



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Report to Board on the Review of Accommodation & Catering Services

June 2014

This report presents the outcome of a review of Accommodation & Catering Services which was undertaken from the 27 – 29 January 2014 by Mr. Scott J. Wright, Columbia University; Ms. Jane Loveys, University of Bath; Mr. Jim Flannery, Tourism Ireland and Mr. Douglas Jordan, Fáilte Ireland (retired 2012). The Internal Facilitator was Ms Deirdre Flynn, Trinity College Dublin.

The report attached includes (i) the External Reviewers' report received on the 26 March 2014, (ii) the response from the Director of Accommodation & Catering received on the 11 April 2014 and (iii) the response from the Chief Operating Officer received on the 2 May 2014.

The main purpose of the Quality review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the Unit to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in service and provision are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed.

The Review Report and recommendations, along with the responses from the Director of Accommodation & Catering and the Chief Operating Officer, were discussed at the Quality Committee on the 22 May 2014. The full discussion on the Review Report and responses is recorded in minute QC/13-14/03.

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Reviewers' Report

Executive Summary

The Accommodation & Catering Department at Trinity College, Dublin (TCD) is comprised of four separate areas of operations management:

- Accommodations – student and guest residences
- Catering – A la Carte dining, Commons and banquets
- Special Events – room hire and MICE catering
- Housekeeping – cleaning services

Each area has a distinct, important role in providing the Trinity Experience to students, staff, faculty and visitors. Each also faces distinct, unique challenges as TCD strives to grow international student and guest populations, and maximize the potential commercial value of the space occupied by Accommodation & Catering.

Recent and ongoing leadership changes at TCD were a significant influencer on our meetings. Staff are feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the numerous changes in key senior administration whose work aligns closely to Accommodation & Catering. The announcement of the START program with a lack of details regarding upcoming changes has created an underlying anxiety and distrust of leadership that we believe is having a negative impact on all levels of the department. There appears to be a great desire for vertical communications throughout the organization, preferably delivered in person by TCD leadership.

The newness of so many critical leaders left the review team with a notable amount of uncertainty. All of our conversations were lively exchanges filled with a courageous candor and very little was held back. However, several important colleagues were too new in their role to have a concrete sense of the task at hand, or to provide insight on how their area may be able to assist and support Accommodation & Catering. Particularly for an area such as Accommodation where property development can take several years to yield increased resources, it will be important for new staff to orient themselves to their new roles as quickly as possible.

The quality of Accommodation & Catering areas can be quite difficult to assess without seeing the actual spaces. This is why we made it a point to visit all of the residences, except Rubrics, and as many of the catering services as possible. After enduring the difficult economic times after the Celtic Tiger, and having to operate on an austerity mode for years, it can be difficult for operators to effectively shift their focus to driving growth and quality. The operations are all well managed in areas of cost control, food safety management and customer outreach. However, these programs and measures presently provide no insights to how Accommodation & Catering should operate in the years to come. As a result, much of what we saw measured strongly in inspections and audits, but to our observation looked outdated, poorly presented, or simply ill conceived.

To drive commercialization, particularly in support of the growing international market, and to maximize department potential TCD must resolve questions around organizational alignment, and brand the 'Trinity Experience.' The external review team recommendations all contribute to achieving clarity of purpose, converting to student-centric service protocols, and leveraging the unique Trinity brand to grow contributions from Accommodation & Catering.

We see a significant number of current strengths in Accommodation & Catering from which the future will be built. The staff is all fiercely dedicated to Trinity and if treated fairly, will do whatever is asked to contribute to the college's success. There are a number of talented Chefs producing a very good quality of product on a daily basis for banquet guests. In addition to the Long Room and Book of Kells, the TCD grounds, buildings and history provide a plethora of material for a fascinating guest experience.

Recommendations

The following are our six key recommendations for Accommodation & Catering.

1. *Develop additional Accommodation Capacity*

There is certainly no disagreement that TCD needs to grow the capacity of university accommodations to meet the expectations of international and European Union (EU) students, as well as to grow the summer tourist accommodation market. We feel the key consideration for growing accommodations should be the proximity of the property to the main Trinity campus. The more time students can spend on campus the more commercial activity will be conducted on campus. Third party properties are an excellent option if close to campus and TCD can lease 100% of the rooms and include housekeeping, security staff and wardens on site to replicate the housing protocol at university-owned properties.

2. *Align Accommodation & Catering as a direct report to Commercial Revenue.*

Decision making in this area should be with a focus on increasing revenue-producing value-driven services, adopting alternative operating models for unprofitable businesses, and developing a single Trinity brand. Immediate areas of synergy include prioritization of future investment, marketing and adopting a holistic approach to delivering special events. The department's lone non-commercial area, Housekeeping should be reassigned to Campus Infrastructure for better operational alignment to maintenance activity.

3. *Diversify and Specialize Catering*

The current operations offer too little choice, outdated one meat/two vegetable menus, and do not compare favorably against the neighborhood competition for the provision of typical budget student fare, light meals for faculty and staff on the go, or conference service. The Dining Hall at lunch time should be converted to a single price, all you care to eat service, similar to the board plans at American schools. The Buttery should remain counter service menus tailored to meeting student price points and preferences. An evening service in Trinity Hall, perhaps operated and staffed by students, has great potential. Cashless "meal plans" using the student identification card and linked to the accommodation fee are a must to drive prepaid patronage and create the requisite financial foundation needed to support the changes.

4. *Create Student Centers*

These spaces will facilitate student community activity and drive patronage throughout the academic calendar, and can be used for special events. Trinity Hall has a number of under-utilized common rooms perfectly capable of being organized into program space complete with catering. The Vaults section of The Buttery currently serves little purpose, and the separate point of service is a staffing burden. The coffee bar should close and then the room

converted to a student lounge with round tables to facilitate conversations and meetings, possibly with high definition screens to allow video gaming. If the other dining rooms in The Buttery can also be left open after hours for students, perhaps served by a limited Late Night menu service, Trinity students will develop a habit of spending their free time on campus, in catering locations.

5. *Expand Conference Activities*

Leverage Trinity's prestigious location and reputation, and the vast alumni network, to host academic conferences, business meetings and social events in campus facilities. Develop a single point of service event management model as offered at many UK universities for ease of access and use for customers. Support the service with appropriate service level agreements and negotiate win-win agreements with current space "owners" to encourage expanded use of resources. Though clearly some amount of financial investment is required, particularly in lecture halls, toilets and wireless coverage, we have little doubt that targeted support will generate compellingly favorable ongoing returns.

6. *Provide Visible Leadership*

There is a desperate need to clarify for staff the mission and expectations of the Accommodation & Catering Department. To maintain the sense of community and ensure workers remain as loyal in the future as they have been up until now, staff need to see and hear from leadership at all levels of TCD. There is a real desire for more staff meetings/briefings and finding ways to recognize and reward strong performance. Introducing periodic training and development activities is critical to serving the growing international student population. The loyalty and trust of Trinity staff is a rare and valuable asset the university leadership must act swiftly to preserve.

Organizational Structure and Management

Align as a Direct Report to Commercial Revenue

This reporting structure provides the ideal context for future decisions in Accommodation & Catering. We believe this alignment will also bring more gravitas to applications for investment via the Capital Project Proposal (CPP) process. The department cannot afford to continue missing opportunities to develop additional accommodations, or catering operations on the east side of campus. Bringing more commercial criteria into decision-making and developing data-based business cases for financial support requests will position Accommodation & Catering as a vital asset for achieving immediate substantial commercial revenue growth.

To market the student experience TCD needs to develop a distinct brand identity and carry that brand throughout everything it does, and sells. No department will benefit more than Accommodation & Catering from an updated, student-driven Trinity brand re-launch. Positioning Accommodation & Catering alongside branding will undoubtedly be mutually beneficial.

Reassign Housekeeping to Campus Infrastructure

The campus operations would be best delivered if Housekeeping were aligned with Maintenance staff under Campus infrastructure. Given the breadth of area covered by the Housekeeping Assistants, they can accelerate the reporting and addressing of maintenance issues, creating a very real opportunity to improve quality of Trinity facilities with no increase in cost. Important current

Housekeeping functional alignments with Accommodation & Catering, primarily in support of Special Events, can be replicated with the development of service level agreements.

The Current Talent is Adequate to Meet the Challenge

We toured clean buildings, tasted good food at the 1592 restaurant, and spoke to a staff of passionate, engaged professionals. There was plenty of talent and knowledge on display during our visit. The challenge is for management to develop a plan, and provide the necessary leadership to help staff deliver the next generation of products and services.

Need Marketing and Merchandizing Support

The department suffers from a dearth of competence in this area. There must be professional support to properly develop and implement the Accommodation & Catering brand and promote what they do well. Central support is another possibility, and ensures greater consistency. However, for ecommerce, websites and student-contact areas such as blogs and social media, hospitality communication experts may be capable of making the greatest impact.

Must Expand Work Schedules

The hospitality industry operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every week of the year. Evening and weekend schedules must be part of the regular workforce agreement and not subject to restrictive salary practices. If the current labor agreements are not open for this type of negotiated expansion, we would suggest TCD investigate the opportunities presented by developing a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for Accommodation & Catering as put forward by TCD leadership during our financial conversations. This arrangement would permit a gradual expansion in work schedules without the contentious presence of outsourced workers or temporary staff in union positions. More comprehensive scheduling would also help department staff realize that banquets and social events and conferences are not distractions from their work, but rather, what they must do best.

Resources

Additional Accommodation Capacity

There is not capacity at present to meet the planned growth in international students, many of who will expect to live in university accommodation for at least their initial year at Trinity, while simultaneously meeting current TCD student demand. The department could reasonably add 1000 student rooms, based on waitlists, if priced competitively. The top priority should be to identify additional available rooms as close to the main campus as possible. Proximity to the TCD property encourages a sense of community and is very attractive to summer guests and conference hosts.

3rd party owned accommodations or co-developed properties appear perfectly viable to us, provided Trinity students can exclusively occupy the properties and buildings are operated with on-site security staff and wardens. This might best be achieved with a management or a lease agreement.

Universal Wireless Coverage

Trinity cannot compete favorably for students or guests without delivering universal access to wifi. This is a baseline expectation of every member of your community and every guest and visitor to campus. Academic activities, conferences, sports camps, students, tourists and community neighbors all expect universal access to be a part of the Trinity experience.

Accommodation Upkeep Fund

TCD should differentiate capital project work requiring central approval and investment, from low cost upkeep activity such as painting, appliance and furniture replacement, and the upkeep of other customer touching finishes. This is particularly important for attracting summer guests. Students will overlook a lot because they are so fortunate to receive an assignment, guests will feel cheated if the paint is peeling or the fabric on the chair is torn, regardless of the rate charged.

East Campus Dining Hub

It is critical for Catering to operate where the campus population is, and not expect customers to go find them. To have the capacity to serve a large population a diverse selection of foods, Catering needs some production capabilities in the east section of campus. Preparing and transporting foods compromises quality and drives customers to the neighborhood competition. This location should support the cashless campus strategy by serving full meals, snacks and coffee or late night pizza and smoothies. Additional opportunity exists in attracting patrons from sports camps, visitors and neighborhood residents seeking free wireless access.

Catering & Conference Space Investment

Some number of lecture halls and classrooms must be brought to a state of the art standard. Improving teaching facilities will have a positive benefit for faculty throughout the academic calendar, and will provide encouragement to bring conferences to Trinity. Additional guest facilities, computer stations, toilets and lounge spaces are all needed to make Trinity space competitive in the conference market. Some amount of new furniture, signage and technology should also be included in this planning.

Catering spaces would also benefit from a small investment in signage, uniforms, nametags, small-wares, and equipment needed to prepare new menus (i.e. late night dining) as well as new chairs for the Dining Hall and Buttery, and The Vault's dining ambience and functional upgrades.

Training & Development Budget for Catering

Internationalization requires exposure to new student customs, dining needs and expectations and opportunities to serve. This type of activity does not require significant funding, but quality programs are not always facilitated in-house. Learning merchandizing skills, developing social media acumen and ongoing transference of knowledge from the culinary team to the service staff are all prime training opportunities. A recognition and reward program should be included in this planning, to reinforce new learning and demonstrate appreciation for the staff.

Systems and Processes

Student-centric Processes

Solid systems appear to be in place and utilized for labor scheduling, food production, and financial measures and service metrics. All of our requests for data were met, which was no small feat. However, it was our impression that many of these systems are in place to maintain what is currently being done, and the business analysis does not identify areas of potential change. The department is measuring activity, but drawing few conclusions that drive improvement in business results. Discussions with students are ongoing and the relationship is described by all as positive, yet the current catering program seems dramatically out of touch with student's diets and sales have lagged in recent years. Long-term staff may simply be unaware of the opportunity to do things differently.

Cashless Campus

Implementing the cashless campus concept would introduce a significant competitive advantage for Catering's businesses. Customers spend more when they use cards instead of cash for transactions, and the department can leverage a broad array of card-driven campus functionality: door key, library card, official identification, dining card, building access to market the card. The program will require some investment in software and hardware, procurement decision-making should also include product software compatibility with the student billing system, and ease of access and use by students and parents.

Information Silos

Recent compartmentalization of system access inhibits the Accommodation staff's ability to serve students, particularly if they cannot see the student's financial status. The result is that students are bounced around campus to multiple offices in search of resolution of their problem, creating frustration and an overall negative impression of the Accommodation Office. One added problem is that the new silos also make it difficult for Accommodation to know if a student has left TCD prematurely, the result of which being rooms may sit empty while there is a current unmet demand for accommodations.

Ireland First

The department needs a re-branding to reintroduce itself to the campus as a student service. Everything from point of sale materials and uniforms, to websites and disposable wares should be included in the branding roll out. Implementing a visible Ireland First campaign could call attention to Irish products for sale that are particularly appealing to conference and tourists guests. We suggest the department consider the marketing potential of Irish brands in their procurement protocol.

Procurement criteria must balance opportunity versus cost and ensure retail product selections are of the necessary quality to deliver customer value. It is not clear to us if this is presently the situation, but the focus of current reporting seems to be heavily tilted in the direction of cost control.

Alignment to Strategy

Commercialization

To achieve clarity of mission and alignment of purpose, Accommodation & Catering should report to Commercial Revenue. This structure is crucial to facilitating a successful branding of the Trinity experience, and the locations managed by Accommodation & Catering are an ideal testing ground for proposed changes. The key to success is changing the image of the department, beginning with student's first moments on site, or on the TCD website, through the conferring of their degree.

Housekeeping does not appear to be an ideal fit for the commercial agenda, and should be transferred to Building Infrastructure. The positioning of the housekeeping staff alongside the maintenance staff should allow both cleaning and repair needs to be identified and resolved earlier, thereby increasing the quality of work performed with no additional staff or funding. Any housekeeping services or support needed by Accommodation & Catering should be delivered under a service level agreement (SLA).

Given the restrictions on the use of Trinity Hall in the summer, the opportunity to increase guest accommodation income and surplus appears limited. All indications are that TCD would have no problem filling a large number of new rooms, possibly as many as 1000, if the rooms are located proximate to the main campus. The campus location is a huge selling point for both students and summer guests. 3rd party developers or leasing agents provide a good opportunity to grow immediately, if terms are competitive. University-owned accommodation is always preferable, particularly from the perspective of international students and their parents, but TCD should pursue both options as viable short term and long-range solutions.

There is a significant opportunity to grow catering sales volume, and net surplus/contribution to the campus.

- Opening a full operation on the east side of TCD is essential to attracting a presently underserved population.
- Introduce new services: a single price, all you care to eat service in the Dining Hall; a pre-paid meals account for students, similar to “board plans” in the USA; a Trinity Hall Evening Café for the 1010 residents; a Hamilton Restaurant menu that can be properly supported by the current facility infrastructure; a grocery store to supply the kitchens in all student apartments.
- Focus resources on the service that is most profitable, banquets. Close or outsource unprofitable locations.
- Neighborhood cafes are very inexpensive and heavily patronized. It would be unwise to compete with large chain restaurants or others on a price basis, someone will always be cheaper. However, by marketing your dining spaces as ideal gathering places for students, clubs, visitors and updating menus to reflect current appetites, considerable market share can be gained.
- TCD must adopt a holistic approach to managing conference events. Conferences should not be seen as a burden on TCD, but rather they are a demonstration of the elite Trinity brand, and an opportunity to underwrite improvements in space for all uses. Many interviewees shared the experience that it is easier to book events at outside venues, than at TCD. There needs to be a single point of contact who can accept all of the client’s event needs, and deliver a single, comprehensive agreement, including cost. The current inefficiency is not only costly, but it diminishes pride in the organization. Issues of who “owns” space must be resolved, perhaps by sharing some revenue with the department, to encourage usage.
- Investment will be required to be competitive in the lucrative Conference market. Lecture Halls are outdated and poorly equipped, there are not adequate toilet facilities or indoor group gathering spaces to provide event support, and this is one area where the only solution is to invest in an upgrade of space. However, the improved space will have a positive impact on regular classroom and lecture use, and frequent weekend, summer and evening bookings will quickly repay the investment.
- The gift shops sell refillable coffee mugs that Catering locations will fill free of charge. We saw very few of these mugs in use, in fact, none. A partnership with an Irish roasted coffee company would be an ideal platform to re-brand Trinity coffee and attract new customers from all areas of campus.
- Vending would appear to be an under-represented income source, particularly given the number of buildings not located close to a cafe. Visibly appealing equipment can be outfitted with customized TCD siding or header graphics to ensure branding consistency.
- The diverse Accommodation & Catering new business opportunities should each have unique pricing strategies to be competitive and fuel revenue sales growth. It is very important to get the price points set properly at the launch of a product or service, students make their choices very quickly and rarely change habits during the year.

- We had some discussion about the merits of implementing a Pub service in the Buttery, but unless the price, space and ambience of the Athletics-managed Pub can be matched, the idea will not work. Students mentioned a dearth of attractive space for alternative, alcohol-free events. Converting The Buttery Vaults to a student event room supported by the catering location next door could be a better use of space.

Internationalization

TCD must be able to offer at least first year accommodations in university residences. There is a very reasonable concern that unless additional capacity is added, more international residents will take away space from Irish and EU students, and dilute the Trinity experience. Therefore the ideal strategy is to grow room inventory and maintain the current allocations percentages to various student types.

It is important to remember that students from outside of Dublin want to be in Dublin. The goal should be to find rooms as close to TCD as possible to foster student community and develop the Trinity experience. The campus property is a gem that reinforces the TCD brand; the more time students remain on property the better.

Many international students, and virtually all of those coming from the USA, will expect to initially take most of their meals in university catering locations. An all you care to eat service in the Dining Hall, supported by a pre-paid meal plans, is an ideal service to meet that expectation. By selling pre-paid packages the Catering department will know patronage in advance, and be able to efficiently deliver a high quality, fresh product on a daily basis. Over time the program quality and value will retain students throughout their time at TCD, regardless of where they reside. Program change must be accompanied by a commitment to staff training to ensure the proper service is delivered from the very first meal.

We fully support the proposal to offer a cashless campus to students. It eliminates the need to carry cash, and the program offers a competitive advantage for Trinity-operated services. Cashless protocols are what many of your students experienced in high school and will not be surprised the Identification card is a very diverse tool: room key, library card, laundry card, vending card, and building access card. Once again, both students and their parents take comfort in cashless systems, and therefore are likely to deposit more money in such.

We heard tourists come to campus in search of four things:

1. The Book of Kells
2. To see the TCD property and take pictures
3. Toilets
4. Refreshments

Currently you only offer the first two, however rearranging the tours to start and/or end at a café, with toilets located nearby, can dramatically improve the guest experience and drive sales. An ideal tour route would conclude at the gift shop, so perhaps starting in a location with toilet facilities near a café is best.

TCD has a lot to offer tourists in addition to the Long Room and Book of Kells. Consider marketing more of the architecture, history, current faculty and past glories and notoriety to keep tourists on campus longer. For example, a tour program for primary school students, perhaps lead by a Samuel Beckett impersonator would be fun, memorable and educational. Thought could also be given to including the tour in summer visitor packages with accommodations, or Book of Kells tickets, or other TCD attractions.

Conclusion

To have success in commercialization and internationalization strategic investment in the Accommodation & Catering Department is a must.

Performance

Diversify & Specialize Catering

The mountains of data supplied to the external review team largely indicate an acceptable level of product quality, service standards, cleanliness, and student engagement activity that collectively meets student's expectations. However, our interactions and observations did not draw the same conclusions. The services do not appear to be student-centric, serving outdated menus, closing early in the evening and on weekends, and lacking in variety. To present a portfolio of destinations Catering must diversify hours of operation and overhaul menus completely, making certain to program each location to have a particular specialty. For example: bakery items and salad bar in The Hamilton Restaurant, gluten free and vegetarian foods in the Dining Hall, pizza and comfort food late at night at Trinity Hall, gourmet teas and breakfast cooked to order in the Buttery. Feature and brand take-out at satellite locations, students believe the best noodles are served in a box, not on a plate.

Student Engagement

Have current freshman and international students help you design an all you care to eat menu for the Dining Hall, invite students to try a demonstration of the service and ask them for their feedback. Engage your students in designing program changes; it will make them feel connected to the service, and valued as customers. Market the role you allowed students to play; demonstrated responsiveness is an ideal cornerstone for working relationships with students.

Universal Wifi

Inconsistent wifi is a significant practical and reputational concern that we were informed would be remedied in summer 2014. TCD cannot compete without it, and it is the primary source of complaints about Accommodation.

Accommodations Upkeep Fund

Accommodation seems fairly priced with significantly more demand than supply, and the valuable additions of on-site security staff, wardens, and at Trinity Hall, spacious function and activity space. Negative impressions of Accommodation not due to wifi tend to be rooted in the lack of availability of rooms, not in the actual experience of those in residence. In general the rooms were spacious and in good repair.

Our primary recommendation for Accommodation would be to create a budget line for minor updating work such as painting and appliance/furniture replacement, to ensure the rooms remain attractive as summer guest rentals.

Marketing

Marketing efforts at present seem ineffective, likely due to the absence of a marketing professional on the Accommodation & Catering staff. This is an important, specialized field that would be best addressed by the addition of an experienced marketing manager to staff. The neighborhood competition is filled with marketing experts and recruiting savvy marketing talent is not optional if you plan to compete.

Service Level Agreements

Reportedly due to the degree of change occurring at Trinity there are not adequate or comprehensive service level agreements in place to support Accommodation & Catering. It will not be possible to meet banquet or conference client expectations without such, we suggest Accommodation & Catering unilaterally design the SLA's needed and present such to their TCD partners.

Staff

All staff we met seemed quite motivated to work hard, they are extremely proud to work at TCD and are loyal to the institution. For staff to be effective in the future there must be ongoing training and development, recognition and reward for performance, and a commitment to regular contact and communications with senior leadership.

Scheduling restrictions under the current labor agreements may limit opportunities, or the profitability of such, during proposed growth periods of nights and weekends. Seven-day service is an absolute must to meet all of the TCD community expectations, and must become a regular practice. Outsourcing operations will likely erode the present strong sense of community amongst staff, therefore forming a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for Accommodation & Catering and other commercial activities may be the best means of expanding operations beyond current service parameters. In the interim, student staff and temporary workers will be needed to efficiently fill the labor void created by business growth.

Conference Growth

More significant and sophisticated conference business growth will be unlikely until three conditions exist at TCD:

1. Universal wifi is in place.
2. Event booking is centralized under one area and easy to use.
3. Meeting and lecture facilities are updated with current technology, inviting gathering spaces and adequate services such as cafes and toilets.

Communication

Students

Accommodation & Catering needs to improve their ability to connect with students. Despite the current use of social media and the web, there are frequent breakdowns in information transfers that negatively impact business. The present perspective is to “blame” students for not properly finding the information; a more effective outlook would be to work with students to identify better tools for pushing information out to them. This may be an opportunity for enlisting student staff to facilitate the outreach and design a more student-centered platform for messaging.

Guests

The onus is presently on visitors to know what type of guest they are, and somehow navigate TCD accordingly to use the conference, banqueting, accommodations or tour services. No amount of communication can properly simplify current protocols. TCD can make their services easier to find by having a single point of contact, and providing multiple links to such from all potential guest gateways.

A limited budget for strategic marketing in print publications aimed at target markets (i.e. weddings) would help introduce and position new initiatives in front of specific customers. These investments are easily tracked and measured, and may be effective for expanding the TCD brand to the correct markets.

Staff

Senior management has been briefed on START and other new initiatives, but staff claim they have not. Whether or not the message has been previously delivered, it would behoove TCD to deliver the message again, and on an ongoing basis. Change always creates anxiety, and the best way to minimize staff concern is to meet with them, help them understand not just what is happening, but why it is happening. Open, in-person communications will undoubtedly fuel loyalty.

Current Accommodation & Catering leadership may not know how to communicate to staff effectively, and will likely require some training to fully understand the skills needed. Be certain that leadership know they are expected to share information with staff, clarify the information to be shared, and demonstrate leadership by example.

Governance Compliance

Accommodation

TCD has been investing in statutory compliance improvements within the Accommodation residences since the mid-1990's. Most work has been completed, and the renovated rooms have proven to be more marketable.

The Rubrics property stands out as the one residence that has not been renovated to date. The building is in desperate need of updating, and may also have serious structural problems to solve. While the location, history and outward appearance of the Rubrics contribute to the overall Trinity campus ambience, TCD may have to give serious consideration to a very extensive, costly renovation of Rubrics to ensure student and community safety is not compromised.

Catering

The Q Mark program is utilized to measure management, food safety systems, HACCP protocols, and structure and service quality. The program provides very detailed reports on areas for improvement for most aspects of the operation, under a very clear scoring system. Overall Catering performs well on Q Mark audits.

There are some concerns regarding the use of the Hamilton Restaurant not meeting all requirements for food preparation, service and storage. Serious consideration should be given to executing simple structural repairs needed for walls and flooring. Re-designing the menus can solve more invasive facility problems and services to better match the facility capabilities. We heard many people talk about the robust neighborhood competitors offering sandwiches and salad bar fare, both of which could be done at Hamilton without further facility investment.

Staff

By their account staff are fairly treated and union agreements are properly followed.

Reviewers' Recommendations

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1. Develop additional Accommodation Capacity

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2. Align Accommodation & Catering as a direct report to Commercial Revenue.

Decision making in this area should be with a focus on increasing revenue-producing value-driven services, adopting alternative operating models for unprofitable businesses, and developing a single Trinity brand. Immediate areas of synergy include prioritization of future investment, marketing and adopting a holistic approach to delivering special events. The department's lone non-commercial area, Housekeeping should be reassigned to Campus Infrastructure for better operational alignment to maintenance activity.

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Leverage Trinity's prestigious location and reputation, and the vast alumni network, to host academic conferences, business meetings and social events in campus facilities. Develop a single point of service event management model as offered at many UK universities for ease of access and use for customers. Support the service with appropriate service level agreements and negotiate win-win agreements with current space "owners" to encourage expanded use of resources. Though clearly some amount of financial investment is required, particularly in lecture halls, toilets and wireless coverage, we have little doubt that targeted support will generate compellingly favorable ongoing returns.

6. Provide Visible Leadership

There is a desperate need to clarify for staff the mission and expectations of the Accommodation & Catering Department. To maintain the sense of community and ensure workers remain as loyal in the future as they have been up until now, staff need to see and hear from leadership at all levels of TCD. There is a real desire for more staff meetings/briefings and finding ways to recognize and reward strong performance. Introducing periodic training and development activities is critical to serving the growing international student population. The loyalty and trust of Trinity staff is a rare and valuable asset the university leadership must act swiftly to preserve.

Response from the Director of Accommodation and Catering to the Reviewers' Report

Introduction

At the outset of this response we would like to express our deep appreciation of the review team's work and effort before, during and after coming to Trinity College and taking the time to understand our environment, our customer perceptions to include our students, staff and visitors and engage with management representatives of both academic and service and support, of the College. We understand better than most the complexity our environment can create and the many differing views and attitudes which need to be explored and assessed. We are very pleased with the review, and its recommendations and we are looking forward to taking them to the next stage as proposals, initiatives and plans.

Detailed Response

From our perspective we were extremely pleased to see the six key recommendations for Accommodation & Catering being outlined in the manner in which they were and we will be developing an implementation plan which will address each recommendation individually.

The six specific recommendations were:

1. *Develop additional Accommodation Capacity*
2. *Align Accommodation & Catering as a direct report to Commercial Revenue.*
3. *Diversify and Specialize Catering*
4. *Create Student Centers*
5. *Expand Conference Activities*
6. *Provide Visible Leadership*

In addition we would, however, like to address the following high level areas:

- Accommodation Capacity –
The issue of accommodation for students has been an area of extreme concern for the function for some time. In fact we have been identifying options and opportunities to resolve the needs of College and have put a number of options forward over the past five years which have not been achieved due to the risk profile. We will redouble our efforts and use the recommendations of this review to pursue new and deliverable options in the months and years to come.
- Internationalisation –
We were pleased that the area of internationalisation has been highlighted and addressed in the report. Clearly we would have some views as to the applicability and deliverability of some of the options in the short term but we are aware that the growth and development of the international student market which is extremely competitive, is critical for the delivery of the University's longer term strategic objectives. We are acutely aware that the expectation of international students differs significantly from the general student population and we are always seeking to position ourselves within College as a key enabler of international student recruitment. We are also aware however, that the degree of upfront investment required to be a 'world leader' and 'location of choice' for international students would be a financial challenge for us in the current funding and capital investment environment within our sector.

- **Organisational structure –**
The ongoing challenge of structure and the implications of various decisions in this regard are issues we have grappled with for some time and in particular since the START process highlighted plans and objectives. As a key service area within College we are committed to delivery of service and support to a quality and standard necessary to ensure exemplary service. We recognise that change to our structure may come and, if so, we remain clear in our purpose and deliverables on behalf of College. While we may believe that elements of our existing structure provide synergies we remain open to change and we will support the implementation of the most appropriate structure. At the time of the external review the leadership of the area was 'in flux' with the very recent appointment of the COO, the pending appointment of the Commercial Director and the re-definition of the current Director's role yet to be finalised under START. This resulted in the reviewer's recommendation to 'Provide Visible Leadership'. This has now been established, as was planned, after the visit of the reviewers but prior to the finalisation of the external reviewer's report.
- **Diversification and Specialisation of Catering –**
The area of diversification and specialisation of catering is one where we have been paying significant attention over the past few years. For example in 2011 we ran a number of surveys to ascertain the needs, preferences and requirements of our students and staff. We also held a series of focus groups in 2012 on the varieties of offerings required and requested by those who use our services. It would be helpful for us to better understand the feedback which led to aspects of the recommendations regarding catering as some elements clash with the output from our surveys. That being said we are aware as catering professionals that change and trends are the life blood of our sector and we are committed to further understanding the recommendation, its benefits for College and our users and we are positioned for change and growth. Specifically, in regard to the suggested 'All-You-Can-Eat' service in the Dining Hall, we would be concerned in regard to the potential impact on obesity amongst our customers and we would want to investigate this further with our customers, and other stakeholders in College, for example the Health Centre and the Student Life Committee, before such an operational change would be considered.
- **Commercialisation and alignment to the Commercial Revenue Unit -**
The realisation of the operation of a commercial revenue unit has been considerably advanced with the appointment of the Commercial Director. As key components of any commercial agenda we remain agile in exploring and delivering on initiatives, expanding existing offerings, developing new offerings and we have begun working closely in these developments which, following approval, will be implemented as the College's new commercial strategy.

Conclusions:

The Quality Review of Accommodation, Catering, Housekeeping and Events has been a major opportunity for the function to review its operations and gave real and useful insights from a range of stakeholders in preparation of our input to the review itself. In addition, prior to completion of our self-assessment report, we had the input and engagement of staff from all across the function to our SWOT analysis, along with some very useful 360 degree feedback.

We will be able to draw great value from both the recommendations and the process leading to their development. We would now plan to engage more deeply on the process of implementing them and to this end we would plan to put together a project implementation plan for approval by

the Chief Operating Officer. In addition the review gives us great insight into the perceptions of our stakeholders and customers and we would plan to develop further this engagement to ensure that as a function we are appropriately aligned with the needs of all our customers and remain flexible and agile in our delivery.

Graham Daniels FIH
Director,
Accommodation and Catering Services

Response from the Chief Operating Officer to the Reviewers' Report

Introduction/overview:

I would like to express my sincere appreciation of the review team's great work in carrying out this review and in their engagement with management and staff of the College. I recognise the time and effort taken to understand our challenges and opportunities and the many differing opinions expressed. I am very appreciative of the recommendations and look forward to working with the Director and his staff in developing an implementation plan.

Response to recommendations:

The Reviewers noted many strengths of the current service provided by Accommodation and Catering, which they feel can be built on in the future. They commented positively on the motivation, commitment and loyalty of the staff. They acknowledged that 'there was plenty of talent and knowledge on display during our visit' saying that they 'toured clean buildings, tasted good food at the 1592 restaurant, and spoke to a staff of passionate, engaged professionals.'

Following consideration of these high level recommendations I would like to make the following comments:

- **Accommodation Capacity –**
The Reviewers recommend that providing additional accommodation close to the main TCD campus be a priority for the College in order to meet the expectations of International and European students, to grow the Summer tourist market, and to increase Commercial activity on campus. Identifying ways and opportunities to resolve the needs of College in this regard has been a challenge but recommendations of this review will help us to pursue new options and address one of the key needs of a modern Internationally-successful University.
- **Internationalisation –**
I welcome the Reviewers helpful insights into the needs and expectations of International students, which can differ significantly from those of the general student population. I acknowledge that realising the College's ambitions in relation to growth and development of the International student market will require drive, innovation and investment.
- **Organisational structure – visible leadership**
The START process highlighted the need for organisational realignment within key service areas in College and I welcome the Reviewers endorsement of that re-organisation. Since my recent appointment as interim COO in January 2014 I recognised the time already taken to fully implement and bed down START and I have ensured that the leadership responsibilities and accountabilities were quickly identified and the requirements put in place. I remain committed to fully implementing a workable and value adding structure for this area.
- **Diversification and Specialisation of Catering –**
The quality of our catering to date has been excellent. The customer focus of the catering management and staff is worth celebrating and I am convinced that they will embrace the opportunities presented by the recommendations in this area.

- Commercialisation and alignment to the Commercial Revenue Unit.

The appointment of the Commercial Director and the initiation of a commercial agenda and strategy with agility and drive, including expanding existing offerings, is a critical component of College strategy. Within a resource constrained environment we must drive every opportunity to highlight the emerging commercial opportunities, whilst ensuring that we do not compromise quality of product or service for cost.

Conclusions:

The Quality Review has been a major opportunity for the function to assess its operations and provides really useful insights from a range of stakeholder perceptions. As a University we will be able to draw great value from these recommendations and I would now plan to ensure that the process of implementing them for approval by me gets the attention and support required.

Geraldine Ruane
Chief Operating Officer