

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

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Trinity High School's One-of-a-Kind Program Gives Students Real-World Professional Experience

College is a time of exploration, experimentation, of determining a course for the future. For many, it also brings the discovery that goals and directions change, and the major must, too.

But what if students could make that discovery before entering college—saving time, energy and money? What if they could find their true career love while still in high school—and build skills and contacts then? This is the experience Trinity High School offers.

Trinity has implemented the first-ever “Pre-Professional Internship Program,” in which all of its 350 or so students get on-the-job training in their chosen professions . . . throughout their high school years. Patrick Straffen, director of admissions and public relations, says students get a solid grounding in their interest areas, working with professionals in those fields before they even turn 18.

“This way, our students know what they want to do—what they *really* want to do—as they’re entering college,” he says. “We’re the only Catholic high school in the country to offer anything like this.”

Trinity’s program offers concentrations in a variety of careers, such as health care, graphic design and information technology. Freshmen stay on campus and are trained in business etiquette, resume building and business confidentiality laws, but sophomores, juniors and seniors leave and spend time with professionals one day each week, who guide and direct them. Their internship position changes each year to align with their work in the classroom as they progress through the program. Straffen says that by their junior year, health care students provide direct patient care.

Trinity is a Roman Catholic, coeducational high school serving students in grades nine through 12 from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Families pay tuition, and need-based financial aid is available for freshmen. After the freshman year, internship corporate sponsors pay a fee that helps defray tuition costs for students working with them.

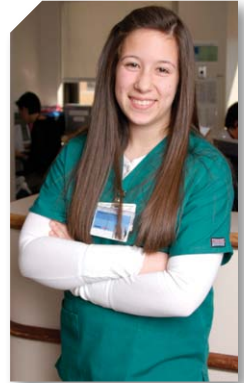
While the Pre-Professional Internship Program is a strong attraction—students come from five counties, passing other schools to get here, Straffen says—the religious formation program is also integral to the school’s culture. Class retreats take place once a year, but students have over 20 additional opportunities to serve on retreat teams, plan Masses and assist the program in other ways. Even eighth graders have the opportunity to experience faith life at Trinity through Trinity’s popular Eighth Grade Retreat, which takes place each October. “Expression of faith through peer-to-peer ministry is not only encouraged at Trinity, but is also widely embraced,” Straffen says.

“It is really amazing to see our students accept God into their lives—something that is at the center of our mission.”

Because of Trinity’s smaller class sizes, the school is very family and community oriented, Straffen says. Sports are available—football, basketball, baseball, cross country, track and soccer, to name a few—and so are other co-curricular activities, such as marching band, mock trial, student leadership, and the environmental and drama clubs.

The school is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis and shares its campus with a convent, a hospital that is part of the Cleveland Clinic Health System, a nursing home and assisted-living facility, and a child care center.

“The entire Trinity experience affords our students the opportunity to gain a wealth of professional and life experience,” Straffen says. “In a world where higher education is increasingly important, Trinity graduates stand out and have something meaningful to say when a college interviewer asks, ‘What makes you different?’”



Senior Allie Pirrone worked as a nursing assistant during her internship last year.



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