trinity College with the Hartford community, and ensuring a sustainable future for the college. Connecting Trinity College with Hartford is a major part of this plan as it looks ahead to continuing its progress of the Learning Corridor and future projects.

These strategic goals set forth from the plan are encouraging for the future of the college's mission and initiative to be a neighbor in the community through its educational projects. From this plan, the agenda is clearly set forth by many key and powerful words, for example when discussing being involved in the community. "We have a responsibility to be a virtuous institutional citizen, to be a leading partner in advancing the Hartford region, and to demonstrate for our students the power of education to transform the world" (Summit Plan 2017). This word

choice of “leading partner” and “transform” and “responsibility” are critical to how the college presents itself to the greater community and the world. By being on the frontlines and taking the lead role in developing and partnering with organizations and members in Hartford, the image set forth shows a need and Trinity stepping in to fulfill that need. Further, utilizing the community as an asset rather than a liability can open up many doors for positive community engagement between both parties. The Summit Plan itself is a key strategic initiative for the college to further its connection with Hartford and create a space where collaboration is encouraged.

In part connecting Trinity with Hartford requires the continuation of its image as a partner to the community and maintaining its ability to enhance the education of the next generation. As a leading member in Hartford, Trinity developed the Center for Hartford Engagement and Research which directly focuses on community engagement efforts.

*CHER (Center for Hartford Engagement and Research)*

Connecting Trinity with Hartford has been a goal for the better half of a decade, and that still holds true today. The Center for Hartford Engagement and Research (CHER) does just this. Through the many facets of community learning, community service and civic engagement, the HMTCA partnership which I discussed above, and Trinfo Café; Trinity is heavily involved with creating a space for Trinity students and community members to be involved together. Through this center, there are many opportunities for community learning initiatives that students can participate in. Students have the opportunity to enroll in the Community Action Gateway which grants the ability to play a part in research and social change projects based around education, economic development, culture, and social inequality to name a few, within the city of Hartford (CHER 2024). This Gateway program for first-year students enables them to be involved in the



community from their very first steps on campus. More importantly, this program designed by CHER and Trinity creates a space for community learning through classes and outside opportunities and allows students to make an impact on the Hartford community.

CHER also works to educate community-based organizations on a range of social issues, and “creates future civic leaders by engaging students in building and maintaining sustainable community partnerships in Hartford” (Office of Community Service and Civic Engagement, Trinity). This part of CHER utilizes a group of student staff members to run events, campaigns, and lead various programs like Habitat for Humanity, Homelessness Project, and more. These groups of students are aligned in making Trinity a sound and influential partner in Hartford. Moreover, CHER aligns itself with the goals outlined in the Summit Plan for solidifying Trinity’s footprint in Hartford over the coming years. Additionally, community learning is a major part of the Trinity curriculum in regard to taking advantage of the vast opportunities Hartford has to offer, one of these is with Hartford Hospital.

#### Hartford Hospital Collaboration

Now one of the major projects that Trinity has had a role in is with Hartford Hospital from helping with its development to ensuring a partnership for neuroscience students at Trinity do conduct research. The ability to utilize world-renowned technologies and materials is a game changer for students and tremendously enhances their learning. The students themselves will not be doing lead research, instead, they will be linked with a physician or researcher in many fields of interest such as Parkinson’s, epilepsy, movement disorders, and neuro-based sciences like intervention, surgery, and psychiatry (Trinity Reporter 2017). In the promotion of this partnership multiple Trinity Faculty were quoted included President Berger-Sweeney, and both parties express the need for and importance of this conjunction. Given Trinity has one of the

oldest neuroscience programs in the country, an agreement such as this one paves the way for exciting research and learning opportunities that is at the heart of the liberal arts.

This relationship was kickstarted in 2017 and has continued to today with students participating in the ability to conduct research at Hartford Hospital. This is a unique opportunity for students due to the proximity to campus and the ability to work directly with leading people in their field of interest. Ultimately this relationship puts forward a positive image towards the community and shows that Trinity is a welcoming neighbor to various projects.

### *Trinity's Downtown Campus*

Further, the Learning Corridor project discussed earlier that sits along Broad Street positions Trinity as a resource and acting member of the greater Hartford community to uphold the civic mission of a higher education institution. Along this note, the college over the recent years has developed multiple projects on growing innovation in downtown Hartford. One of these is the new downtown Hartford campus that houses the Liberal Arts Action Lab and the Trinity Innovation Center, which are directly across from each other. The Innovation Center houses many things including its partnership with Infosys, a global technology company, and together through the Applied Learning Initiative runs a business analytics training program of 25-30 liberal arts graduates designed to set themselves up for success in the digital workplace (Trinity College 2024). Further in this center there is access for the community through various clubs on campus, to bridge the gap between the liberal arts and the innovation of today's workplace. (Concatelli 2020)

This Innovation Center which opened in 2020 is one of the two projects Trinity has played a role in downtown Hartford, the other is the Liberal Arts Action Lab. Now this development is a cool one and pushes the agenda proposed in the Summit Plan, by partnering with community

members and working together with Trinity students and faculty for semester long research projects. Students themselves apply to be a part of the project teams each semester to learn valuable research and digital skills while collaborating with partner organizations. Projects are surrounded by answering a question to better and improve the overall Hartford community, like giving more opportunities to own a home or raising more awareness of minority organizations, and these questions are answered in total collaboration and hands on research (Liberal Arts Action Lab 2024).

The Liberal Arts Action Lab was the first of the two developments in downtown Hartford with its opening in 2018. This program for students has offered positive experiences, as one student noted it allowed him to understand Hartford as a city and community much better than remaining on campus (Liberal Arts Action Lab 2023). Further given the ability to choose from the programs to participate in, it allows students to choose on that most aligns with their identity. Thus, this project led by Trinity has left a positive and meaningful impact on students and the community alike, by bridging the gap between Trinity and Hartford while also continuing their motives in forming students to be critical thinkers and engaged across multiple areas detailed in the Summit Plan. What this shows is that students at Trinity want to be members of the community, especially in the classroom but they also want to be members of the community outside of the classroom as well.

#### *Acknowledging Trinity College Students as Consumers*

Even though Trinity College has been a sound player in the community through their initiatives, programs, and projects throughout Hartford there is still an element that is missing from the equation. That is the role students can play in the larger discussion of economic and community development. As students, most of our time is spent in the classroom and staying on

campus, but students often go off campus for retail, dining, and convenience purposes.

Ultimately this should be something that is pushed for college students to do and get out in the community on a non-academic perspective to become the critical thinking, institutional citizen, and immersive student that the Summit Plan preached. By being promoted to get off campus and explore various areas of the vibrant city of Hartford, students can gain real-life experiences, a better understanding of the world around us, and be immersed in different cultural backgrounds outside the classroom.

Nowhere throughout these projects is there the notion of students being promoted to be involved in the community in a non-academic setting. That is what this thesis will push to show and how Trinity students play a role in the development of the community outside the classroom. I believe this is a vital part of the college experience and Trinity as a whole given our location in Hartford, plus this is a massive hole in the vast literature on economic impact studies in the higher education field. In the subsequent chapters, I will look into the student perspective of what it looks like to be an economic actor on a college campus. Then I will do a deep dive into the relationship Trinity has had with Trinity Restaurant and pose an answer to why a partnership like this has not existed since its removal. Lastly, I will look into the role of the college through the shift to a lack of advertisements of local businesses in the Tripod and a lack of awareness for local businesses around campus.

### Chapter 3: The Trinity Tripod Serving Trinity Students

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Trinity unveiled a student newspaper, the *Trinity Tripod*. The goal of the Tripod is to further student interests at Trinity by bringing greater interest to athletics and student organizations through accurate accounts of games, campus events, and news. Similarly, the newspaper has a goal to increase the Trinity spirit through its circulation in hopes of bettering its prominence throughout the country. (Tripod Vol.1 No.1) The Tripod itself is a source of news for Trinity students, covering sports, student life, and world news. Now in its 120<sup>th</sup> year, The Tripod details the progress and improvement of the college, as well as the changes of student needs and wants throughout time. Furthermore, Tripod lends insight into the changes in how Trinity views itself as an institution and its relationship to Hartford.

Moreover, the Tripod served as a way to increase student spending in the local Hartford region by providing resources for students of businesses within the Frog Hollow Neighborhood, yet over the course of the Tripod this has gone away. Additionally, since the Tripod is student-run they have their own set of policies on what they can and can't do, and with an interview with the Tripods' editor-in-chief, this mostly surrounds their budget. By having to follow their budget, this puts restrictions on what the Tripod can and cannot do such as bringing back advertisements or restaurant reviews. This chapter will detail the ways the Tripod served students in the past, the shift away from advertisements, and their policies and their effects on students.

#### *Students Know of Businesses in Frog Hollow*

The main way the Tripod has served the student body has been through advertisements, which have changed over time. From the third issue of the Tripod in 1904, we see the first display of advertisements for students and an expression of need from Trinity students towards these businesses. In this edition, the editors of the Tripod promoted three businesses, Pope

Products an automobile shop, Chamberlin & Shaughnessy which was a clothing store, and a law firm. (Tripod Vol. 6 No. 25) Ads from this time are aligned with what the students need for the time and given the “wardrobe of the Trinity collegian. The basic items were the suit with ‘short sack coat buttoned high with narrow lapels, tightly fitting trousers, high shoes... stiff shirt and collar... the derby hat was the correct hat” (Weaver 227-228, 1967). In this instance, we see the effects of Trinity’s policy on student consumption and the Tripod furthering this policy while also providing students with multiple local businesses in the neighborhood to consciously encourage student spending in the local economy. This is the case because policies have a large impact on the interaction of students and at this time Trinity’s policy of dress is encouraging student consumption through the Trinity Tripod, rather than discouraging.

Given the dress of the college followed that of the collegian and formality many of the advertisements in the Tripod featured clothing, shoe, and hat stores which were all required for students at the college. In the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the 6<sup>th</sup> volume in 1910, the Tripod furthers this collegian style by showing businesses of tailors, collar stores, and other essential businesses that featured everyday items for a student. (Tripod Vol.6 No. 25) These advertisements continued to be displayed up until the mid-1950s, further showing how policy positively impacts student consumption. But the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of volume 47, shows more businesses surrounding student life. With respective ads promoting various taverns directly off campus on Broad Street and Zion Street. (Tripod Vol.47 No.14) This change in what advertisements are displayed in the Tripod displays the ways student needs evolve, and the Tripod serves as a source to meet those needs. Moreover, given the dress of the college remained formal, we see that this policy is not deterring students from spending money at local businesses as in the student handbook which covers all student policy at Trinity features advertisements as well.

The 1916-1917 student handbook notes, “it is solely through the courtesy of advertisers on the following pages that it is possible to publish this Handbook. We ask that if you have any appreciation for the volume, you show it by giving your patronage to these firms whenever possible” (Student Handbook 1916-1917). In this instance, the college is seen to be promoting its students to be active members of the community and encourages students to spend money at local businesses for their support of the college. By providing knowledge of businesses and backing them through these advertisements, Trinity provides resources for students that are aligned with their policies on campus furthering the effect of policy on student consumption and interaction with the community.

Of these advertisements, there are some discounts provided to students when they go there, as at the Danbury Hat Co., a 10% discount was given for anyone to show the student handbook, and further, they enhance a common place for Trinity men. As it is said for March’s Barber Shop, that freshman should know that all Trinity men go there. This promotion to Trinity men at the time furthers how the college viewed itself as an institution that wanted students to interact with the community outside of the classroom and meet their needs when it comes to dressing the part and upholding the values of a Trinity man. Moreover, given the formality of this time in the early 1900s at Trinity, local businesses and Trinity College embraces this cultural norm through their policy on campus. At the same time, the college invites students to spend money in the area by endorsing local businesses off campus at Trinity. Even still the formality of dress for men was still apparent as in a 1967 article, there is an advertisement around a shoe store that specialized in loafers. Given the upper-class nature of the college this ad was right in line with student needs, and Trinity policy on campus which pushes student consumption in Hartford.

Jumping ahead to the 60's and 70's the college underwent a major change in school policy, which is the admittance of women at the turn of the decade. This change caused Tripod to promote fewer businesses around clothing stores for men and instead more surrounding student life that was shown a decade earlier. Moreover, during this time there was a general change in the formality of the way people dressed throughout the country. So, the lack of advertisements surrounding clothing is very in line with the ways society has changed. Yet even with this, we still see that the new Trinity policy did not affect how students interact with local businesses. As there was still a plethora of advertisements that created awareness for Trinity students and also encouraged them to remain local when spending their money.

This shift away from clothing advertisements can be seen throughout articles in the 1970s and into the 1980s, as a common restaurant for Trinity students, Phil's appeared very often throughout the Tripod. In a 1975 issue there were three advertisements for Phil's with the first one stating "If you haven't been to Phil's, you haven't been at Trin" (Tripod Vol.74 No.3) Now this statement alone shows that this is a hotspot for Trinity students at the time and it is showing itself to the rest of the community, making new students aware of this place. Similarly, other restaurants like ABC Pizza offer a deal where you buy four pizzas and get the fifth one free, or Trinity Pizza House offers a 10% discount to students who show their student ID, or Nicky's Pizza House offers free delivery to any Trinity student. Moreover, even outside of a restaurant, there is an advertisement where students get the same 10% discount by showing their student ID at a mattress store in West Hartford. Having a policy that allows the use of a student ID at local businesses incentivizes students to interact with them while also creating a policy that encourages student consumption in the local area.



The 1990s, specifically an issue in 1995 showed a slowing down of advertisements in the Tripod with a significantly lower number. Yet the businesses they promoted offer discounts to Trinity students, with Roggi's Garage offering another 10% discount with the use of a student or faculty ID, and the College View Café offering drink and food specials with a coupon. (Tripod Vol. 93 No. 18) The discounts that were shown in the Tripod over 25 years ago, have not been the same. At the turn of the century, advertisements in the Tripod had fully slowed down to what they were of years prior. In an issue in 2000, of the three advertisements there were two free pizza delivery services in Hartford, as well as a discount of a store selling futons, that had couches on clearance for students. (Tripod Vol. 99 No. 4) So as these advertisements have slowed, the appeal to students is still present given the offerings for them along with policies that encourage students to interact with them. This trend in the Tripod regarding advertisements continued into the next decade as an issue in 2010 highlighted the menu of Choice One Pizza multiple times, and a few years later there was a restaurant review of El Sarape on Broad Street by Aesha Shah '14 and Brittany Voila '14, two writers of the Tripod in their edition of Food Dudes. (Tripod Vol. 108 No. 11) But what is different about this type of advertising to students is the sudden change in the offering of student discounts, showing how policy changed at Trinity by not offering the use of Trinity IDs at local businesses. Instead, this restaurant highlight covers their extensive menu and gives an impressive review to Trinity students, and this concept of restaurant highlights seems to be the new wave of advertisements for the Tripod.

The Food Dudes edition in the Tripod would highlight a new restaurant or search for the best food in the Hartford area. The writers of this switched throughout the years, but the goal stayed the same: to allow students to learn about a great restaurant in the Hartford area. The idea of this feature in the Tripod provided resources for students to know what is around the area, and

to learn of new places they have not heard of. This concept first appeared in 2010 and ran until 2014, why this went away remains unknown, but it is possible the turning over of the guard of Presidents to Joanne Berger-Sweeney could have had an impact or the writers graduated, and the Tripod did not have enough money in their budget to pick it back up.

Yet each edition highlighted either a different restaurant or food expedition. In a November article in 2010, two Trinity students embarked on a mission to find the best burger in Hartford. Each day they went to a new place, taking a much-needed break on Wednesday as “EJ dry heaved whenever she passed the McDonalds on Washington Street” (Tripod Vol. 106 No. 8). In this wide search they highlighted a different restaurant, Max Burger, Plan B, The Counter, and Half-Door. Each time giving the restaurant a review of the atmosphere and the burgers themselves. It was decided that Max Burger was the best of both worlds for their burger and atmosphere. But while there are debates over this, the point of this article in the Tripod supersedes these debates as it acknowledges local businesses in Hartford to Trinity students. It introduces students to Hartford businesses. In further Food Dude articles, the writers rave over El Sarape on Broad Street, with its “hole in the wall” environment and intimate atmosphere this restaurant is a favorite amongst Trinity students. (Tripod Vol. 108 No. 11) Even though many students know of this place, making this a more well-known place amongst the student body only helps this small local business.

In later editions jumping forward to 2013 in December, Food Dudes went to Quaker Diner which is a long-standing family-owned business in West Hartford. According to the writers once you go inside “you feel transported back in time” (Katzman and Thermos '14, Tripod Vol. 110 No. 11), naming it one of the best breakfast spots in Hartford. The review itself raved over the delicious chocolate chip pancakes, noting its perfect mix of savory and sweet.

Ultimately given the size and scale of this business, highlighting it in the Tripod appeals to student needs and wants regarding local businesses off campus. Students themselves want to know about these local and small businesses within the Trinity area to take full advantage of their student life in college.

Another edition of Food Dudes in 2014 highlighted not a restaurant but rather A Dong's Supermarket in West Hartford, a short drive from campus. This was a different approach to the Food Dudes article but possibly of more importance. This is because in this article, the writers are giving students a better alternative to the food at Trinity, the writer states "if you are anything like the food junkie I am... food at Trinity isn't enough" (Gonzalez '16, Tripod Vol. 111 No.1). The idea that food at Mather or on campus, in general, is not enough for students is a common conception around the Trinity student body, so this article serves greater importance to the community, it gives students another option when thinking about food that is not a restaurant experience. The writer walks through their experience at the market and how a simple bus trip "changed my perception of food life in Hartford" (Gonzalez '16, Tripod Vol. 111 No.1). As a student at Trinity, reading this article I am more inclined to go to this supermarket based on this incredible review and even just learning about a place like this. Unfortunately, Food Dudes stopped appearing in the Tripod in 2014 and has not been replaced.

Further in the same year, there were two instances of top 10 rankings about restaurants for students and families to check out. In an October issue of the Tripod around Trinity family weekend, there was a top 10 list of "family weekend destinations", which included restaurants in the Hartford and West Hartford area off campus. This served as a unique and creative way for students and families to be aware of what the best local businesses are near Trinity. Additionally, one of the first editions of the 2010 fall semester featured something similar, a top 10 of the most

neighborhood attractions around Trinity. This top 10 featured a mix of restaurants, café, markets, bakeries, all types of businesses within the Frog Hollow Neighborhood. Considering the timeliness of the edition, this piece offers new students the ability to already understand what is around Trinity rather than having them find it on their own. Similarly, it provides business owners with a great stream of new and existing customers who have a lot of disposable income to spend.

Ultimately during the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century of the Tripod we see how Trinity policy positively affects student consumption in the local area. This is through the showing of advertisements that are aligned with the school's policy, but these advertisements also create awareness and encourage student consumption. Even with the removal of discounts for students by showing their ID, the Tripod still provides advertisements, restaurant reviews, and lists of the best restaurants in the neighborhood which establishes knowledge of local businesses in Hartford while favoring student consumption.

#### *Tripod Goes Away from Advertisements*

Further, the college's mission on paper is clear connecting students with Hartford. As I've mentioned in the previous chapter it does this on an educational level through community learning programs and the development of the downtown campus as well as the Learning Corridor, these policies have weakened students' relationships with local businesses. As in 2014 advertisements in the Tripod went away and it drastically affected student consumption in the local Frog Hollow neighborhood.

In an interview, Person 1 was asked if there are any ways that Trinity sets up a boundary of where students go off campus, Person 1 said, "Yeah, I think the fact we are in a gated community doesn't really help, and also the school just hasn't really made students aware of all

the things around here” (Person 1). This notion of a gated community is incredibly truthful and apparent with our high walls and gates making students feel isolated from everything else, and completely unaware of businesses within walking distance from campus. Person 1 went on to say:

Like the other day for my roommate’s birthday party, I found out about this restaurant, El Sarape. That’s 5 minutes down the street, you could easily walk there. It had delicious food, never would have thought to go there, and never would have in any other circumstance. I don’t know that just made me think about all the other restaurants that maybe you know are delicious, but I just would discount completely based off of purely not knowing about it. (Person 1).

Ultimately, there is a major disconnect between Trinity and its students when it comes to student expenditures. Trinity students want to learn about these restaurants and experience the city of Hartford, but the resources are not there. Given that the Tripod gave these resources to students through its advertisements of local businesses and that has stopped, students do not know about businesses around Trinity. Moreover, as Trinity’s guidelines and policy have changed, the encouragement of student consumption has also changed. We see this in the first quote from Person 1 because he explains this feeling of isolation and how Trinity policy does not do anything to change that. Ultimately, policy at Trinity has created a divide between Trinity students and the local Hartford area.

The Tripod is a great resource for the college to further its mission of connecting students to the city outside of academics, yet this is no longer the case. Other than the occasional restaurant highlights in the Tripod like Elbow Room in West Hartford, J Bar in Hartford, or the Food Dudes edition in the early 2010’s the sudden drop off of advertisements and restaurant

highlights is very apparent. Moreover, this sudden exclusion of advertisements in the Tripod deviates from what the school says it does. Since the school says it connects Trinity students to Hartford, in reality it does this on one level, in the classroom. There is a whole other side to the Trinity student experience that has gone unnoticed. As the Tripod is student-run and accessible to all students at Trinity, it is a missed opportunity by the college to partner with the Tripod to solve this issue and since that has not happened, student wishes are going unheard. Moreover, by not providing awareness of local businesses to students, they are left to go elsewhere and spend money outside of the local Hartford economy.

In an interview, person 1 was asked why students do not see ads in the Tripod and if it would be of interest, and person 1 stated, “I feel as though if local businesses were advertised in the Tripod I would know more and if I saw something of interest I would go and check it out. Plus, it would give students information about local businesses and further the community engagement efforts that Trinity says it does, so the Tripod seems like a great place to do that” (Person 1). Ever since the 2010s, the editions of the Tripod have strayed away from presenting local business opportunities to the student body, and the issues have circulated more to what is transpiring throughout the NESCAC, country, and campus. This change in the Tripod ultimately is something that students do not want, as Person 1 alluded to. By reinstalling advertisements in the Tripod, it would provide a great resource for students to become fully immersed and aware of the business’s steps off of campus and in turn allow Trinity to be a fully engaged community member.

Throughout all the editions I have cited previously, the same notions have been seen but there were always sections of the Tripod that shared a local business, sometimes even multiple for one issue. Yet, over the last 10 years, this is not the case as Tripod has shaped itself to more

school-wide, student-focused issues which is in line with its overall mission. As the Editor in Chief of the Tripod said, “At the very basic level our mission is to report on stories about students at Trinity. The Tripod is here to act as an archival resource, so as things happen throughout the community they are known and remembered forever” (Tripod Editor in Chief). Now this is great because by highlighting student and campus-wide issues it keeps students informed about important and pertinent topics at Trinity, but the sudden lack of advertisements is an interesting discussion.

In a survey conducted amongst the student body, many Trinity students feel that they would be more inclined to go to local businesses if the Tripod included them in their weekly editions, and similarly, they want to see more local Hartford restaurants promoted on campus.

Q7 - If there were advertisements of local businesses in the Trinity Tripod or posted around campus, would you feel more inclined to go to them?

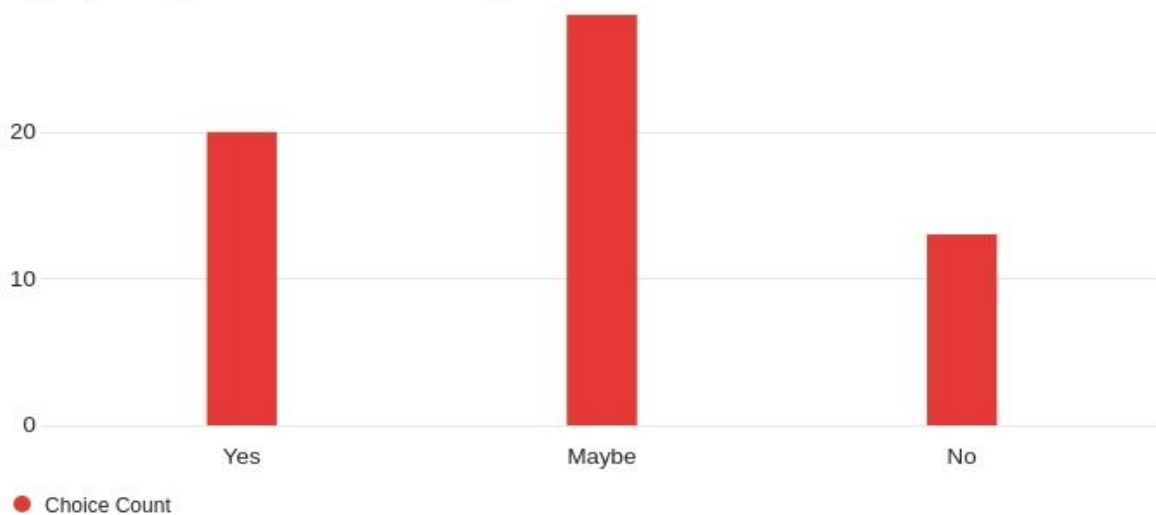


Figure 1: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Of these responses, some of the restaurants and businesses students want to see range from general family-owned places to more specific ones like Doro Marketplace, Rebel Dog

Bakery and Café, and American Mexican Diner, but the consensus has been to include deals for Trinity students, similar to what the Tripod advertised years prior.

I discussed advertisements with the Tripod's editor-in-chief. The editor said, "In terms of advertisements we have been approached around 10 times, but it is oftentimes student organizations and internal groups at Trinity" (Trinity Tripod Editor in Chief). In this instance, we see firsthand the student struggles of the isolation of the college from the local area as we are in this gated community which Person 1 discussed. Moreover, this is exactly in line with how Trinity presents itself when discussing community engagement, which is mainly educational opportunities throughout the city. The college lacks in its ability to connect students outside of the classroom and alleviate them from this feeling of isolation. Yet there is more to community engagement and the college neglects this as Person 1 stated, "Trinity is all about community or they say that they're all about community engagement and actually being a functioning member within the Hartford community, but outside of its educational partnerships, I haven't seen much that lines up with what they say" (Person 1). Echoing this point when asked why the Tripod has not run advertisements the editor commented "I feel that there is not a strong enough relationship between local businesses and us as an organization. I mean we don't reach out to them, and they do not reach out to us" (Trinity Tripod Editor in Chief) Based on what the editor said it is clear that this is a Trinity problem as well by not creating policy to make students aware of these businesses and work to create a relationship, it ultimately does not allow for the Tripod to further student needs at Trinity.

Yet even though this is an issue, the editor wants to fix this and went on to say "this is not only a Tripod problem but a Trinity problem in general. But as the school paper, we can begin to bridge the gap with local businesses independently by doing more coverage surrounding local



businesses, so that way the Tripod can be known to these businesses that students do not know about” (Trinity Tripod Editor in Chief). So even though it may be true the school says one thing and does another, the future of this disconnection seems promising as the Tripod wants to be more for the students and its overall mission, which is to report stories about Trinity students by branching out in Hartford and acting as an archival so things happening on campus and in the community are remembered.

Even though the Tripod may not have advertisements right now to appeal to student’s wishes, an app in beta at Trinity College “College Bites” has launched this year which offers Trinity students great deals on businesses and restaurants in and around the Trinity neighborhood. This is promising for students as it does two things, one it creates an environment where students are encouraged to explore the Hartford area, and two it positively impacts the businesses involved as more money is being brought to them from the students at Trinity. Similarly, it answers the questions of so many students about where to go off campus, now students have the resources to do so, which will be explained further in the following chapter.

Ultimately between its students and Trinity, there is a major disconnect in the discussion of student spending. Some of this is due to the recent development of online ordering and e-commerce shopping. Frankly this change in the way consumers interact, the need for advertisements in a school newspaper may not even be necessary given the vast capability of personal devices, where an individual can easily google “good restaurants near me” and have a plethora of options to choose from. Similarly, mobile apps like Uber Eats, Grub Hub, and Door Dash have changed the way consumers interact with restaurants, and how businesses operate. This is especially evident on college campuses as it is much more convenient to place order through a phone than leaving campus to go pick up food when half of the student body is limited

with ways of transportation. In the same survey, students were asked how often they ordered food from an app to campus and subsequently how many of those meals were delivered. The results below show the change in way students act as consumers and their patterns towards the change in ecommerce.

Q13 - How often in the past month have you used an app to order food to campus?

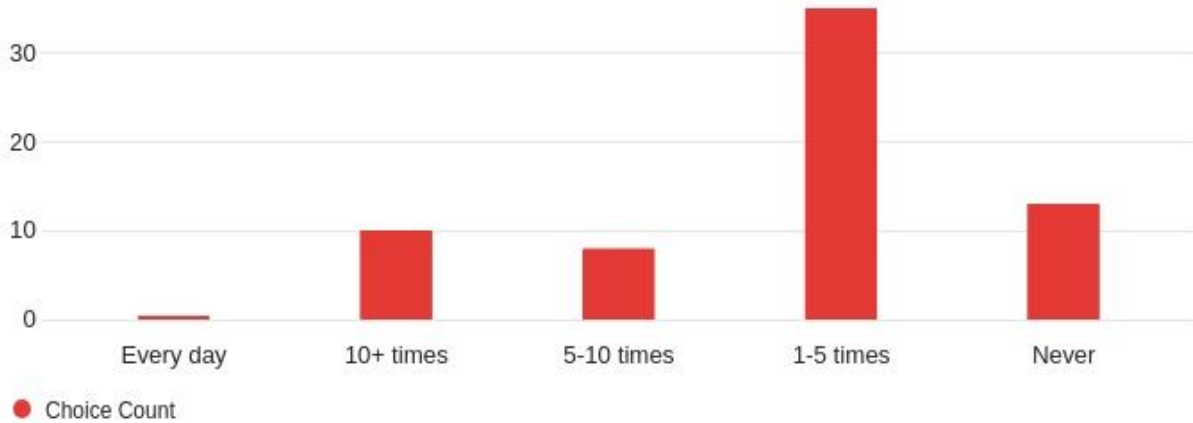


Figure 2: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Q21 - How many of those meals are delivered?

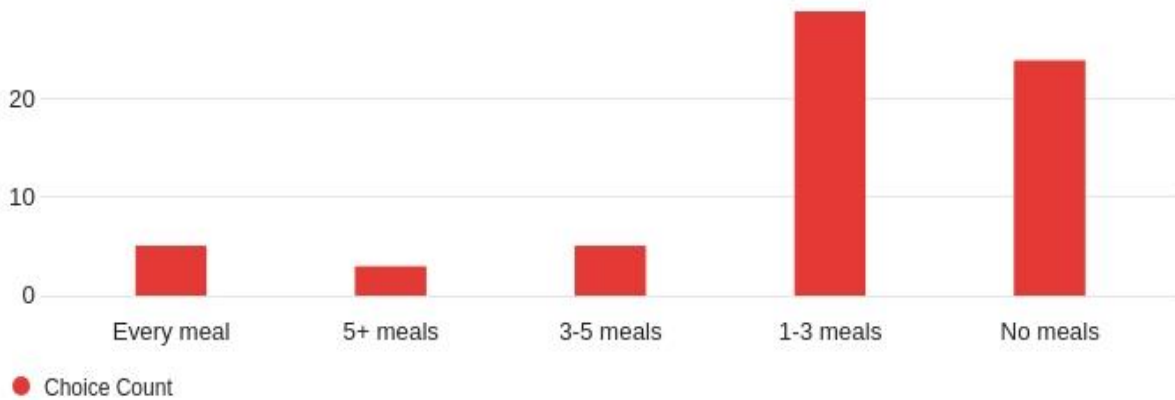


Figure 3: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Therefore, a majority of students order out less than 5 times and 3 of those meals are delivered. Given this information, it is clear that the changing times of the digital age, have changed the ways students act as consumers. This is a critical piece of the puzzle when trying to realign the college's words with their actions toward community engagement, and exactly where College Bites fills the gap. By offering discounts online for students, businesses will reap the benefits and students will be more aware of what is around Trinity and in Hartford.

Furthermore, this is the first step for students to create an initiative towards changing the way students interact with local businesses. In the next chapters, I will discuss this in more depth by offering reasons for why this takes place. From students being pushed away from Hartford by Trinity, continuing the effect of policy on student consumption, and furthering the lack of awareness among students of local businesses it is clear that Trinity College students do not take advantage of local businesses in Hartford and Trinity does not fulfill itself as an engaged community neighbor.

### Chapter 4: Exploring College Spending at Trinity

In previous chapters, I have alluded to this concept surrounding student spending not being considered when Trinity College thinks of community engagement. Given the vibrant city of Hartford, there are phenomenal restaurants and businesses surrounding the college that students at Trinity do not take advantage of. Instead, Trinity students often will go to West Hartford, a 15-minute drive away which is much more expensive rather than staying within walking distance from campus.

Q5 - Within the last 3 months, how often have you been to these areas off campus?

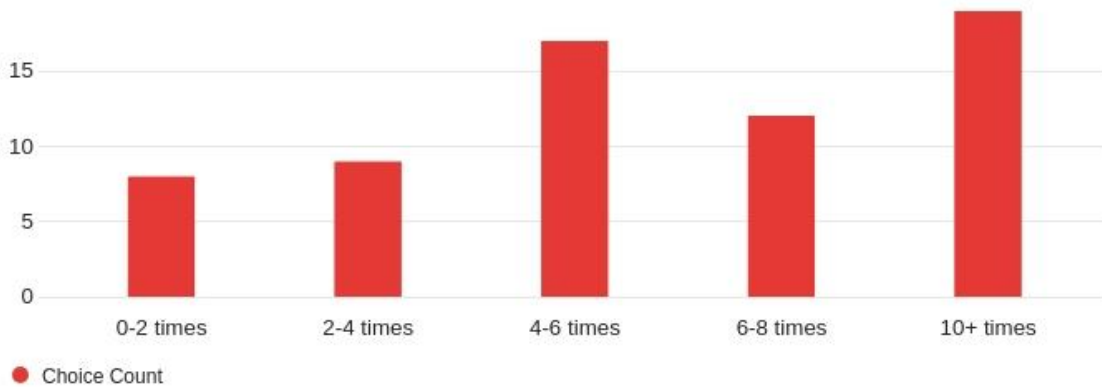


Figure 4: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Q3 - In the last month how often have you spent money at a business within walking distance from campus?

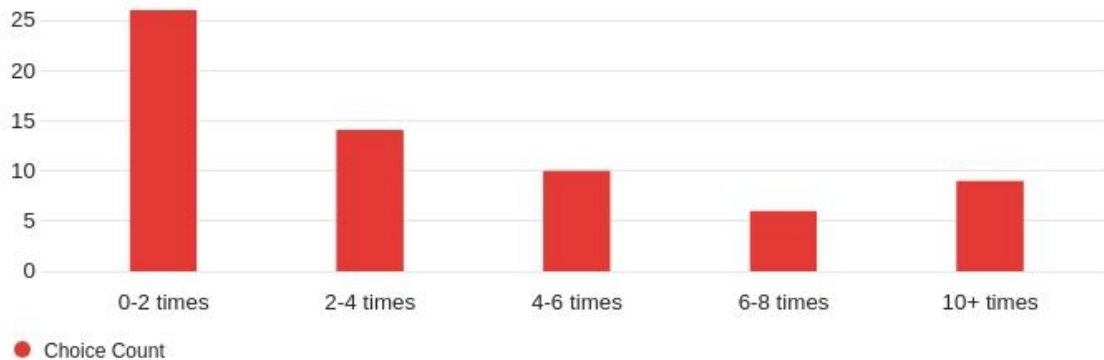


Figure 5: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Based on this data from a survey sent to Trinity students regarding their spending patterns, what areas around Trinity they often will go to, and their opinions on what businesses they want to see promoted, it is clear that students would much rather want to go to areas off campus than stay within walking distance. Interestingly, students would go to West Hartford 10x times more than the immediate area off campus, which requires transportation and is much more expensive. But it does not mean that students do not go to businesses in Hartford. Many of these businesses that students choose to go to around Trinity are Sam's Food Store, The Tap Café, Trinity Package, Bobby's Liquor in terms of convenience and retail stores. But in terms of restaurants students often will go to Campus Pizza, Papa Johns, El Sarape, the food trucks on Summit Street, and even some have chosen to go to American Mexican Diner, which replaced Trinity Restaurant. Moreover, there are other businesses that students like to frequent including J Bar, CTown market, Broad Street Market, H&L Package Store, Fire & Forge, and First and Last Tavern. (Student Expenditure Survey 2024) These businesses here are all also within the immediate area of Trinity, some in walking distance and some requiring transportation to and from.

Yet even still there are a plethora of businesses students can go to and some do, but there is still a large disparity in the number of students who go to businesses in West Hartford versus the Hartford area around Trinity. Much of this comes down to the lack of awareness surrounding local businesses in Hartford that Trinity does not offer to its students, as well as the lack of policy encouraging students to remain local. With the lack of advertisements in Tripod, Trinity students are forced to rely on each other for where to go off campus and spend money. However, this causes students to lean more towards West Hartford because this area is pushed by the college and its policies, and it is an area that provides a greater level of safety to students.

Q1 - 1. In last month how many of the following businesses have you been to? Choose all that apply.

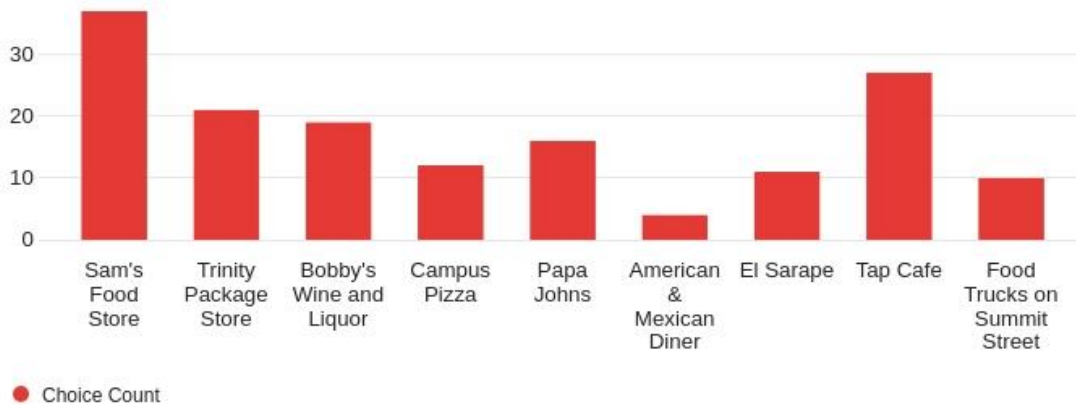


Figure 6: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

Q4 - In the last 3 months, how many of the following areas have you been to? Choose all that apply.

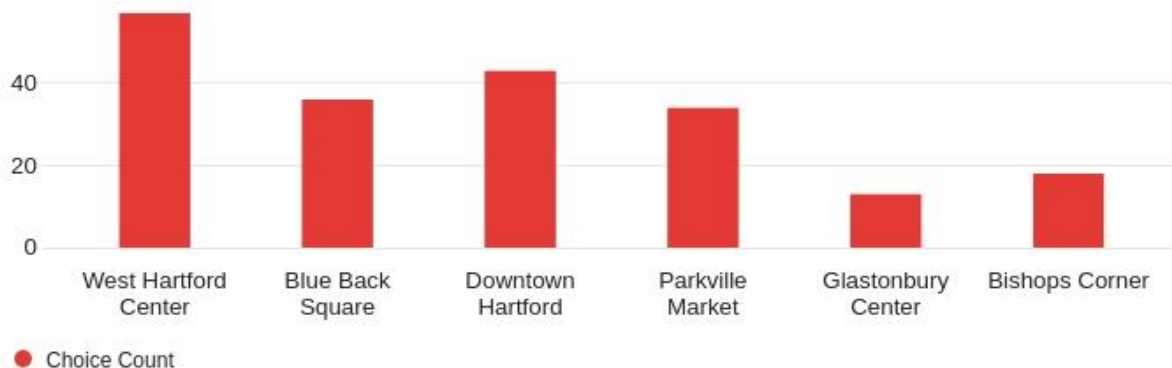


Figure 7: Trinity Qualtrics: Student Expenditure Survey

While a majority of students choose to go West Hartford, Parkville, and Downtown Hartford which the school promotes itself on its website, there are still other areas students go to outside the immediate Hartford area including the West Farms Mall and Corbin's Corner, Silas Deane Highway, Berlin Turnpike, and Wethersfield Center. (Student Expenditure Survey 2024) These are very high-traffic areas with a multitude of franchises as well as local businesses, and while students tend to go to these places it only furthers how students prefer leaving Hartford when spending money, due to their lack of awareness of local businesses in Frog Hollow. In addition, there is a large portion of money that is not coming to the immediate Hartford area. As West Hartford is much more expensive than the surrounding Trinity area, many students have spent over \$100 in the last 3 months, whereas in Hartford they are spending less than \$50. (Student Expenditure Survey 2024) There are many reasons for why this happens including the lack of transportation and the lack of awareness for these businesses, but the city of Hartford is losing out on a lot of money.

A student highlighted in an interview about the possible causes for why this is taking place. "To be honest, I think there's just a trend of kids going into that West Hartford area and

that's kind of what I've seen from teammates on the golf team telling me that the good dinner spots are there" (Person 2) The idea of this word of mouth and realization of businesses throughout Trinity is incredibly interesting and one that students also agree with, as another student echoed this point saying, "I feel Trinity does not really advertise businesses; I feel as though it is word of mouth in terms of where to go. I am part of an athletic team so we would always ask upperclassmen where to go and get food and that has continued for me as well" (Person 3). Now considering a majority of the school is composed of athletes, this notion of hearing about businesses from upperclassmen on the team or from going to team dinners is often how students hear about where to go off campus, rather than from the school directly. Given that this issue surrounding students interacting more with businesses in Hartford is both a student and Trinity problem, the school does not take the initiative to change this through their policies.

In addition, the school also plays a role in this by not making businesses in the immediate Hartford area known to students, as the two interviewees above noted. This is also an issue in the community engagement efforts of the college, as they say they connect students to the community but in reality, it is quite the opposite. "I think we do a poor job interacting with the community around us. I think a large portion of our interaction is typically requirements of classes, and very educational based" (Person 3). In this instance, a student is showing how Trinity presents itself as an educational partner, which is completely true with the work done with CHER and the Liberal Arts Action Lab connecting students with community members in Hartford. But students also want to connect with the community outside of the classroom. In this regard, it is a twofold issue, "I think people are so used to what they are comfortable with. It is the school's fault and the student's fault because the students go to the same places, and I feel the school is saying let's promote what the students like rather than give them new options. I also



would say going to West Hartford is more aligned with the demographics of the school and what kids are used to” (Person 4). Based on this response from this student, it is evident that the disconnect between students and Trinity comes from both parties. Students do not want to step outside their comfort zone due to the safety of the area. “In all honesty, safety is a big factor for me, and I do not feel as comfortable going to a restaurant close to campus as opposed to West Hartford, and I also feel much safer walking around there” (Person 3). Thus, in this instance, it is clear there is an underlying reason to why students choose to leave the area when going off campus as well, and since a majority of the school comes from upper-class backgrounds, West Hartford is more aligned with what students are used to in their daily lives. Further, this is pushed based on the notions surrounding Trinity itself, as “it is very well known that the area around Trinity is not the greatest, but the campus itself is beautiful. It’s almost like we are in an oasis blocked off from everything else” (Person 3). So ultimately, we see that student consumption in Hartford is also a fault of Trinity by not generating awareness of local businesses through their policies of being an educational partner, a large part of community engagement has gone overlooked.

Similarly, staying in the Hartford area when going out to eat is also something that students do not take the initiative upon themselves along with school based on the lack of knowledge about local businesses outside of the popular restaurants that students hear about from other students. The promotion of businesses by Trinity is not something that has occurred over the last 10 years with the stoppage of the Tripod running ads as well as the Food Dudes edition in the Tripod, students no longer have the accessibility to go to one place to figure out where to go, other than their classmates. Yet even though this is the case when asked if Trinity made more businesses aware to students would you be more likely to go, a student responded, “I

feel they will not promote events around the area, as this past weekend my friends and I went to brunch at Parkville and it was a ton of fun but it was found on our own merit, it was so fun and if we had more events like that, where the school promoted it I think more kids would go” (Person 3). Moreover, another student echoed this point by describing what Trinity promotes:

I think Trinity does not make these businesses known and also just do not incentivize us to go. For me, I feel the school heavily advertised Parkville, and I also think they heavily push going to West Hartford. As for admissions on my visit, they gave recommendations and most were in West Hartford, but that is a form of advertising so that is the first thing you see and it’s almost like get used to that. So, it’s a bit as I was saying earlier about how the school does not make the effort to encourage students to remain local when spending their money. (Person 4)

In this instance here we see the ways in which Trinity pushes students to go to certain places and will advertise that to students instead of local businesses in the area which kids ultimately want to see. As in a survey sent to Trinity students, many responded they wished to see more promotion of local, family-owned, cheap options for food in Hartford instead of going 15 minutes to spend more money in West Hartford. But not everyone does this because Trinity has a policy of no cars on campus for first years, and even still as upperclassmen some students do not have the availability to bring their car, so that’s a challenge in of itself.

This policy furthers the issues amongst students because having a car allows a student the ability to begin to figure out what is around the area. But without a car, this opportunity is taken away and given the college does not provide open resources to its students regarding reliable local businesses, students are left to figure it out on their own and rely on their classmates. When asked if Trinity puts up a boundary for students regarding where to go, a student mentioned, “I’m

not sure of a boundary, but I think it is very difficult to navigate the area around Trinity. If it was more encouraged by Trinity to explore the area like if they had a bus that took students to Parkville or where the school thinks students should go” (Person 4). Another student echoed this point by saying, “I think one thing that is hard is that our freshman year we do not have cars, so it is difficult to explore the area, which is a caveat in itself” (Person 3). It is indeed a caveat because with this policy students grow less and less aware of what Hartford has to offer, furthering the effects of policy on student interaction. Moreover, since Trinity’s policy is focused on community engagement through the classroom and does not facilitate student consumption based on its no-car policy, students are unconsciously pushed away from Frog Hollow and into West Hartford.

Furthermore, by not having a car on campus it limits access for students to leave campus because finding parking is difficult, and it is simply not a viable option for students. In an interview, a student who does not have a car on campus said, “I think a lot of it has to do with transportation and if you do not have a car, it’s pretty hard to go off campus because Ubers are expensive. But if Trinity advertised businesses in West Hartford or Downtown Hartford and had buses that shuttle in and out on Friday or Saturday nights, would definitely help” (Person 5). The expensiveness of Ubers to areas of campus puts a limit on those who decide to go off campus, and with no transportation, this is furthered. But even still the lack of no car makes it that much more important for Trinity to incentivize students to go to local businesses that are within proximity to campus, so students do not have to spend money on an Uber or be restricted by a car on campus. One student alluded to this:

Trinity can do better by really making students aware of what is what is available and offering discounts to students in the immediate area that incentivizes students to be more

involved in the community. Because not everyone has a car on campus, so encouraging students to remain in the immediate Hartford area is much more important to make sure no one is limited if they want to leave campus. (Person 1)

Yet students are still limited because as one student mentioned when asked about some of the factors that influence the decision to go off campus, “I think the biggest factor has been having a car on campus has given me availability to go to more places” (Person 4) Ultimately, having a car is the biggest restriction for students deciding to leave campus and where to go, along with the lack of awareness of businesses in Hartford. So, the addition of a car on campus opens of the gates in terms of freedom to leave and get off campus rather than being restricted to staying on. Additionally, by establishing a policy that encourages student consumption such as the use of student IDs or providing discounts for students at local businesses students would become much more aware of local businesses and would not need to rely on spending an Uber, having a car on campus, or word of mouth at Trinity. Moreover, given this policy set by the school, it drastically affects how students interact with the community. Ultimately, this policy pushes Trinity further away from the local community and creates a large gap between local businesses and students.

While Trinity connects students through its community engagement projects, the policies in place limit them from fully connecting students to the local community by interacting with businesses along with interacting with organizations in the classroom. This would allow for the student to be fully immersed in Hartford and position the college as a full neighbor to the community as well.

Though this is the case, the school can work around it as a student above mentioned a way around by offering a shuttle service to Downtown Hartford on Friday and Saturday nights that run throughout the night, which would give students the option of experiencing and

connecting with the city of Hartford outside of the classroom. Furthermore, this option bypasses the wall that is created by the lack of transportation. Trinity does have a working shuttle, but you need to call it and it does not run as often and only goes to the Flatbush Plaza, not to local businesses around Hartford. So, by enhancing the shuttle system students would have more access to the Hartford area. Similarly, this would alleviate some of the struggles of not having a car as well, as a student said, “Trinity kids have their spots they go to and that’s if they have a car, usually a lot of Trinity kids are more likely to stay on campus if they don’t have a car because it is pretty hard to uber into Hartford and sort of figure out from there” (Duprau). But with a running campus shuttle, these issues would be solved, and students would be much more aware of local businesses.

Another way students would become aware of local businesses would be through the school. Straying away from advertising and promoting local businesses has significantly impacted the way students interact with the community. Likewise, without access to a car students are thus spending more money on Ubers with no viable alternative. Therefore, students want to see advertisements as many more students would go to businesses including themselves. “If businesses were advertised more, more students would go, and we would also know about it. I just found out about El Sarape, and it is a 5–10-minute walk down the street” (Person 3). In terms of what advertisements students want to see, a student said, “I think as far as advertising it is tough to do, but I can see doing posters around. But honestly, I think the best way to get a college student to pay attention is to offer deals like your first pizza is 15 bucks off” (Person 5). The concept of Trinity running deals for students is very appealing and something that would attract students while simultaneously making students aware of what is available to them. By doing this, Trinity can make students aware of what is around them and allow them to take

advantage of the city of Hartford. Further giving students resources and promoting discounts to students as the Tripod did previously, students would become much more interactive with the community. Similarly, this would align Trinity more with what it says it does surrounding community engagement efforts. “I also think too if the school advertised deals for students to incentivize them like at El Sarape a Taco Tuesday night with 15% percent off or something, just things like that to again make businesses known and encourage students to go, because lack of awareness is the biggest issue” (Person 4). Offering deals to students, would do two things and solve a major issue on campus, it would make students know of different businesses that are outside of their comfort zone, and it would make Trinity more aligned with their mission of developing students to be global citizens. Further, by partnering with local businesses Trinity can develop policy to continually incentivize student consumption and open the door for partnerships outside of the classroom by backing local businesses, which Bridger and Alter (2006) argue.

In terms of reaching students advertisements and promotion of these businesses are incredibly important. For one student they thought the best place for this would be, “I think by Mather would be best. There's obviously a bunch of flyers already in Mather, especially in The Cave. But I think that central quad areas where a lot of students tend to go is a great place, they could promote these smaller local businesses in Hartford” (Person 2). By placing these ads in a central location at Trinity would make a majority of students see them and have the option to go to them or not but giving them the option of a deal going on in a few days or even a restaurant review would highly increase the exposure of businesses to students. Similarly, another student had a contrasting idea regarding the promotion of local businesses:

Honestly, I think posters and emails are great but realistically in my opinion I do not really pay attention to them. It is this lengthy email and I have a million other emails to

get to, so I sort of discard that. But I think if the school started a text message system that informs students a couple days before an event, that says this is what is going on at Parkville or the restaurant that replaced Trinity Restaurant, and even texts that inform students about local deals going on at restaurants around campus would help massively in getting students to go to local businesses. (Person 3)

Given that our society has grown to be glued to a screen, this option of a text messaging system created by the school, with a short quick message about a deal going on at a local restaurant or even an upcoming event at Parkville or another establishment seems to be a great viable option. Also, since the school does send all-school emails oftentimes, they are very rarely looked at due to the reasons spoken to above about other pertinent emails from professors or club leaders, inboxes get very overcrowded. Thus, designing a policy such as a text message system that students can opt in or out of, would also solve the issue surrounding the lack of awareness of local businesses. This system would also provide an incentivization for students to go as I alluded to earlier. Since students are receiving a discount, it takes away the need to leave campus and spend much more money at a restaurant in West Hartford. Ultimately, it would keep students within the Hartford area and allow the college to fully grow the Hartford economy as a partner and neighbor in the community.

In the same light encouraging students to go to local businesses will take away the bias students have towards the area surrounding Trinity. One student commented on this by saying, "The other day my roommates and I went to El Sarape, and it was really fun, and opened my own eyes to the bias I had because I felt very safe, and it was probably a mistake I made early on" (Person 3). In this instance, we see a regrettable thought of a student for not taking advantage of

the businesses around the area, but it is solely because this student did not know about them. But this may change with the development of a new app College Bites.

*College Bites: By the Student, For the Student*

This app is a one-stop shop for Trinity students to have access to a multitude of businesses in the Hartford area, along with some in West Hartford and Glastonbury by partnering with restaurants to offer discounts on meals for college students. In an interview with one of the founders, they said “The reason College Bites was created is because I did an internship in Downtown Hartford with Infosys and realized the area was cool, with a lot of really good restaurants around. I wanted to make this available to everyone” (Person 6). Thus, College Bites was soft launched with over 60 restaurant partnerships. For the restaurants, it is free to join with the stipulation they offer an exclusive discount for college students. These discounts range from 20% off of a meal or 10% off drinks or offering a discount on certain days.

The main mission of the app is “to be for the student. By offering 20% off a meal at Max Downtown when a student pays \$10-15 bucks on an Uber both ways, saving a couple of bucks is ideal. The value we see in the app is to allow students to be able to have access and know of the many businesses Hartford has to offer” (Person 6) This is a very exciting solution for the issue at Trinity regarding students flocking to West Hartford to spend money rather than staying in the Hartford area, as this app provides room to connect students and local businesses. Moreover, this is something that businesses want to see happen, “Even though managers are tough to track down and it took multiple times walking into businesses, when I explained the idea and how it was free to join business owners were excited about the opportunity” (Person 6) College Bites serves as a great way to bridge the gap between local businesses and Trinity, which has been nearly non-existent over the past decade.



To bridge the gap between Hartford and Trinity is something that is critical for the college to successfully achieve their goal of connecting students with Hartford. As I mentioned it does this on an educational level, but there is an additional aspect to community engagement that has been neglected. Ultimately, in years prior students did have a plethora of resources at their disposal when deciding where to go off campus through advertising in the Tripod offering deals and just highlighting local businesses. Moreover, with Trinity Restaurant within walking distance and a safe alternative for students, it was a common place to go to for group dinners and just a good meal right off of campus. In hindsight this restaurant has been replaced but the new restaurant has not received the same traction as its predecessor, based on a variety of factors.

## Chapter 5: A Beloved Business Gone & What Trinity Can Do

### Trinity Restaurant: A Beloved Business No Longer

Even though Trinity does not account for student spending when it positions itself to the rest of the community, this was not always the case. As I previously mentioned the Trinity Tripod was a great resource for students as it would frequently highlight local businesses and would showcase deals for students on a given day of the week. Further, this allowed for students to become very aware of what was around Trinity in terms of going off campus whereas now it is very difficult to determine the “spots” to go to that other Trinity kids go to. This culture of Trinity kids going to certain places, as one student said “Trinity students sort of have their favorites. You know there is a lot down Broad Street with really good food and in West Hartford as well that have been sort of passed down through class years from friends, family, and word of mouth,” (Person 5) is highly noticeable. But Trinity does not seem to stray away from this, and they continue to push the places that students are comfortable with, and ultimately further an already present disconnect between its students and the Hartford community.

This disconnect seems to have been inherently noticeable, but ever since the pandemic it has been furthered based on various school policies regarding COVID. As for students on campus it was very difficult to leave campus, considering a group of freshmen were removed from campus for leaving the school during the height of the pandemic in the fall. Trinity at this point was very concerned with keeping students on campus to not infect the rest of the community, which was a great initiative, but it ultimately set in motion students finding places to go on their own merit, and that inevitably turned to West Hartford as it is a nicer area than the immediate area off campus. Similarly at this point in time for those on campus were fortunate to have Trinity Restaurant at their disposal.

If you were to walk up to any senior or recent alumni and asked them if they have been to Trinity Restaurant at least once, I bet everyone would say yes. Trinity Restaurant was such a large part of the Trinity community up until the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic in 2020 hit almost every small and local business very hard, but it ultimately did not allow for Trinity Restaurant to continue. “After Trin Res closed, I think just discussions around that restaurant in general kind of flew out the window, at least for me and my friend group,” (Person 1) a student commented in an interview. Because before COVID and even during the pandemic it was a hot spot for Trinity students because the family-owned restaurant catered itself to the larger Trinity community, “Because of the selective clients attracted by Trinity restaurant, the owners charge more per item than other restaurants in the area. This reverse process of ‘catering to your audience’ results in the restaurant continuing to attract a particular clientele” (Global cities sandbox 2015). This particular clientele was indeed Trinity students, and it was very rare to see someone from the local community there as the prices were indeed higher, but also this was an environment where students would feel safe when going off campus.

Since Trinity Restaurant was such a student-centric atmosphere and environment, and the fact it was within walking distance to campus, made it stand out to other businesses around Hartford. As other local businesses did not cater themselves to students at Trinity as much as Trinity Restaurant did and given the importance of safety for students most did not feel the need to step outside of this atmosphere and explore other areas in Hartford. Further, the other businesses in the same proximity around campus did not offer the same type of atmosphere that was sit-down and as good of food, as well as these other businesses such as ABC Pizza, Campus Pizza, and Papa Johns catered more to the local community rather than the college. So based on

this fact and students looking for a place to interact with each other to build a sense of community, it was a no-brainer for students to choose Trin Res over others.

Given that Trinity Restaurant was so close to campus students it was a very safe spot for students to go. People could walk there very easily, and it would take away the need to spend money on an uber and going somewhere more expensive, it kept money flowing in Hartford. Moreover, given that it had Trinity in the name of the business, it put in the back of people's minds that this is affiliated with the college in some way, and it was such a hot spot for Trinity students that would go multiple times. Person 4 touched on this topic by saying, "With Trin Res, I would go all the time and it was awesome, I heard about it from the upperclassmen on my team. I think people went because for me it had Trinity in its name, so it makes me think it is affiliated with the school along with me feeling safe. It was also just part of the culture at the school during COVID, so it gave us something to do as well". (Cassie) There are a few things in this that are worth noting, one of them being the safety factor as Person 3 mentioned it is well known the area around Trinity is not the greatest, but having something so close to campus and a business that many Trinity people went to make students feel that much safer. Furthermore, it was something fun to do during COVID when the school was practically shut down in terms of events on campus and socializing in student dorms, so the only thing students were able to do was go off campus when policies changed, and Trinity Restaurant was a main place to do so. What this allowed for was the ability to develop a strong sense of community at Trinity College, which is a very well-known facet of the school. The community of Bantams is incredibly strong while at the school and even with alumni.

Now this does not happen overnight it rather can be traced to social capital theory. This theory explains ties between individuals and their overall development of understanding subject

matter and growth as an individual. In a study on conducted by Shane Dawson in the Journal of Educational Technology & Society noted that there was a positive relationship between the close tie's students have with each other to their overall sense of community. Moreover, an interesting takeaway involves a student's pre-existing social networks influence the social networks they seek out and require on an individual basis, but ultimately a sense of community is based upon the relationships one has with one another. (Dawson 2008) Trinity Restaurant allowed this to take place given many students who were freshmen were put into singles as very few rooms were available with roommates. Thus, going to Trinity Restaurant was a great place to meet people as well as foster a sense of community. Person 1 alluded to this by saying, "Since I was a freshman during COVID you would always see Trinity kids there, and you were able to have the social atmosphere as well and the fact that it was so close to campus made it feel much safer. Like nobody was going to drive because you could just walk there. I ultimately think that was a large part of community building and my experiences through college. (Person 1) Based on this was a place for community building, it was always talked about amongst Trinity students.

Trinity Restaurant always surfaced throughout the school during the week as something to do, and it was a great place to go for those on athletic teams with large groups as well as large friend groups looking for somewhere to eat on a weekend. Person 5 alluded to this, "I think it was a good sit-down spot close to Trinity, and especially for group outings it is hard to find a spot in West Hartford or Downtown Hartford that can fit everyone, and also it was easily walkable and very safe for students" (Person 5). In this instance, we see the close proximity to campus as an appealing factor as well its accessibility for large groups, which furthers the sense of community by students by being involved in a social atmosphere at a time when that was very limited. In addition, the food was spectacular at Trinity Restaurant which is always an important

factor for college students and around campus students would give mini reviews to create awareness for the business and encourage students to go. Person 1 also touched on this when discussing how Trinity Restaurant become aware to them, “For me I definitely heard about Trinity Restaurant throughout the school, other students would ask me if I have been and since I hadn’t at the time, they would rave about how great the food is and the atmosphere it brought” (Person 1). This concept of student-based advertisements and awareness of businesses is still apparent today as we see students talking more about the West Hartford area as a great place to go. Yet since it was during the pandemic, staying close to campus was a priority for the college and because Trinity Restaurant was so close a lot of students would end up going.

Furthering how students heard about Trinity Restaurant, it also comes down its benefit of being extremely close to campus. As Person 5 visited the school and happened to come across it. “I would go to Trinity Restaurant for big group dinners and whenever my parents came into town, I heard about it actually when I came to visit Trinity in August before freshman year, so when we were looking for a restaurant, we found Trin Res and it was really good food, and if you went at the right time, it was never too crowded either.” (Person 5). By being so close to Trinity, it allowed the business to flourish and cater itself more to the community of students. Its location on Zion Street makes “this popular mom-and-pop feel business stands strong because of its location” (Global Cities Sandbox 2015). Its location was a great appeal to its students as I alluded to earlier, but since COVID the restaurant has shut down. Instead, it has been taken over by American Mexican Diner.

This new restaurant took over in the same location but ultimately it has not had the same buzz around it on campus as Trinity Restaurant, and not many students know about it. In

interviews when asked why American Mexican Diner has not had the same traction as Trinity Restaurant the answers are intriguing. Person 1 said:

I personally have never been to this new one or heard of it. After Trin Res closed, I think just discussions around that restaurant in general kind of flew out the window, at least for me and my friend group. But. I don't know, I think it also goes back down to the advertising I feel that trin res was more advertised through Trinity. It was more discussed among students, and everyone knew it was the place to go and things like that, but this new restaurant that took its place just doesn't seem to draw on the students the same way as Trin Res even though it is the same model. (Person 1)

In this instance, we see a similar story to local businesses in general among students, which is students promote businesses among themselves and since American Mexican Diner has not been talked about much throughout the school, students do not even know about it even one who is in their senior year. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness created by Trinity surrounding this new restaurant, which ultimately leaves students to not consider this as a place to go anymore.

With that said though the same story is also told about the college itself, concerning not promoting local businesses for students, because ever since this restaurant took over the school did not mention it or even make students aware of it. In turn, it has caused very little attention from students and what once was a popular spot, it has escaped people's minds. "Honestly, I do not know, but I think not a lot of people know about it because I think people heard Trinity Restaurant closed down and it escaped people's minds. But I have not heard a lot of chatter around people going" (Person 5). The lack of knowledge surrounding American Mexican Diner is one of the main reasons people are not going there, but also another main reason that we see here is not many people are even talking about it. So, in an environment where word of mouth is

incredibly crucial for students finding out about businesses and restaurants, and Trinity not making an effort to promote American Mexican Diner, it has gone without notice. But even since it has gone unnoticed Person 5 still wants to go there as he has been previously, “I went when it first opened my sophomore year, and if I remember it was pretty good. So, I’d be interested to go back and check it out as I hear it is great for brunch or even talk to those that have been to see how it is” (Person 5). Here we see a perfect example of the Trinity culture surrounding local businesses come to its benefit as by talking to those who have gone, it provides a much clearer picture of what to expect and if it is even worth going away from the usual spots for Trinity kids to go. These usual spots for Trinity began to flourish with the removal of restrictions due to the pandemic.

Moreover, another reason is the ability for students to have a car and the slowing down of the COVID pandemic as students have moved through the school. As Person 4 said:

I think kids ultimately do not know about it because during COVID when I was here, it was a way for Trinity to keep students on campus instead of leaving campus so that’s a possibility for why American Mexican Diner hasn’t had the same traction with students. And once COVID finished we had access to more businesses when the school opened up more, so now I honestly do not really think of that place and consider that a place to go.

(Person 4)

The opening of campus for students unveiled a lot of possibilities in terms of where students can go, and since the school lacks in providing advertisements word of mouth took stride around campus. From hearing about restaurants and areas to go to from students who were on campus prior to COVID, the area around Trinity fell by the waste side. Similarly, for freshman on campus during the pandemic and with the school’s policy, they were unable to have a car, but



once campus opened up more, we see more students having their cars on campus and being able to access more areas outside of Trinity. Person 3 touched on this as well as the role safety plays in decision-making:

Now I think a lot more students have cars on campus, and because it is (Trinity Restaurant) gone not a single freshman would know what Trin Res was or even the restaurant that took its place, I do not even know what is there now. I think ultimately too over the last few years we have had intense experiences with safety hazards, so I think that raised the stakes of Trinity trying to keep us out of the Hartford area. (Person 3)

Since the pandemic was such a grave issue around the world, Trinity's policies were very pro stay on campus, and we even see some of the same situations based on safety incidents. As a couple of years ago a student passed away from a car accident by crossing a street by the Tap Café across from campus on New Britain Ave. So, because of this it is strange that American Mexican Diner has not taken off or the school has not pushed it as much considering its great location within walking distance, and many Trinity students used to go. But since students have their favorites and it is what's comfortable for them, students still choose to go to the safer but more expensive West Hartford.

Along with this, it is worth noting that Trinity pushes students away from the Hartford area, and this is done in multiple ways, but the main reason is the lack of promotion of Hartford businesses and more promotion of businesses in West Hartford. We see this unfold through the Trinity College website, as there is very little information surrounding the Hartford area and attractions to check out. There is one link to "Hartford.com" with places to go and things to do, but primarily the discussion of Hartford and Trinity is prevalent on its website of its educational partnerships with the community, not local businesses.

Rather when talking about West Hartford, there is a decent amount of promotional activity. Specifically, the Office of International Students and Scholars dedicated an entire article surrounding West Hartford. This piece discusses valuable ways to get there as well as a persuasive tone in regard to its shopping and entertainment. Moreover, it said, “This area is very walkable and safe, even at night” (Trincoll.edu). The notion of West Hartford being safe, especially at night, implicitly tells students that the school would want them to go there rather than stay in the immediate Hartford area. Throughout all of its pieces on Hartford, there is not a single mention of this being a safe place or making students feel safe when venturing out to restaurants.

#### *Catering to Student Needs and Wants*

Given that Trinity Restaurant was a hub for students to go to during COVID, many of their needs were being met at a time when it was a period of isolation. It gave students social interaction and an opportunity to further their sense of community with each other. Further with the removal of these businesses, and the college pushing students to leave the areas as many interviewees have said regarding West Hartford and other areas outside of the Hartford area, Trinity Students’ needs were still being met but just in a different way. Even still students do want to see more businesses promoted in the Hartford area, as when asked what businesses students would want to see Person 1 said, “I think local restaurants like I was saying with like El Sarape or something because I wouldn't have thought twice about it if it wasn't going there for a birthday. But you know, like just giving information about what is available, because I honestly have no idea what restaurants are around us so I think that would be helpful to students” (Person 1). Here we see the need for wanting to go to businesses around Trinity because the food is fantastic, but students primarily have no idea they exist unless they hear about from someone

else or go there for an event. Ultimately there is an inherent push for students to go to West Hartford, but in reality, it is all they know because that is mainly what is discussed around campus.

Yet since it is mainly discussed around campus, it highlights the power of word of mouth in a concept called word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM). This is an incredibly powerful way of advertising that is heavily present on Trinity's campus, because "there is no more powerful communication technique than one person talking to another" (Barber and Wallace 2009). Further Barber and Wallace from the American Libraries go on to discuss WOMM benefits, as they say, it is real and immediate, it's not a pitch but rather a personal suggestion from someone you know and trust, it is honest, and since people love to share good experiences as well as share experiences it is a very catching and persuasive means of advertising and communication. And we see this throughout Trinity and the anecdotes provided by interviewees and even in my own experience. As a senior, I have had the experience of going to a lot of businesses and restaurants in and out of the Hartford area. Specifically in the Hartford area many of these places I have been to have been from other classmates telling me about the great experience that they had. As Barber and Wallace mentioned, once I heard of a great experience, I immediately went to tell my own friends about it to further the discussion of a new restaurant to go and try out. But is this enough? It does not seem like it is because Trinity still does not form policies that encourage student consumption, so Trinity students are left to rely on word of mouth and leave the Frog Hollow neighborhood when going off campus.

*Trinity Website: Only Resource for Students*

It is clear that Trinity very clearly views itself as a neighbor to Hartford in terms of its educational partnerships and opportunities. Through CHER, it does a fantastic job of this by

offering students the ability to partner with a local organization in Hartford to work on community-based research and academic partnerships. This is key for Trinity to fulfill its mission of connecting Trinity with Hartford, but in reality, there is another aspect that goes unnoticed, which is connecting students to Hartford as consumers. Ultimately there is not enough of awareness created around local businesses in Hartford for students to become involved in and given that Trinity pushes students towards West Hartford rather than the immediate area students disregard Hartford as a place of consumption.

Yet, on Trinity's website there are resources for students, but the question is why do students need to go out of their way to search for these instead of having them at their disposal from their first steps on campus? The areas that Trinity specifically promotes on its website are Downtown Hartford, West Hartford, and Parkville. The college offers a promotional page for businesses in all three of these areas through the Office of International Students and Scholars. This office provides transportation and highlights many restaurants for students. By offering a free bus pass to students, they are able to experience the exciting opportunities that Downtown Hartford has to offer, such as the bustling Pratt Street. This is a great street, with a multitude of restaurants and entertainment options. Trinity highlights *Hartford Prints*, *Bloom Bake Shoop*, *Hartford Stage*, *Max Downtown*, *Salute*, and *City Steam Brewery*. In terms of its restaurants, Trinity offers expensive options as well as cheaper options such as the brewery, but this is a great place for students to become aware of what Hartford has to offer. Although many students still do not know these businesses even exist because they are only promoted on the website, not on campus or through other policy options that students developed.

Further, while the college offers resources for students on its website, still a lot of the information is tailored to the student on an educational basis. On the admission page of the

website, there is a few resources for what to do in Hartford, but mostly the resources are based on what Trinity does as a neighbor in the community around education. There are highlights of the Liberal Arts Action Lab, the Legislative Internship Program, Trinfo Café, and community learning initiatives. All of these opportunities that Trinity offers, is aligned with what President Berger-Sweeney alluded to in the Summit Plan in terms of connecting students with the city of Hartford. Moreover, community learning is a viable part of the Trinity curriculum and offers students the ability to be involved and make an impact on the Hartford community. But this furthers the fact that Trinity neglects the student as a consumer and makes an impact economically in Hartford.

Rather than students having to search these local businesses on their own, it would make more sense for the college to highlight these restaurants in Downtown Hartford in the discussion surrounding its position as a neighbor to Hartford community groups on an educational basis. At this point, it would allow Trinity to see itself as an institution that fosters community engagement on all levels, rather than educationally. Similarly, it would create an environment where student consumption is encouraged in Frog Hollow, as it was previously.

*Conclusion: Policies Matter for Students*

Throughout this thesis, I have made the argument that Trinity College's relationship to Hartford is on an educational basis and neglects the students as consumers within the local economy. Now this has been shown based on a variety of factors; the Summit Plan's initiative to connect students to the Hartford community in the classroom, building up the downtown campus with the Liberal Arts Action Lab, the lack of awareness of local businesses in Hartford for students so they are forced to rely on word of mouth, and ultimately the college pushing students outside of the immediate area and into West Hartford. Yet while this is the case the inherent

cause of this is clearer, as changes in school policy have an immediate effect on the ways students interact with the community.

The college policies that are put in place have certainly changed throughout my four years at Trinity but there is one that has stayed the same. That is the community learning and civic engagement components of the curriculum. Through CHER, Trinity offers many community learning-based classes in three categories: service, products, and research. In each of these sections are classes that fulfill them, for example with education. Education 200 gives students the opportunity to work with students and assist the teachers with teaching the course three hours a week. Similarly in the Community Action Gateway freshmen can enroll in, students partner with local organizations to put together promotional videos such as with CACT 101. Even though community learning is set for specific classes, other classes will also include this in their syllabi to foster civic engagement between students and the community. The community learning initiatives involved in the Trinity curriculum are key components to the Summit Plan of 2018, which was released ahead of the bicentennial.

This plan is crucial for the college to continue on the right path into the college's third century. Additionally, in this plan, there is an entire goal situated on connecting Trinity with the Hartford region. To properly achieve this goal, Trinity is focused on furthering its landscape as an educator in the Hartford area by revamping its research capabilities, courses, internship opportunities to make community engagement a pillar of Trinity. Off of that, Trinity is focused on the development of long-term partnerships in the region that support local economic development. This is pertinent to continue its role in the larger Hartford community, yet these partnerships are to boost the economic development of Hartford through developing the youth educationally and providing necessary resources for growth. While this is extremely important, it

is only one piece of the puzzle regarding economic development, the other piece is completely overlooked; student consumption. Ultimately though this policy pushes students to think about themselves as a member of the community in the classroom, not outside of it. Through various examples given, it is clear the college is focused on only being a sound educational partner, rather than utilizing students as consumers to also boost the development of Hartford.

As I alluded to earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic that struck across the entire world put everyone in a state of shock and isolation. This was the same for higher education, as during the pandemic Trinity instituted their own set of policies. Students were unable to be in a group larger than 10, could not be in other students' dorms that often, had to test regularly, wear a mask during all instruction and certain periods all around campus. So ultimately as a student during this time there was very limited opportunity for students to interact with the community as a whole. There was one outlet though, which was Trinity Restaurant. Multiple interviewees stated during this time that Trinity Restaurant was often a place for students to congregate for social interaction as policies changed throughout the year. But because of this policy, Trinity students were pushed to stay on campus more often than it is now.

Moreover, as the pandemic began to lessen after 2020 and 2021, students had much more access to what Hartford and areas around campus had to offer. At this point, there was a major shift of students who often would stay on campus and within the Hartford area to more students getting off campus to West Hartford and Parkville. As the college began to open up students moved farther and farther away from Hartford when they went out to spend money. We see this in the conducted interviews, as more students as they got older began to have access to a car, so they gained more freedom to explore the area. The policy instituted by the college regarding cars on campus prohibits freshmen from being able to have one, whether or not they would be able to.

This policy for freshmen ultimately furthers an already present gap between the Hartford community and its students in terms of expenditure patterns and spending money in the region. Part of this policy is the lack of space on campus for every single student to have a car, or a student being unable to afford the cost of a parking pass but there are other options such as a bus pass that goes directly to Downtown Hartford, and to Corbin's Corner for the West Farms Mall (Bantam Bus Pass), but there is much more to the city than these two places. Additionally, when students can have a car, they are left with relying on word of mouth among students to determine where the best places to go off campus. So ultimately based on resources given by the school and the comfortability of students, West Hartford is often that place where students are driven to go.

Further, this policy inherently keeps students on campus, but since they are unable to leave students also become less aware of the great businesses in the vibrant city of Hartford. The concept of awareness is a major issue in Trinity's relationship with Hartford that is only pushed further away based on school policies. One way this occurs is with the Trinity Tripod, the Tripod is the school newspaper that has its own budget, so it is very difficult for them to have members of the paper go to all the local restaurants and then review it in the weekly editions because it is expensive. Rather than the Tripod doing this, Trinity itself can serve as the bridge between the Tripod and local businesses. The college initiating contact and asking to run advertisements for free at the school or in the Tripod, is a great way for students to become more aware of these businesses instead of going 5-10 miles away to get food and interact with the community. Initially, the Tripod was a great resource for students to become aware of the many businesses around Trinity's campus in Hartford, but because advertisements and restaurant reviews have gone away, students are left empty-handed to figure it out on their own.

*Skidmore College: Policy That Works*



A way that Trinity can eventually grow to change this dilemma and gap on campus, is to look towards Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. Skidmore is a very similar college to Trinity, with the same demographics of its student body but on a slightly larger scale. A major difference between the two schools ultimately is the location of both institutions. Skidmore is located in Saratoga Springs, which is a tourist destination in the summer for horse races and is a town. Trinity, on the other hand, is located in a city, the capital of Connecticut for that matter. So, with this, there are inherent differences in the environments that students face regarding safety. Nevertheless, given the liberal arts curriculum of these two institutions, Skidmore does a great job of recognizing its students as consumers in the larger community. One of the ways that Skidmore does this is through its website and its partnerships with the community. The college has “worked to create an environment with ‘no walls or gates, for we want the world to enter’” (Skidmore.edu). In this instance, Skidmore is presenting itself as a neighbor to everyone, and it is important to note the notion of no walls or gates which implies no isolation from the community. Whereas at Trinity, as Person 1 stated it is felt as though Trinity is a gated community, separated from what is around us. This notion is furthered by the policies implemented at Trinity, that push students away from the Hartford region or to stay on campus during the COVID pandemic. Yet at Skidmore, this is not the case. Instead, it is encouraged for students to be involved in the community both educationally and as consumers.

As another liberal arts school there is similar community learning initiatives and opportunities for students. A major one being the Skidmore-Saratoga Consulting Partnership (SSCP), which allows a highly accomplished group of students to gain hands on consulting experience with the regions for-profit and non-profit businesses. This is similar to the opportunities presented by Trinity with Infosys at the downtown campus at Constitution Plaza.

Both of these opportunities and programs create partnerships with the local region to realize growth and the institution's footprint in the region as well. Moreover, similar to the civic engagement projects at Trinity with the partnership at HMTCA or community learning involved in the curriculum, Skidmore as well offers similar opportunities. A major way Skidmore does this is through Skidmore Cares, which is an initiative where members of the Skidmore community do community service work in the larger Saratoga Springs region. This is an annual program that "furthers our connection to the greater Saratoga community and brings us together in the season of giving thanks. The need among our neighbors remains significant, and Skidmore Cares provides a wonderful opportunity to offer our support and generosity" (President Conner Skidmore.edu). Over the last year the college donated 3,400 food items and more than 1,700 school and personal care supplies to multiple Saratoga organizations. Through sporting events on campus during this program, many canned food drives are organized as well as donation boxes where the program raised more than \$15,000 that was matched by a trustee. This program fulfills what the college sets out of being welcome to all and reiterates what President Conner said about having the resources to give back to the greater community. In addition, Trinity College does a similar program every year in its athletic program around Giving Day, which is an initiative that involves sports teams going to areas of the Hartford community in need and offering support.

Yet while both Trinity and Skidmore educationally and through community service serve as active members of the community, Trinity falls short of Skidmore in making students viable economic actors in the region. Skidmore fulfills this through its policy around the use of the student ID card. Now it should be said that some businesses in Hartford offer the availability of students to use their student IDs at various businesses, but it is not widely known and often to

figure out that it's even an option is again through word of mouth. Yet at Skidmore, students can use their student IDs at multiple businesses in Saratoga. This process allows students to pay with their ID at markets, restaurants, convenience stores, and on Grub Hub. Now Grub Hub is a mobile delivery service, and at Skidmore, students can utilize their ID cards as a form of payment outside of campus, whereas at Trinity the ID card is only available for on-campus food options.

What is different with the ID card at Skidmore than Trinity, is the businesses involved are made aware to students through the off-campus merchants page on their website. To take advantage of this, students simply need to relay their student ID number to the worker at a given restaurant, and the bill is deducted from the Skidmore ID account. Further, even if students do not know that you can use the ID for off-campus vendors, Skidmore makes it noticeable for all by signifying a logo of a Skidmore ID at various locations where it is accepted, so there is no confusion on whether or not is accepted. This system incentivizes students to go and interact with the larger community off campus as a consumer, by being able to use your ID it reduces the need for another form of payment and allows the college to fully market itself as a community partner.

#### *What Trinity Should Do*

As I mentioned above, Trinity does do this with some businesses, but it is very hard to determine what businesses are accepting your ID because the college does not advertise this to its students. Yet even still, many students at Trinity feel that this would be a great way for the college to incentivize students to go to businesses in Hartford, and it would also incentivize Trinity to do so as they are benefitting its students while simultaneously developing partnerships with local business owners. Ultimately this will allow for the gap to be shortened between

Trinity and Hartford on a consumption basis, as students will become more aware of what is available to them when stepping right off of campus. Person 4 touched on this subject in an interview by saying, “I also think that if there was a way to use our meal plans or student I.D. card would be such a game changer. For example, I think campus pizza would be a great one or even Papa Johns. At my sister’s school, you can go to the Starbucks across the street and use your I.D., but here at Trinity we do not have that, and I wish we did” (Person 4). In this instance, we see the need to be able to use the Trinity Student ID at businesses directly off campus, and this is felt of other interviewees as well. Person 2 said, “Another idea would be at these small restaurants to use your student ID. And I know it’s just a lot easier to do. You have to use it everywhere at school, so I mean I think if the school could coordinate with these local businesses to use our school ID would be great” (Person 2). Here we see the convenience factor of being able to use your student ID, because since students need to have it on them at all times to get into their dorms being able to use it at various local businesses like Skidmore does, would create an environment where it is easier to go out to a business in Hartford that offers this opposed to going to West Hartford.

In addition, from Person 4 we see another school offering the same thing at Skidmore by usage of your student ID, so based on that it seems common for schools to be able to use their student IDs at off campus vendors, but Trinity does not do that other than Sam’s Food Stores. But at Sam’s it is not advertised to students, so many students do not even know that you can do that. Person 1 said when asked if Trinity made students more aware of businesses, if the student would go more:

I think so. I think making them aware would be the first step, and then maybe also offering the ability to use your Bantam bucks I know Sam's offers that, but I didn't know

that until last year and I still have met seniors in my class that don't know that you can use bantam bucks at Sam's, which is just baffling to me because it's right down the street and that's where almost every student goes for anything he can't get at The Cave. (Person 1)

In this instance we see exactly that, a senior at Trinity who did not find out about this availability until junior year, and even noted some seniors do not know this is an opportunity. Ultimately this falls onto Trinity for not making this aware and disincentivizing students to remain in the local region when spending their money. There are multiple areas that Trinity can coordinate with to offer the use of the student ID card at, considering that Trinity realizes Downtown Hartford and Parkville as a common area for students, offering the use of a student ID for payment would exponentially increase the amount of Trinity students going to these businesses.

This is because there is already a given need of students who want to be able to use their student ID at local businesses and other areas in Hartford based on convenience and becoming more aware of the businesses that surround Trinity. Moreover, this would solve the issue of students leaving the Hartford area to spend money, and it would allow the college to be a viable economic actor on all accounts; academically and economically when considering the students. But based on the college pushing students to West Hartford a lot and Parkville, rather than the immediate area off campus, whether or not this is something the college wants to do remains to be seen. The one thing is there is a large gap between Trinity students and the local Hartford area in terms of consumption and expenditure patterns, but Trinity creating a policy that incentivizes student wants through the use of the Trinity ID card and creating awareness of businesses ultimately allows Trinity to be a full neighbor to the community. Moreover, since policy has an impact on student interaction, specifically at Trinity, creating this policy will make students not

have to rely on word of mouth, and will establish awareness of local businesses to students and encourage Trinity students to remain local when spending money rather than leaving the Frog Hollow neighborhood.

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