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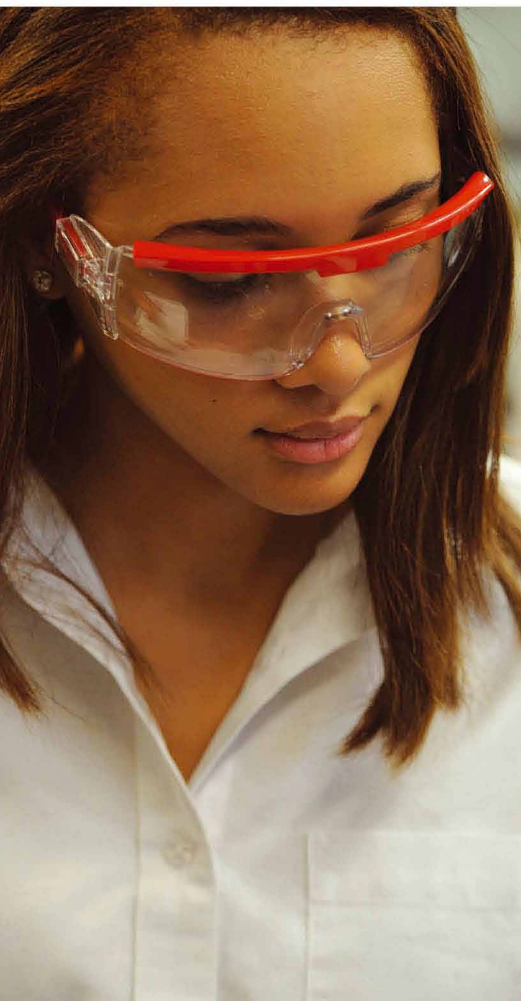


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TRENDS FOR THE FUTURE



special section



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Trinity High School Prepares Students for Success



Pre-Professional Internships Prepare Students for College and Workplace Success

At Trinity High School in Garfield Heights, Ohio, students attend rigorous college-preparatory courses in a four-by-four block schedule four days a week and work in an internship closely aligned with their career aspirations on the fifth day

Carla Fritsch

Like many other high school students across the country, Joseph Tonich, Katelyn Ali and James Liptow compete on the athletic field, showcase their talents in co-curricular activities and prepare for college in honor level and advanced placement classes.

What makes them different?

One day each week, Joseph works with the Cleveland Clinic's Spine Research Laboratory on the Traumatic Head Injury Neurological Quantifier (THINQ) system. He is helping to create an optical map of a virtual head-mouth guard system as part of a research study on concussion injuries.

When Gabriella Huszarik, executive director of the Garfield Heights Chamber of Commerce, needs promotional materials she contacts Katelyn, who designs the layout, writes the copy and then oversees the production of the brochures.

When a computer malfunctions at Marymount Hospital and an employee calls the help desk, James is at the other end of the line. He diagnoses the problem, fixes it and then logs the information to keep an accurate record of all computer maintenance and network repair issues.

These are just a few examples of

students' experiences in the new Pre-Professional Internship Program at Trinity High School in Garfield Heights, Ohio. Students attend rigorous college-preparatory courses in a four-by-four block schedule four days a week and work in an internship closely aligned with their career aspirations on the fifth day. Participating businesses and organizations pay Trinity an annual corporate sponsorship fee for the services of the interns, which, in turn, helps defray tuition expenses, keeping down the cost of a Catholic high school education. Corporate sponsor fees for interns vary with the skill level of the intern. Sponsors pay less for entry level sophomores than they do for seniors who have specialized skills in patient care, IT or graphic design.

In 2003, the school saw a 26 percent drop in the number of applications for the incoming freshman class. The closings and mergings of Catholic elementary schools, rising unemployment rates and tight competition from open-enrollment policies in some of the 20 other Catholic high schools in the area prompted the administration to take a serious look at the long-term viability of the school. Located in an inner-ring suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, Trinity High School traditionally served a blue-collar population from five coun-

PHOTO: CHARLENE PAPANIZOS



Senior Scott Bollinger, a graphic design intern with Trinity's in-house design and print shop, finishes the installation of a wall graphic at St. Michael School in Independence, Ohio. Scott worked with school administrators to create, produce and install an indoor environmental graphics campaign for the school featuring students and teachers.

ties across northeastern Ohio. Many of the graduates were the first in the family to attend college. Rising tuition costs made a Catholic high school education unaffordable to the families the school served. Although significant financial assistance is available for disadvantaged students in the Cleveland area, little is available to middle-class families who often have more than one child in a Catholic school. Faced with these economic realities, Trinity's board of trustees presented a two-fold charge to the administration: Secure and improve access to Catholic education for students the school traditionally served and enhance the students' post-secondary preparation.

Academic Standards Anchored in Real-World Applications

The design of the Pre-Professional Internship program capitalizes on current educational research. The American Diploma Project (www.achieve.org) recommends that all students engage in rigorous college-preparatory course-



PHOTO: BARB DOTTORE

Izabela Trybucki, a junior, interns as a patient care assistant at Marymount Hospital, a Cleveland Clinic hospital. Recently she served as a personal translator for a Polish patient who spoke very little English, and helped guide doctors through a series of tests and procedures with the patient.

work in order to be better prepared for college and workplace success. The recommendations also advise that academic standards be anchored in real-world applications that emphasize non-routine problem solving. All students enrolled in Trinity High School participate in the Pre-Professional Internship Program, although, unlike the Cristo Rey model, freshmen are not placed in an internship. Trinity freshmen spend their first year preparing for their internship placements that begin during the sophomore year and continue through grade 12. During that first year they are introduced to career exploration and acquisition of “soft skills” needed for workplace success. They master a variety of software programs and clerical skills so that they have something marketable to offer their corporate sponsor when they enter the program as sophomores.

Trinity makes an explicit tie between the students’ internship placements and their career interests and academic courses.

The 21st Century Workforce Commission, sponsored by the National Alliance of Businesses, states: “The current and future health of America’s 21st-century economy depends directly

on how broadly and deeply Americans reach a new level of literacy—21st century literacy—that includes strong academic skills, thinking, reasoning, teamwork skills and proficiency in using technology.”

Students at Trinity High School receive a report card at the end of each marking period. They also receive an extensive evaluation completed online by their workplace supervisors that examines their performance in 17 areas, including time management, interaction with fellow workers, critical thinking, planning and servant-leadership. Students use both the traditional academic report card and the workplace evaluations to set goals for personal and professional growth.

Research conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals indicates that schools organized around small learning communities that focus on career pathways maximize student engagement. Students enrolled in Trinity’s Pre-Professional Internship Program can choose from three intensive focus areas: health care, graphic design or information technology. College and career readiness, a program that focuses on career exploration, also is available.

Trinity High School conducted blind-research group studies during the design phase of the program. Parents expressed a strong desire for an array of choices in academic programs, co-curricular activities and spiritual growth opportunities for their children. In addition, they wanted more guidance for college and career readiness to cut down on the number of students who pursued six-year majors in “undecided” once enrolled in college.

To meet these objectives, the administration adjusted the school calendar, bell schedules, athletic practice times and co-curricular events so that students did not have to give up any of the components of normal high school life. Students are interviewed to learn about their career objectives and then placed in internships that align closely with those aspirations. Students experience three different year-long internship placements during their high school years, thereby enabling them to narrow down their career interests.

Preparing for Intern Placements

New courses were designed to prepare students for their internship placements. Students in the medi-

Trinity Graduates are Different

An excerpt from the school's website.

As Trinity graduates, our students are different. They can describe what it was like to scrub in on brain surgery, detail their research findings after studying the factors related to a mother choosing to breast-feed, describe the visual identity they created for a client or what it was like to have their own book published. At Trinity, we are transforming education and the futures of young adults.

The Vision

- Enrich a traditional college-preparatory education with an expanded network of professional learning sites
- Experience personal collaboration with a college-trained professional
- Refine career choices based on direct experience of workplace settings
- Increase professional skills and knowledge of business etiquette



The Value

- Real-world experience in a workplace setting
- Development of professional skills
- Cultivation of mentor relationship with top professionals
- Satisfaction of contributing almost 30 percent of annual tuition costs

cal track learn the skills needed to be certified as patient care assistants and provide hands-on patient care at area hospitals. Several of the students are bona-fide life-savers, having performed CPR on patients entering the emergency room in cardiac arrest. Others in the health care program work as veterinary assistants and run lab tests at area pet clinics.

Graphic design students learn what is involved to take a project from concept to completion. Working with industry-standard software like Adobe Creative Suite and Autodesk Maya, these interns provide graphic design and printing services to more than 100 businesses and organizations across northeast Ohio. Students who intern with Trinity's in-house design and print shop learn the workings of an advertising agency as they cater to many clients' differing needs, work on tight deadlines and foster new business.

Those interested in engineering and architecture master computer-aided drawing programs to produce scale drawings of mechanical devices and building plans. They also write user manuals for these programs for one corporate sponsor. The student-produced user manuals are much easier to understand than the ones developed by technically oriented engineers.

When students in the information

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technology program are not preparing for the CompTIA A+ Certification, Cisco CCNA and Microsoft Windows Server Certification, they provide IT support services to county government agencies and local congressional offices, as well as to nearby hospitals, a convent and assisted living and skilled care complexes.

Enthusiasm from the local business community has helped the Pre-Professional Internship Program grow. Area employers have expressed increasing concern about the lack of qualified applicants for positions and the continuous "brain drain" in northeast Ohio that results in the best and brightest candidates moving out of the area to

Emma Raulinaitis, a junior, is a first grade classroom aide at St. Barnabas School in Northfield, Ohio.

seek employment elsewhere. The Pre-Professional Internship Program will help keep talent in the region.

Jump Start on Careers

"The Pre-Professional Internship Program gives these young men and women a wonderful jump start on discovering their passion and career interests, while giving the region a great opportunity to retain our homegrown talent," said Matt LoPiccolo, vice president and chief information officer for the Swagelok Company of Solon, Ohio.

Tom Rybicki, president of Rybicki and Son Funeral Homes in Garfield Heights, Ohio, said of the program: "Small business serves as the backbone of many communities. This program offers growing enterprises a personally satisfying and cost-effective method for investing in tomorrow's community leaders."

At PSI (Partners for Success and Innovation) of Twinburg, Ohio, Founder and President Steve Rosenberg sponsors three interns who divide their time at five elementary schools. He chose to become a Corporate Angel because he believes in the program, the mission of Catholic schools and the huge value that outreach programs have on both the students and the integrity of parochial schools.

The Pre-Professional Internship Program is attracting more Corporate Sponsors each year. Additional Corporate Angels are being sought to enable placements at non-profit agencies that cannot afford to sponsor interns. The Cleveland Museum of Art is one such non-profit agency. Upon returning to the museum after a five-year absence for renovations, the curatorial department put a group of Trinity interns to work one day each week creating a new filing system, transferring object files into the system and conducting research. Their work is critical to the success of the museum because there are more than 5,000 object and administrative files. The interns have helped make the curatorial depart-



PHOTO: TYLAR SUTTON

Senior Joseph Tonich poses in front of a diagram for a kidney surgery device he helped invent. Currently, Tonich interns in Cleveland Clinic's Spine Research Laboratory and is contributing to research in support of the clinic's burgeoning "THINQ" (Traumatic Head Injury Neurologic Quantifier) system, a technology listed as one of the Cleveland Clinic's 10 most promising medical innovations for 2012.

ment's organizational process much easier.

Students see the value of their internship experiences as the key to setting them apart from their peers when applying to prestigious colleges and seeking competitive scholarships and financial aid dollars. Stephanie Nalepa, a senior at Trinity, believes that her internship experiences have given her a better work ethic and the ability to interact appropriately in a professional environment. She feels that the Pre-Professional Internship Program has made her into a more mature student who is better prepared for college.

To the best of our knowledge, Trinity is the only school that undertook this new model while maintaining a full array of co-curricular activities, competitive athletic teams and faith formation experiences as part of the traditional Catholic high school experience. And perhaps we are the only one nuts enough to have done it through a three-year phase-in process while we graduated the students who were enrolled under the traditional mode.

Now in its fourth year of implemen-

tation, the first group of students to enroll in the Pre-Professional Internship Program will graduate in June 2012. Numerous logistical challenges have been met over the course of the program's implementation. Teachers have expanded their instructional repertoire to incorporate more differentiated instruction and individualized lesson plans. Through the use of Moodle, class web pages, podcasts and the school's ever-expanding computer network, students don't miss a beat while at their internship.

Trinity's Pre-Professional Internship Program is listed in the 2012 CollegeKeys Compact catalog of effective practices, published by the College Board. Although the program has stabilized enrollment and rolled back tuition charged to parents, it is premature to discuss the long-term impact of the program upon the marketplace in northeast Ohio. However, small glimpses into the quiet building of the Kingdom of God can be seen in how the church's teaching about the dignity of work has been added to the curriculum. Students are reflecting upon

their internships and linking their faith life with their work experiences. Numerous dynamic relationships are being formed. Supervisors are learning what it means to mentor young people, teenagers are interacting with and recognizing the face of God in senior citizens and children alike, and both large corporations and small local businesses are becoming learning organizations as they assist interns to take the first steps toward their future careers.

Carla Fritsch is special assistant to the president of Trinity High School in Garfield Heights, Ohio, where she is responsible for curriculum, school accreditation and professional development. She also serves as the secretary of the board of directors for the Garfield Heights Chamber of Commerce. She earned a M.A. in religious studies from John Carroll University and a M.A. in educational administration from Ursuline College. She has published religion text books through *The Center for Learning*. (cfritsch@ths.org)