

FEDERAL CITY COUNCIL

# CATALYST

federalcitycouncil.org | 2019 Fall/Winter

## Quality Schools for D.C. Students


Toward More  
Affordable  
Workforce  
Housing

TONYTalks:  
Meet Patricia  
McGuire of  
Trinity



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# Letter from the CEO and Executive Director

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Dear Trustees,

At the Federal City Council (FC2), our programs and initiatives have a multiplier effect: through persistence, hard work and community involvement, we are able to lay the foundation for economic and educational transformation in the District of Columbia.

With this issue of *Catalyst*, we largely focus on the theme of education, exploring our new programs and ongoing initiatives designed to address the needs of students as they determine their academic life and post-high school careers.

This year, we are advancing a conversation among policymakers and residents about one of the critical issues that defines success in K-12 education—the availability of quality education facilities for all D.C. students. Our new Education Facilities Initiative will leverage our unique resources to provide support, guidance and thought leadership in resolving this intractable problem (p. 2).

*It's hard to overstate the value of these FC2 projects, but they are reminders that our resources and time are powerful tools for transformation.*

In that same vein, we are supplementing the work of CityBridge Education in establishing the parameters for a pilot apprenticeship program—built on a Swiss model—that could transform the lives of young people in D.C. high schools and kick start their careers. Learn more about our efforts on p. 8.

The FC2 continues to advance the groundbreaking Washington Housing Conservancy (WHC), and our work in this early stage has laid a strong foundation for its success: selecting a dynamic board, identifying potential properties for purchase and hiring new Executive Director Kimberly Driggins (p. 4).

In this issue, you'll also find our latest TONYTalks, which continues the education theme. It details the insightful conversation I had with Trinity Washington University President Patricia McGuire about the university's pioneering programs to educate young women of color in the District (p. 6).

The FC2 is a modest institution in terms of resources, and we have always leveraged the capacities and interests of our Trustees to complement the work of government, corporations and the nonprofit sector. It's hard to overstate the value of these projects, but they are reminders that our resources and time are powerful tools for transformation.

Sincerely,



Tony Williams



# ENSURING THE QUALITY and Supply of School Facilities





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Rethinking how to acquire, renovate or allocate education facilities for DC Public Schools (DCPS) and D.C. charter schools would better support student learning, reduce inequity and improve the quality of K-12 education in the District.

To that end, the Federal City Council (FC2) launched its Education Facilities Initiative earlier this year to explore how educational facilities can be utilized to advance education efficiency and to align resources to meet the needs of all students and their parents.

“We have all these forces coming together, and we’re wondering if there is a smarter way to align these schools to emphasize quality,” said Anthony Williams, FC2 CEO and Executive Director. “There is a lot of opportunity for better decision making. Both sectors are growing, and we can’t rely on old solutions. We need to come up with new solutions.”

The Initiative is responding to a critical problem in the District. Enrollment in D.C.’s system of schools is rising by at least 2,000 students annually, but the distribution of that growth has been uneven. A fifth of all DCPS schools experience overcrowding and yet nearly a quarter of schools are underutilized, at 65 percent capacity or lower.

D.C.’s charter school sector enrolls 47 percent of all students, and it faces very different challenges. Not-for-profit charter schools must secure their own facilities by leveraging their per-pupil facilities allowance (\$3,355 for the 2019/2020 school year) in D.C.’s highly competitive real estate market.

“It’s increasingly difficult for charters to afford the space they need to grow and to serve parent demands,” says Kevin Clinton, FC2 Chief Operating Officer, “particularly given that we have a facilities allowance that’s not sufficient to meet the price they would need to pay.”

The Initiative will serve as a hub for expertise on education facilities and best practices for improving access to school buildings. It seeks to build a community of practice to promote collaboration, convene public and charter school leaders for key discussions and search for solution-oriented approaches.

The Initiative, which is guided by Stefan Huh, Project Manager, is being steered by the Education Facilities Advisory Board. Along with Chairman Robert Bobb, other Trustee members include Bill Alsup, Laurie Ballenger, Katherine Bradley, Conrad Cafritz, Allison Fansler, Steve Manlove, Deryl McKissack, Bo Menkiti, Barbara Mullenex, Sandy Nelson, Rudy Seikaly, Margie Yeager and Anthony Williams. As this project progresses, the FC2 plans to broaden the committee’s membership to include representatives from D.C. agencies and the charter school sector.

*“There is a lot of opportunity for better decision making. Both sectors are growing, and we can’t rely on old solutions. We need to come up with new solutions.”*

“I think the forum of the Advisory Board can serve as a platform for collaboration between the D.C. government, charter schools and the business community,” said Huh. “I think the business community is an underused resource in the public debate around schools, especially considering businesses serve as the region’s employers.”

The Initiative gives the FC2 an opportunity to exert leadership in this space by bringing the FC2’s relationships, focus and knowledge to the forefront to deliver better results for D.C. students and families. To date, the FC2 has met with staff from the D.C. Council, DCPS, the DC Public Charter School Board, the Deputy Mayor of Education and public education advocates.

Innovative ideas to be explored include co-locating charter and DCPS schoolchildren in a single facility; identifying new opportunities to finance charter school facility projects; considering how education program reforms impact school design; and leveraging local expertise that might support novel approaches to facilities development. ■





# WASHINGTON HOUSING CONSERVANCY

## Closer to Goals

The Washington Housing Conservancy (WHC) has laid a solid foundation this past year in its drive to preserve and create affordable workforce housing for low-income residents and developing responsive, socially active communities in its properties.

In the coming months, the WHC is expecting to acquire its first properties in neighborhoods where there is a threat of displacement and risk of gentrification. It's likely the properties will already have tenants, and the WHC plans to work with the tenants to contribute to a positive culture in the buildings.

"By creating connected communities within our buildings and the neighborhoods that surround them, the WHC can foster relations between people of different economic and racial backgrounds and ensure affordable workforce housing is available far into the future," said Anthony Williams, FC2 CEO and Executive Director.

Launched in summer 2019, the focus of the WHC's first six months of operations has been laying the foundation for its future: charting the vision for the organization, establishing its infrastructure, searching for real estate acquisitions, developing a social impact strategy,



fundraising and building partnerships, and completing legal and operational housekeeping activities.

An independent, non-profit corporation, the WHC is a co-partner with JBG SMITH in the Washington Housing Initiative (WHI), which is a transformational, market-driven approach to produce affordable workforce housing in economically integrated neighborhoods.

Another critical component of the WHC mission is working with its tenant communities, civic organizations, service providers and governmental agencies to allow residents to take advantage of the positive growth in D.C.

"Our focus has been on how we manage our buildings in a way that creates a positive culture and contributes to recognizing opportunities for residents as their

neighborhoods change," said Kevin Clinton, FC2 Chief Operating Officer. "We want to manage the properties in a way that helps realize the benefits for those who live there."

As the WHC seeks to add amenities to its buildings, it will be looking to make it easy for service providers, from health care to education providers, to access the buildings. WHC buildings might also open their doors to retail, including grocery stores and day care centers.

The WHC will manage its buildings so that its tenants reflect a mix of incomes within the workforce tier to allow residents with good jobs to stay in their homes as rents in their communities increase. At least half of the units will be legally income and rent restricted. ■

## Driggins joins the WHC as Executive Director

With an eye toward its future, the Washington Housing Conservancy (WHC) hired long-time community development advocate and creative placemaking expert Kimberly Driggins to serve as its first, full-time Executive Director.

"The Washington Housing Conservancy and its combination of the private and non-profit sectors is groundbreaking and will work toward solving this nationwide challenge," said Driggins, whose tenure began in October. "It is not an either/or, it's an and/both around preserving affordability for individuals and families and building connected communities."

Driggins recently served as Director of Strategic Planning for the City of Detroit, overseeing citywide planning initiatives regarding vacant land strategy, cultural and heritage planning, neighborhood retail and equitable development. She succeeds Kevin Clinton, Chief Operating Officer of the Federal City Council, who served as

the Interim Executive Director for the WHC. Clinton will remain on the WHC board.

Prior to her time with Detroit, Driggins served as Associate Director of Citywide Planning for the District of Columbia Government from 2008-2015. Driggins currently serves as board member for Project for Public Spaces and board chairperson for Gehl Institute.



Driggins has a BA degree from Hampton University and a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Chicago. She was awarded a prestigious Loeb Fellowship from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 2015. ■

## Championing Social Justice and Higher Learning

An educator and lawyer, Patricia McGuire, President of Trinity Washington University, is a tireless champion for educating young women of color. She doesn't take "no" for an answer, or even maybe, and she has adeptly shepherded her Catholic institution through its shifting fortunes and the vicissitudes of the church. McGuire has also been an innovator, leading the university through a remarkable academic renaissance.

She has overcome enrollment declines and resource shortages by reinforcing Trinity's origins as an institution in service to justice. Like the Sisters of Notre Dame who founded Trinity, she has been confident in taking her rightful seat at the table for herself and her university.

The FC2's Anthony Williams recently spoke to McGuire about Trinity's role in educating D.C.'s young women of color, the priority of developing students for new career paths and the importance of a liberal arts education for every student.

**AW:** Trinity's student body is one of the most diverse of the District's universities. What about that diversity adds to the university's learning experience and how did this mission begin?

**PM:** "It is absolutely essential for colleges and universities, frankly for any education institution, to educate a broad diversity of the population, whether in cities, states or nationally. Here at Trinity, we started as a very traditional Catholic women's college in 1897 because Catholic University wouldn't admit women. We were pretty much predominantly white and Catholic up to 1980 and then our enrollment declined. Georgetown University and other Catholic men's schools went co-ed and we lost a lot of women students.

Trinity had to figure out its future. The nuns had a call to social justice, and we turned our attention to the needs of women in this city. Trinity is classified as a predominantly black institution. Black students are 60 percent of our population, and we have a growing population of Latina students. Hispanic students now account for about 30 percent of our population."

**AW:** Why, at this point in the 21st century, do you think is it still important to have a liberal arts college that exclusively serves women students?



Tony Williams



Pat McGuire

**PM:** "Like many women's colleges, we went through the conversation about whether we should go fully co-ed. We do have men in our graduate and professional programs. They make up about 5 percent of our population, but the fulltime, daytime population is all women. What we realized is even as well-to-do women were rejecting the idea of women's colleges, once they could go to Georgetown or George Washington University, women who had never had the opportunity to go to college flocked to women's colleges. These were women who were predominantly women of color and who loved the idea of being empowered with an education.

Women of the city see this as a gateway to intellectual, academic and economic success, not only for themselves but also for their children. We help young women who have not previously experienced success find their way to achievement. I think we have the formula for women's success. In 1990, we had 300 students; today, we have 1,000 students."

**AW:** Trinity has some distinguished alumnae, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, White House advisor Kellyanne Conway and former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, to name just a few. What is Trinity doing today to make it as relevant as it has been in the past?

**PM:** "We believe very strongly, and I think this comes from our social justice mission with the sisters, in justice. We use the different forums we host to speak out on immigration policy, nuclear policy, war, economic policy and the relieving of poverty. Where there is an issue that affects our students or issues of justice, we are very quick to speak out.



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Two years ago, we hosted a symposium on undocumented students. We've had one on the Me-Too Movement. We're planning a symposium later this year on race in society. We tackle these issues head on. We try to include all points of view. Some say it's a liberal point of view. We say it's a moral point of view. We believe the moral treatment of people is very important."

**AW:** There is a great focus on building career pathways for students. How does Trinity view the balance between a liberal arts education and more utilitarian majors connected to careers and jobs?

**PM:** "We believe in both job skills and being conversant in poetry. We believe the best workers are those who can recite Shakespeare and know what history is all about. The fact is a liberal arts education is the foundation for all the programs we have here at Trinity. Our nursing students and business students do well, and they need to read well and analyze critically. They have to have the context of history and sociology. We cultivate that in our students."

Workforce training in the information technology (IT) area is a focus for us now, particularly related to Amazon coming to town. Data analytics is not just for information technology; it's for a broad range of work. We basically call it math. We don't call it IT. Developing those mathematics skills for students is essential.

We received a big grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute because we practice inclusive excellence in our pedagogy. The grant is to encourage more women of color in the sciences and how to engage students who previously have not been that engaged in higher-level learning.

We are developing a knowledge base that works across disciplines. We have scientists who use art to help students understand science concepts. The liberal arts is a great platform for a great workforce."

**AW:** Can you describe some of the many early college partnerships you've launched with D.C. high schools?

**PM:** "Trinity has always worked with the DC Public Schools going back to our founding. We've always had teachers who graduated from Trinity go into teaching. Half of our students are DC Public School graduates, which we're very proud of."

As more and more students came to Trinity from the DC Public Schools, we noticed that they weren't ready for quantitative disciplines like nursing. We're working

in partnership now to improve readiness for collegiate work on the pathway to nursing and other disciplines in the sciences. We are working with the STEM academies at McKinley Tech and the Columbia Heights Education Center, and we're working with Wilson High School on dual enrollment in biomedicine.

A NASA grant is currently funding research with McKinley students. We are also the college partner with Coolidge High School for the new Early College Academy.

Additionally, we work very closely with Medstar for our nursing and healthcare programs, and we are in talks right now about how we can get some of our students to serve some of their hospitals farther out in the region. There's a need for healthcare workforce support throughout the Washington region. We think that's going to grow and become a model for health care and sciences."

**AW:** What are the biggest challenges facing Trinity today?

**PM:** "Our No. 1 issue is funding. The D.C. schools do not have the resources to provide the funding for the dual enrollment programs. We're scrambling to try to find the resources for those programs. The second issue is faculty talent. Faculty talent is hard to find in some of these areas, and it is particularly critical in health care and IT. On the whole, knowledge is a growth industry in the Washington region. All of us will only get bigger and better as we look to the future of education."

**AW:** What do you see as the biggest changes in higher education since you became president in 1989?

**PM:** "We are the smallest institution in the region, and we specialize at the undergraduate level in women's education. It's hard to be a small institution in a region that has behemoths while also serving a very different clientele. The low-income women of color we teach deserve to be in the pipeline the same way the graduates of the University of Maryland or Georgetown University are. We need everybody at the table to solve the workforce needs in this region." ■

*Please visit [federalcitycouncil.org](https://federalcitycouncil.org) for more of Tony's conversations with local and national thought leaders.*



# Progress on Youth Apprenticeships

Given current and future workforce needs, D.C.-area employers must play a more vigorous role in “co-producing” young talent to avoid the growing mismatch between high-demand jobs and the skills of D.C. high school graduates.

Toward that goal, the Federal City Council (FC2) is collaborating with CityBridge Education to create stronger pathways from high school to skilled jobs in the D.C. labor market by launching a citywide pilot youth apprenticeship program in the fall of 2020.

“Too many local residents are not benefiting from our economic growth because employers cannot find local talent and are having to import talent,” says Anthony Williams. “The cost is too high for everyone—students, employers and the community—for this to continue.”

The goal of this effort is to create more options for students on the pathway from high school to a career. Apprenticeships can be a step on the way to a 2-year or 4-year degree or a full-time job.

Jennie Niles, a CityBridge Education Senior Fellow and former Deputy Mayor for Education in the Bowser Administration, is leading the effort. In this early stage, Niles is setting up a Steering Committee, seeking key industry and school partners and determining the pilot’s scope. FC2 Trustees are being asked to support the initiative by serving on the committee, recruiting employer partners and providing work-based learning experiences for young people.

In June 2019, Niles led a mission to Switzerland to study its pioneering education-to-employment program at the Center on the Economics and Management of Education and Training Systems (CEMETS) Reform Lab. Leaders from the DC Public Schools, KIPP DC and Friendship Public Charter School—representing 70 percent of D.C.’s high school enrollment—joined her.

In the Swiss system, industry associations define competencies and build curricula while firms hire apprentices and provide extensive training. The apprenticeships are anchored in work, employer-led, market-driven and high-status. In Switzerland, 97 percent of youth complete a secondary program and

the youth unemployment rate is 4 percent.

The advantages to this approach for D.C. employers are many. The program will build a local talent pipeline, lower recruiting costs, increase productivity and increase worker retention. Currently, 76 percent of jobs in D.C. will require a postsecondary credential, but fewer than 20 percent of D.C. public high school graduates will attain a postsecondary degree of any kind.

The D.C. effort will be anchored by the career readiness infrastructure and expertise already in place under the auspices of organizations such as the D.C. Career Academy Network, Talent Ready and internship providers Urban Alliance and Genesys Works. ■



Photo Credit: DC Public Schools

## D.C. Pilot Youth Apprenticeship Program (Fall 2020)



**1-2**  
Industries



**4-6**  
School partners



**30-50**  
Apprentices



**3-5**  
Occupation  
pathways



**6-8**  
Employer  
partners

Source: CityBridge Education



## Update on the Langston Initiative

The Federal City Council (FC2) is continuing to work towards its goal of invigorating three of the National Park Service's (NPS) D.C. recreational facilities—East Potomac Golf Course, Langston Golf Course and Rock Creek Golf Course.

The FC2, with a team of partners, is working to prepare a proposal to the federal government outlining its plans and detailing the timeline for assuming control of the underutilized facilities. It also summarizes FC2's renovation plans and community-facing benefits.

"We believe the team is in a good position to be awarded the long-term lease," said Maura Brophy, FC2 Director of Transportation and

Infrastructure. "Our proposal is competitive and envisions how we'll improve the quality of the courses and elevate their standing as recreational assets in the District."

The NPS is expected to award the lease in 2020. A lease negotiation and transition period would occur in the months following the award. The current operator would oversee the facilities until the transition is completed.

If awarded the lease, the FC2 and its partners will oversee operations, improvements and community activities through Langston Initiative Partners, a 501(c)3 organization that has been set up to oversee this initiative. ■

## At-risk Students' Proximity to Leveler Schools

A recent report from the D.C. Policy Center examines the commute times of at-risk students to certain high-quality schools—leveler schools that boast the very highest growth in learning outcomes for their at-risk students.

The report, "Access to schools that level the playing field for D.C.'s at-risk students," found that out of 24 neighborhood clusters with higher concentrations of at-risk students, 10 lack easy commutes to leveler elementary schools and eight lack easy access to leveler middle schools.

Large outcome gaps remain for students who have been classified as at-risk for academic

failure based on low household income or adverse life experiences. To close the achievement gap, it is essential that at-risk students experience steady improvements in learning outcomes year on year.

"Your access to leveler schools is limited if you don't have a car or someone who can drive you to school," said Chelsea Coffin, Director of the Center's Education Policy Initiative. "That means some students may not be able to travel to the school that's going to do the best for them."

To read the report, and the D.C. Policy Center's other work, please visit [dcpolicycenter.org](http://dcpolicycenter.org). ■

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**To learn more about the FC2 and its programs and initiatives, visit [federalcitycouncil.org](http://federalcitycouncil.org) and its social media outlets.**





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