

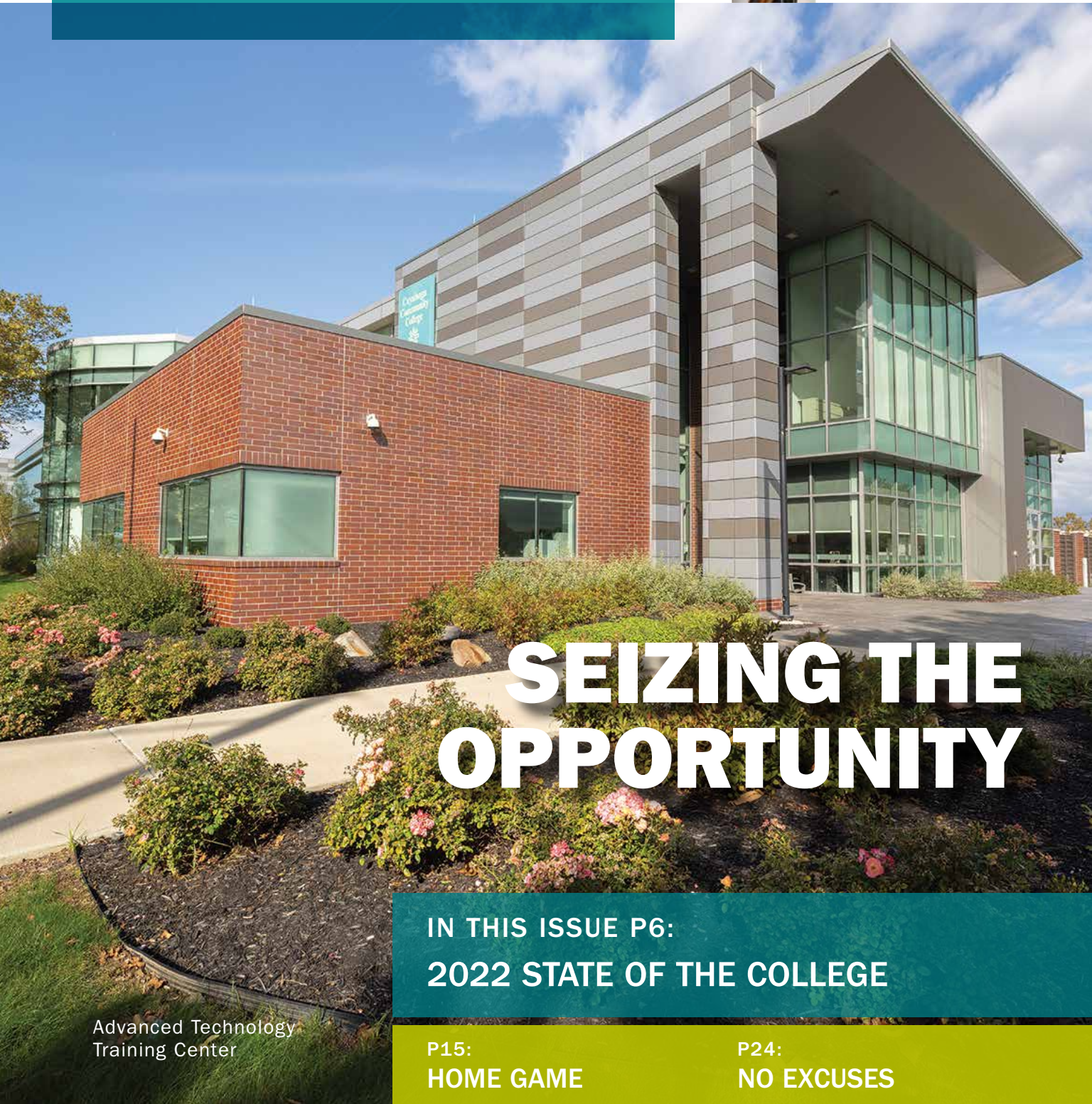
TRI-C®

TIMES



NOT PAINTING BY NUMBERS

Accounting major sweeps Press Club illustration awards



SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

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2022 STATE OF THE COLLEGE

Advanced Technology
Training Center

P15:
HOME GAME
TRI-C'S WEBPAGE UPDATE

P24:
NO EXCUSES
PROF MANUFACTURES SUCCESS

Back to pursuing your dreams.

COME BACK
TO GO FORWARD



tri-c.edu/startnow

Cuyahoga
Community
College



PRESIDENT'S Message

TO OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

As we ring in another new year, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) has much to celebrate. In 2021, amid the ambiguity and hardship of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Tri-C remained steadfast in its commitment to student access and success — helping hundreds of Northeast Ohioans attain their educational and career goals despite these added challenges.

This issue of *Tri-C Times* includes our sixth annual State of the College report (pages 6-11), which highlights some of the strategies used to achieve these positive outcomes as we progress toward a new normal. As many of you know, it is also my last State of the College report as Tri-C president.

On Oct. 13, I officially announced my retirement to the College and the community. The search for my replacement will begin soon; however, my tenure will continue through June 30, 2022. I am proud of everything the College has achieved since I became president in 2013, and I trust that the momentum we've built will continue unabated.



I AM PROUD OF EVERYTHING THE COLLEGE HAS ACHIEVED SINCE I BECAME PRESIDENT IN 2013, AND I TRUST THAT THE MOMENTUM WE'VE BUILT WILL CONTINUE UNABATED.

To that end, College faculty, staff and administration have collaborated to produce a Transformation Plan that builds upon the existing 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. The Transformation Plan is intended as a bridge between the current strategic plan and subsequent plans, which will be shaped by the priorities and strategic vision of Tri-C's next president.

The Transformation Plan has three goals: to reframe access; to innovate teaching and learning; and to align resources. Each of these goals connects to one or more of the strategic plan's five focus areas: student experience; brand/image; community; workforce; and affordability. The Transformation Plan is designed to allow the institution to remain flexible while staying true to its foundational principles of access, equity and success.

Please join me in celebrating the accomplishments of the past year and looking forward to an even more successful future — for our College, for our students, and for our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Alex Johnson, Ph.D.
President

IN THIS ISSUE:

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Tri-C Times is published by Cuyahoga Community College's Integrated Communications department for its friends and constituents. Feedback and story ideas are welcome. Send correspondence to Tri-C Times, 2500 E. 22nd St., Cleveland, OH 44115; call 216-987-4322; or email editorial@tri-c.edu.

JOHNSON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

After nearly a decade as Tri-C's fourth full-time president, Alex Johnson, Ph.D., announced his retirement on Oct. 13, 2021. He will remain with the College through June 30, 2022. Under Johnson's leadership, Tri-C saw increased graduation rates, a renewed commitment to educational access, new investments in workforce training and the passage of a \$227 million capital bond issue. A committee chaired by Tri-C trustee Victor Ruiz will oversee a national search for Johnson's replacement.



PNC GIFT PROMOTES ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A three-year, \$750K gift from PNC Bank and the PNC Foundation will help strengthen and support scholarships, wraparound services and dual-enrollment opportunities for high school and college students. These resources will help fund Tri-C's High Tech Academy and other comprehensive educational and job preparedness programs geared toward promoting economic empowerment in Northeast Ohio. The gift is part of PNC's \$1 billion commitment to support Black and low- to moderate-income communities throughout the region.



WINTER 2021

AWARD REGARDED AS NATION'S SIGNATURE RECOGNITION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Cuyahoga Community College was the only Ohio school named to the biennial Aspen Prize Top 150 list, awarded by the Aspen Institute in November. This distinction makes the College eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

Selection was based on student outcomes that include learning, completion rates, employment rates, earnings and equity. The Aspen Institute reviewed data from a pool of more than 1,000 public two-year colleges.





SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

GUIDED BY A NEW TRANSFORMATION PLAN, TRI-C WILL EMERGE FROM THE PANDEMIC A STRONGER, MORE CREATIVE AND NIMBLE INSTITUTION



Higher education is not usually described as nimble. However, in March of 2020, that changed — and radically so.

That was the month when what seemed an abstract concern became a very real threat. Tutorials on washing hands became shelter-in-place recommendations. Strange images on the nightly news of people wearing masks in public started to appear in 3D in our own grocery stores. People were afraid. A global pandemic had come to our doorstep.

Cuyahoga Community College faced what would become one of its greatest challenges: figuring out how to deliver services to students, keep people employed and, through workforce development, serve the Northeast Ohio business community in an environment that was not only unprecedented, but changing from day to day. An anticipated decline in enrollment didn't help, joining other factors in creating a projected \$25 million budget shortfall.

I met with our executive vice presidents, vice presidents and others at 9 a.m. every morning. It was essentially the higher education version of a war room. These meetings were followed by other meetings, which were followed by more meetings — all to gather as much information as possible from as many College constituents as possible.

The goals were simple: to continue service to students and the community as seamlessly as possible and to preserve and protect the College against what was arguably the greatest threat it had ever faced. The result was something even more powerful: an immediate, decisive response to the pandemic, followed by a plan that would capitalize on what we learned to build a stronger and more agile institution bonded more than ever to its mission.

Rather than just surviving, we wanted to reach a position of strength through the determination and innovation captured in an ambitious Transformation Plan. Introduced in May, it acts as a bridge that keeps the College focused while responding to the new realities emerging from the pandemic.



The plan will guide Tri-C through roughly the next two years as a complement to the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, designed to advance the College’s focus areas of access, equity and success through five deliberately selected priorities: Student Experience, Brand and Image, Community, Workforce and Affordability.



REFRAME ACCESS

Access encompasses everything we do to ensure that those who want to attend Tri-C can attend Tri-C.

One focus of the Transformation Plan is workers who were laid off during the pandemic and need to train for new careers. Service sector jobs in hospitality, for example, were hit hard.

The College’s workforce division takes upskilling and reskilling seriously as part of its responsibility to the Northeast Ohio economy. William Gary, executive vice president of Workforce, Community and Economic Development, has met with area industry and business leaders to assess where workers are needed now and is developing a broader range of short-term certificates that align with those needs.

Donors to the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation will support many of the Transformation Plan’s initiatives to close employment skills gaps and retrain or upskill workers. The money will support programs in manufacturing, IT, health care and police and fire training at Tri-C. This includes expansion of Tri-C’s mobile unit fleet to take job training to more companies and low-income neighborhoods.

“We want to target people who are not participating in economic vitality and social growth and bring them into the fold to become a talent pipeline for the many businesses crying for qualified staff,” Gary said.

Developing new programs that respond to new opportunities extends across the College. In addition to growth in the workforce division, Tri-C has launched new programs in anthropology, business, English and captioning and court reporting, for example.

Another initiative designed to recruit students to fill the talent pipeline is Jobs First, an earn-and-learn program that connects Tri-C students with employment. In assembling

ALIGNING MISSION WITH (THE NEW) REALITY

The Transformation Plan has three goals:



Reframe Access



Innovation, Teaching and Learning



Align Resources

STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS AREAS



Student Experience Provide a comprehensive student experience in a welcoming, safe environment



Brand and Image Promote a culture of transparency, accountability and inclusion



Community Build upon partnerships to meet student needs, improve NEO quality of life



Workforce Align programs, employer needs so all can engage in a growing NEO economy



Affordability Maintain affordable, accessible education; stewardship of taxpayer resources; institutional integrity

REFRAME ACCESS (Cont.)



JOBS FIRST
Earn While You Learn

Jobs First, the College has developed employment support, secured job and internship spots, reached out to students and offered resume and interview coaching.

Through the program, students can earn a paycheck and gain experience while they earn degrees and certifications at Tri-C. The plan is to couple this with state initiatives that reimburse businesses for covering this training.

The College's Level Up campaign is a Transformation Plan initiative that targets Cleveland Metropolitan School District and certain inner-ring school district students who postponed or stopped their education during the pandemic. Its goal is to get them back on track toward earning a degree or certificate. The program is run in conjunction with Cleveland State University and launched in the fall.

Level Up students may be eligible for up to \$2,000 for expenses like food, transportation and books; tuition assistance; and a free laptop.

From July through early November, 940 students enrolled at Tri-C as the result of this program.

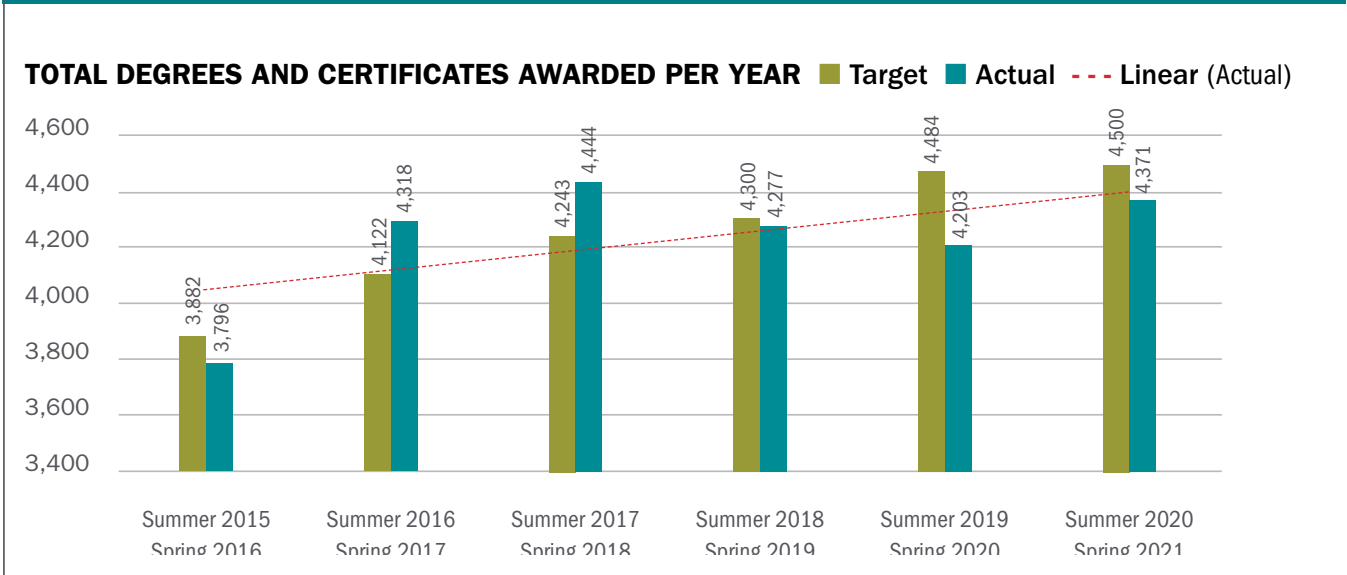
Don't settle for less, level up to the kind of job that a college education can unlock for you! Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C*) and Cleveland State University are teaming up to provide the funding and support to take you to the next level.

Find out more at: tri-c.edu/LevelUp or csuohio.edu/LevelUp

Don't just dream about the lifestyle a college education can unlock, level up and make it happen! Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C*) and Cleveland State University are teaming up to provide the funding and support to take you to the next level.

Find out more at: tri-c.edu/LevelUp or csuohio.edu/LevelUp

Tri-C launched multiple programs in recent years with one goal in mind: creating clearer pathways to commencement for students. The efforts brought immediate results, with graduation rates climbing to record highs.



INNOVATION, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Expanding online courses had been on the College's to-do list, but when the pandemic forced 98% of instruction to move online, that project got a jolt of adrenaline. As a result, Tri-C is now positioned to offer a wide range of course delivery formats and flexible learning options under the umbrella of FlexEd: Learning That Fits Your Life.

Even though many classes are now back on campus, online and blended class models are here to stay. FlexEd offers students flexibility in how they pursue their education at Tri-C.

Karen Miller, provost and executive vice president of Access, Learning and Success, put it this way: "It's proven to all of us

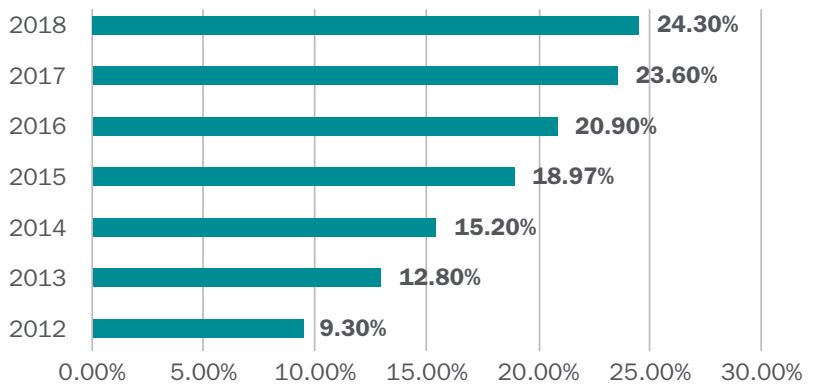
that we are a much stronger institution than I think we even realized. It gave us the impetus to reinforce everything that we do virtually, and we are much better for it in the long run."

The College is also expanding competency-based learning, which allows students to earn credit based on life and work experience.

Through the Transformation Plan, the College will improve other virtual functionality, too. A 24/7 tutoring app is in development, and training and resources for online instruction have been expanded for faculty. Tri-C is also developing a more intuitive online registration process to make access easier and faster for students.

The federal government measures success rates in higher education through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The system tracks how many first-time, full-time community college students earn an associate degree within three years of enrollment. After years of growth, Tri-C's IPEDS rate now exceeds the national average for community colleges in urban settings.

IPEDS GRADUATION RATE BY COHORT



ALIGN RESOURCES

To help students pay for or return to college, Tri-C launched a student debt relief program, a tuition assistance program and a program called "College Comeback." Donations to the Foundation and government relief funds pay for the initiatives. This money has also helped cover expenses for students like food, child care, housing and health emergencies, and other costs. Tri-C is working to expand such programs.

The Transformation Plan also sees the institution expanding outreach to students where they are. Overseen by the Institute for Community Engagement and Development, three central components of this effort are Access Centers, Central Community Partners, and Community Training and Job Hubs.

In 2019, Tri-C launched partnerships with Esperanza Inc., The MetroHealth System, Olivet Housing and Community Development Corp. (an arm of Olivet Institutional Baptist

Church) and Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority to provide affordable educational and workforce programming right in the neighborhood. Plans are underway to open a Slavic Village Access Center in spring 2022.

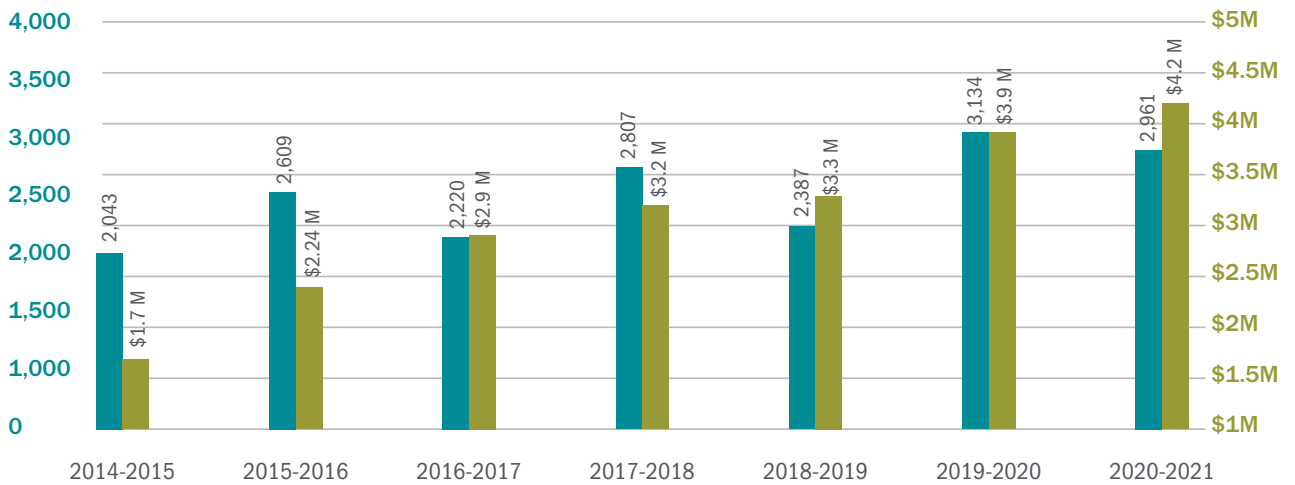
From Spring 2020 to Spring 2021, nearly 400 people participated in Access Center programming, which includes the Workforce Success course, Women in Transition, Google IT certification, Basic Computer Skills, Medical Terminology and Ohio Options for Adults (including the Aspire/GED and Adult Diploma Program).

The College has further established a partnership with Cuyahoga Job and Family Services to connect Access Center partnerships to available benefits, and it has delivered Access Center programming to youth and their families at the county juvenile detention center.

Central Community Partners are also critical to the effort.

Scholarships help turn students into graduates and dreams into success stories. Over the past decade, Tri-C and the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation have awarded more than \$26 million in scholarships to nearly 24,000 individuals. These dollars represent an investment in the future of Northeast Ohio. To join the growing list of donors contributing to student success at the College, visit tri-c.edu/give.

SCHOLARSHIPS ■ Number of scholarships awarded ■ Scholarship dollars disbursed (in millions)



ALIGN RESOURCES (Cont.)

Tri-C brings College resources, college preparation, training and education into community-based settings through relationships with mayors, superintendents and other community partners for short- and intermediate-term programming.



An example of the College’s Community Training and Job Hubs can be found with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. Tri-C brings programming to RTA to help the agency recruit new employees, upskill current workers and enhance leadership teams. Plans call for offering employment pathway programs like the College’s Workforce Success course, Adult Diploma Program and Women in Transition in coordination with the transit agency.

Tri-C training options for current RTA employees will range from leadership sessions offered through Corporate College® to commercial driver’s license (CDL) refresher courses run

by the Transportation Innovation Center. Most sessions will take place at RTA locations.

In 2019, RTA partnered with Tri-C on a temporary CDL training program to recruit and train bus and paratransit operators. Dozens have used the program to land in an RTA driver’s seat, and that program is ongoing.

The College also looked at its own employees. In March 2020, those who could work from home were asked to do so. What most people thought would be a couple of weeks turned into months, and then a year. A lightbulb went off.

“We recognized after we transitioned to a remote work environment that we were pretty darn good at it,” said David Kuntz, the College’s treasurer and executive vice president of Administration and Finance. “We were able to function at a pretty high level and, frankly, do it more efficiently.”

College employees have recently returned to campuses, but a flexible work arrangement has been implemented that allows options like working alternative hours, a compressed work week and working from home.

“Part of the Transformation Plan is about positioning our workforce for what it needs to look like for the future,” Kuntz said.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Collegewide collaboration was key to developing the Transformation Plan, and almost no part of the institution was left untouched. The pandemic forced change, and it did not overlook Tri-C. The College didn't just need to adapt — it needed to adapt fast.

The technology and know-how are now in place to deliver classes in a variety of formats, from totally online to in-person to a combination of the two. Human and financial resources are realigned to embrace change. Students have new ways to access the College, and we are reaching them right where they live and work.

“The Transformation Plan is a bridge that helps us refocus and shift and respond to the evolving pandemic, and a lot of very good, very strong projects have come out of it that will help us be a stronger institution,” Miller said.

Despite drops in enrollment due to COVID-19, Tri-C has conferred the highest number of degrees and certificates in the history of the institution: 4,500 annual degrees through Summer and Fall 2020 and Spring 2021.

The College expects to exceed last year's IPEDS graduation rate of 24%, with more than half (13%) of those graduates being students of color.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved that Tri-C could do more than just weather the storm. It proved that the College could quickly and creatively adapt and emerge a stronger institution for all.

THE TRANSFORMATION PLAN SEEKS TO:

- Stabilize enrollment
- Serve our most at-risk student populations
- Support Northeast Ohio's economic growth
- Maintain the College's financial health and stability
- Keep the safety of our students, faculty and staff at the forefront





STORY BY Erik Cassano

PHOTOS BY Cody York

TRI-C'S CAREER CENTERS WERE THRUST INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THIS IS HOW THEY CHANGED THEIR APPROACH TO CONTINUE SERVING STUDENTS.

CAREER

GOALS



For those who help people find employment, the COVID-19 pandemic had a far-reaching ripple effect.

Not only did it impact how such organizations operated internally, it also profoundly impacted the lives of those who had been seeking employment — many of whom halted their job searches entirely.

The Cuyahoga Community College Career Centers have experienced every vexing, multilayered challenge posed by the pandemic. Nevertheless, they adapted and persevered — and they continue to provide students with much-needed services, encouraging them to resume their job searches and begin their careers post-graduation.

“We offer extensive services and programs in the full life cycle of career development,” said Sandy McKnight, the College’s associate vice president of Access, Learning and Success, who oversees the Career Centers. “We serve the entire College, at every campus and location, across pathways and programs, so we definitely saw the full scope of how the pandemic impacted our students.”



Impact on students

The pandemic altered students' schedules, living arrangements and financial situations. Concerns about exposure to the virus were rampant.

McKnight said, "Many were concerned about catching the virus, and many more needed to stay home to care for immediate family members. So there were multiple factors in play."

With anxiety and uncertainty touching every part of students' lives, Career Center staff reached out to them on their terms, providing virtual training, interviews and, in some cases, employment.

Maria Selos, a Tri-C career coach, said the first step toward recovering students who had stopped pursuing employment was to make them comfortable with technology.

"We recognized that this was going to become the new normal, perhaps even after the pandemic ends," Selos said. "So we quickly built new ways to help students navigate the virtual world, including on-demand training workshops and virtual mock interviews."

Throughout 2021, as vaccination rates have increased, the Career Centers have moved more services back on-site at its campus locations; however, virtual services still remain

a major component of their operations. McKnight and center staff said a multifaceted approach to career services is crucial to putting students back on the path to a career after nearly two years of on-demand work and short-term, wage-driven job searching.

"Many students turned to 'gig' employment, like rideshare and food delivery services," McKnight said. "They were going for whatever could get them the best short-term wages while limiting their exposure to the virus. The problem with that is, it doesn't help them build a career with long-term, sustainable-wage employment."

It's a matter of trying to get students to play the "long game," seeing the benefits of career employment over a short-term paycheck, all while coaching them to operate in a job-searching environment that has likely been permanently changed by the pandemic.

"I don't think searching for jobs or interviewing online will change anytime soon," Selos said. "As a Career Center coach, I've been sharing more networking opportunities for students to learn about companies, jobs and overall industry expectations. When a candidate does prior research, they can better express why they would be a great fit for an employer during the interview — and employers hear that loud and clear."

"WE OFFER EXTENSIVE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS IN THE FULL LIFE CYCLE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT."

— Sandy McKnight, Associate VP, Access, Learning and Success



Impact on work

Communication is integral to the Career Centers' ability to do its job. Coaching, counseling and encouragement can't have an impact without the means to reach students. That's why, like many departments and organizations, the Career Centers had to adapt on the fly during the early days of the pandemic, shifting its operations online.

"That was one of the first hurdles we had to clear," said Maya Walsh, a Tri-C career placement specialist. "Workshops were always in person, as were most one-to-one appointments. In a very short time span, we had to convert all those services to a video screen."

In order to adapt to all-remote service, the Career Centers had to ensure all staff had the proper technology, including laptops, cameras and docking stations. Staff members were also trained on the full functionality of various virtual meeting platforms such as Webex, Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

"It was a lot of upskilling in a short period of time," McKnight said. "In addition to meeting with students, we also meet with employers seeking new talent — and those employers use a variety of meeting platforms."

Over the course of the pandemic, the Career Centers also implemented other platforms and processes geared toward the virtual environment. In July 2020, the centers adopted Handshake, a comprehensive career management system that connects colleges and students with open positions. More than 3,500 employers have connected with Tri-C via Handshake thus far.

The centers also adapted their summer internship program to allow students to apply for a combination of remote, in-person and blended positions, with an all-online interview process. With this new format, the program placed more than 70 students in internships during the Summer 2021 session.

The pandemic has fundamentally changed many things for Career Center staff and the students they assist, but it hasn't changed the centers' mission to provide services that lead to meaningful employment. The key, Walsh says, is to continue looking for new ways to operate within the new reality.

"Adapting our systems and service delivery model has been a challenge, but I think it has some valuable lessons as well," she said. "Change is inevitable, but it can also be good if you handle it right. You need to be adaptable as an organization and never get set in your ways. If we continue to remember that, we will continue to succeed in providing a path to a better future for our students."



LOCATIONS:

Eastern Campus

Metropolitan Campus (Manufacturing Technology Center)

Metropolitan Campus (Student Services building)

Western Campus

Westshore Campus

About 1,600 career coaching appointments conducted annually, nearly half of which were conducted online or via telephone during the pandemic.

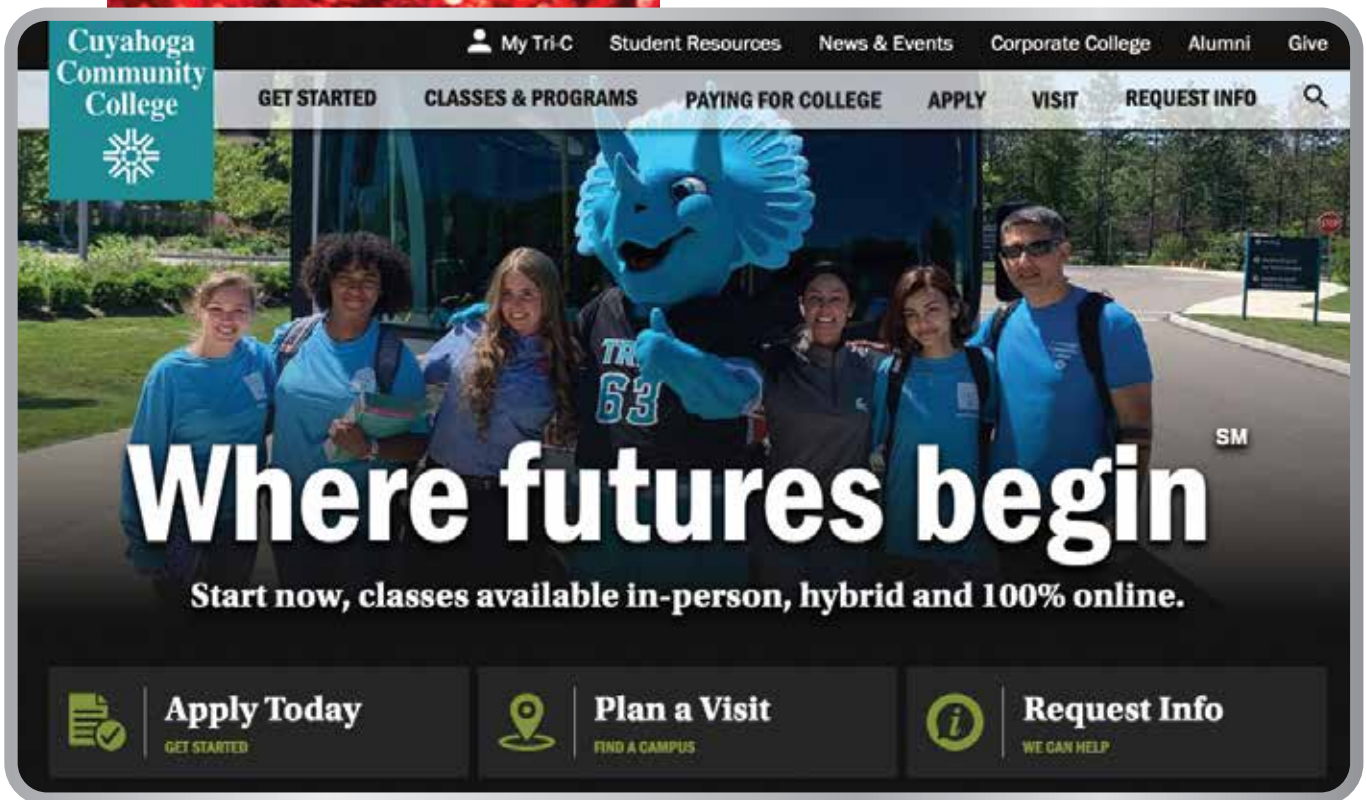
In 2021, partnered with more than 2,600 employers to offer more than 21,000 positions to Tri-C students.

Selected services include resume review, cover letter development, interview prep, workshops, career fairs and a summer internship program.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

TRI-C'S UPDATED HOMEPAGE OFFERS A MORE ATTRACTIVE AND USER-FRIENDLY DESIGN

STORY BY **Michael von Glahn**



Websites, like fashion, are a product of their time. Last updated in 2014, the Cuyahoga Community College website was due for a makeover. So after nearly a year and a half of trying on new clothes, the refreshed College homepage debuted in June 2021.

Lisa Dobransky, Tri-C's director of strategic communications, said the 2014 update was "on the cutting edge" when it rolled out. It added responsive design that allowed the site to render well on any screen. So for the update, functionality was less of an issue than how the site was organized.

"The majority of the homepage real estate all had these calls to action to do something — to get started, to apply

for financial aid or to take a class," said Brittany Hanek, manager of interactive marketing for the College. However, usability testing found that visitors weren't exploring most of that territory.



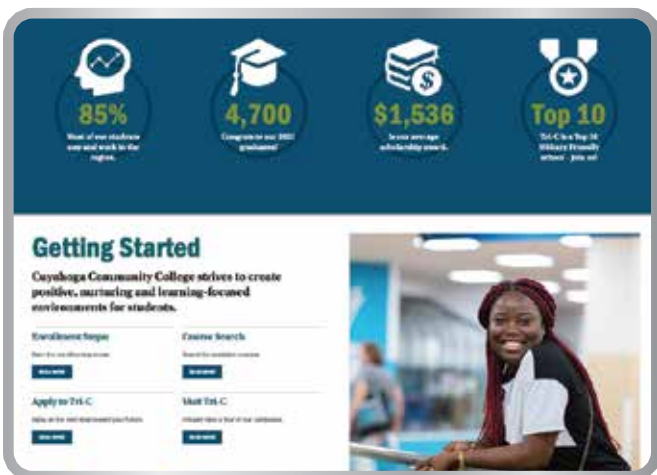
Lisa Dobransky



Brittany Hanek

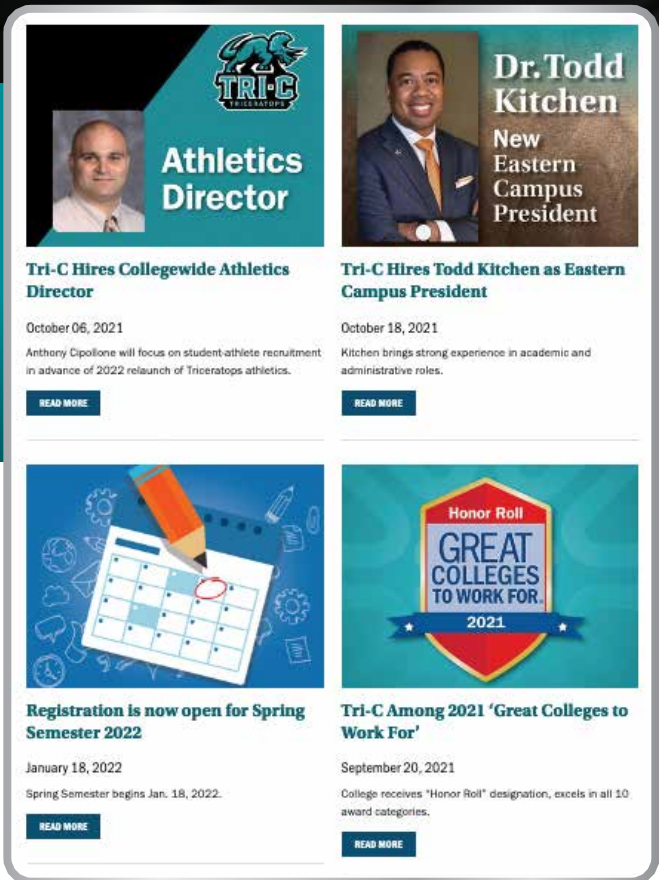


Partnering with Cleveland-based marketing agency thunder::tech, Tri-C staff interviewed current and prospective students, parents, senior citizens and others to understand how they use the College’s public website. They wanted to find out what did and didn’t work. The team discovered that, while the navigation bar at the top of the homepage worked well and saw heavy use, visitors rarely ventured into the content below it. The redesign places the homepage’s three most important links at the top: Apply, Visit and Request Info.



“We really just want to make sure that students are getting to the information they need quickly and with as few clicks as possible,” Hanek said. “Moving those links to the very top of the page has helped do that.”

Visitors will immediately notice a bolder color palette, an attractive font scheme and a simplified and intuitive layout. But the improvements warrant a closer look. Instead of a single static image near the top, the homepage now cycles through a series of three images. Campus news and events, formerly placed at the bottom of the page, appear just below the rotating images, followed by a new infographic section using icons and numbers as a quick way to tell the Tri-C story. Below these are stories highlighting student achievement — something the previous homepage lacked.



Accessibility has also been improved. “We constantly look to update the site to be ADA-compliant,” Hanek said. One way to navigate the old site was through colored bars at the top of the homepage. Unfortunately, the colors did not contrast enough for visitors with vision issues. The bars are now black and white for sharper contrast. Similarly, live links are now identified by bold, colored text, which allows users to more easily distinguish them from regular text.

“WE REALLY JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT STUDENTS ARE GETTING TO THE INFORMATION THEY NEED QUICKLY AND WITH AS FEW CLICKS AS POSSIBLE.”

— Brittany Hanek, Manager, Interactive Marketing

Dobrinsky said she was “really pleased with the process and how everything worked, and the overall ease of implementing it. I can’t say enough about our internal IT team.”

Feedback on the redesign has been positive. The June rollout was eased by alerting users beforehand that change was coming. The team also provided a preview video describing what to expect.

There has been professional recognition, as well. In October, Tri-C took first place in the Microsite/Landing Page category of the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations District 3 Medallion Awards.

NOT PAINTING BY NUMBERS



STORY BY Michael von Glahn
PHOTOS BY Cody York

**ACCOUNTING MAJOR
SWEEPS PRESS CLUB
ILLUSTRATION AWARDS
BY TACKLING TOUGH SUBJECTS
WITH INSIGHT, CREATIVITY**



When Jazmin Johnson hits the books, it is in pursuit of an accounting degree at Cuyahoga Community College's Metropolitan Campus. But when she turns to her creative side, life is far more than mere numbers.

When this side is activated, she might be working on a contribution to *The Voice*, Tri-C's student newspaper. Johnson, 33, from Marion, Ohio, is also an illustration journalist for *The Cleveland Observer*, a community-based news monthly, and for *Cleveland Magazine*. Her published artwork earned four awards in the Press Club of Cleveland's 2021 All-Ohio Excellence in Journalism competition.

The awards, honoring professional and college journalists in disciplines including print and broadcast reporting, photography and illustration, were announced in a virtual ceremony last June. Three of Johnson's entries swept the Illustration Single Image category, and she placed second in the Best in Ohio: Illustration, All Publications category.

Artistic since she was a toddler, Johnson said she was "always doodling and creating things from my imagination, making a mess everywhere."

Art classes at school helped refine her work, and she cites Claude Monet, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Faith Ringgold as influences. She works in pen and ink, oils, acrylics, watercolors and colored pencil.

She created *Dubai Life During Corona*, which won first place in Illustration Single Image, to depict that country during the pandemic through the eyes of a Muslim woman at prayer. Judges noted the work's intricate detail. Johnson gathered impressions of Dubai from online media and watched live events from the country. "My connection to Dubai was through religion and seeing the importance of prayer on a global scale," she said.

"MY CONNECTION TO DUBAI WAS THROUGH RELIGION AND SEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER ON A GLOBAL SCALE."

— Jazmin Johnson, Student, Cuyahoga Community College



Renaissance Jazz (second place) shows the central role jazz played in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and '30s. She said it is “a reminder that the roots of jazz stem from the African American community.” Judges said, “Very impactful work. [Her] art created a great vision.”





Johnson took inspiration for *Native American Art* (third place) from Native American peoples' use of colorful feathers and makeup to express their creativity and devotion.

Learning she'd swept an entire category left her feeling "very honored and blessed."

"Hard work and dedication pay off, and when you're an artist being recognized for your artwork, it solidifies a part of your legacy," she said.

Johnson's work will be exhibited March 2-30 at Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, 2345 Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

Other Tri-C student winners in the Press Club competition were Mario "Marz" Anderson Jr., 29, of Cleveland, and Annabella King, 21, from Akron.

Anderson, who earned an Associate of Arts degree in media and journalism studies at Tri-C, is now a journalism major at Kent State University. He won first place in the Best Online Report Trade/Two-Year School category for his piece "How

It Started vs. How It's Going" and third place in the Digital Media Analysis category for his work on a breaking news package, "Trump COVID+."

King, who earned an Associate of Arts degree in liberal arts with a focus on political science from Tri-C last spring, is now a senior at The University of Akron studying national security and intelligence studies. She won third place in Best Online Report Trade/Two-Year School for a personal essay titled "Changing Seasons, Changing World."

**"HARD WORK AND DEDICATION PAY OFF,
AND WHEN YOU'RE AN ARTIST BEING
RECOGNIZED FOR YOUR ARTWORK,
IT SOLIDIFIES A PART OF YOUR LEGACY."**

— Jazmin Johnson



MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE



TYLER OLSON WANTS TO HELP STUDENTS TURN CONTENTION INTO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE

Three recent headlines from *The Washington Post*:

- “Democrats to scale back Treasury’s IRS bank reporting plan amid GOP uproar”
- “Will abortion decide the Virginia governor’s race? McAuliffe says yes; Youngkin, not so much.”
- “High-profile and fully vaccinated but immunocompromised: Colin Powell’s death wrongly seized upon to undermine utility of coronavirus vaccines”

STORY BY **Jarrold Zickefoose**



A YouTube video titled “Think Fast, Talk Smart: Communication Techniques” has more than 24 million views.

Right-wing and left-wing pundits aim more for your attention than your edification.

The din is everywhere, from kitchen tables to conference tables. We live in a culture that cultivates conflict. From coronavirus vaccines to the Black Lives Matter movement, it seems we cannot agree on anything. Highly prized, then, is the ability to turn these tensions into something productive.

Cuyahoga Community College’s Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies program exists explicitly to impart this skill, offering a certificate that is uniquely suited to our times.

Founded in 2010, the program “empowers students through innovative instruction to understand and transform human conflict, promoting peace in the family, community and world,” according to its mission statement.

“THE CERTIFICATE CAN HELP STUDENTS ADVANCE IN A WIDE VARIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS, BUT IT CAN ALSO HELP THEM MAKE BETTER SENSE OF DAY-TO-DAY LIFE AND THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.”

— Tyler Olson, Program Manager, Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies

Program manager, Tyler Olson, puts it in simpler terms.

“Conflict resolution is key to making the world a better place for everyone,” he said. “The certificate can help students advance in a wide variety of professional settings, but it can also help them make better sense of day-to-day life and their personal relationships.”

A valuable and widely applicable credential in the professional world, the Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies certificate imparts:

- Cultural awareness, conflict intelligence, consensus building and group facilitation
- Effective communication, management and negotiation
- De-escalation, active listening and mediation
- Transformational thinking, decision-making, compassion and empathy





“We live in a culture where conflict is frequently weaponized. Sorting out facts and understanding motivations is more important than it ever has been,” Olson said.

Olson’s work with the program is close to his heart.

“I moved across the country in 2013 for two primary reasons: I held the deep desire to work at an urban community college, and I wanted to work with a program that empowered people with the skills and knowledge to more constructively navigate conflict and work toward more equitable, just and peaceful communities and workplaces.”

Before relocating to Northeast Ohio from the Pacific Northwest, Olson lived and worked in Honduras for two years. The experience fortified his commitment to conflict- and social justice-oriented work.

“Leading this program at Tri-C has been the perfect fit. It has been tremendously rewarding to see both young adults and seasoned professionals come through our program more equipped to deal with conflict and influence positive change in their lives and in the world,” he said.

As a so-called “soft skill,” effective communication is a critical component in successful leadership, and students who earn this certificate apply it all over the place. Olson has seen graduates pursue careers in fields ranging from organizational consulting to law enforcement.

In addition to awarding a certificate, the Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies program has articulation agreements with local four-year schools through which credits earned at Tri-C can be applied toward bachelor’s degrees in similar disciplines.

“People who have these skills are able to help facilitate dialogue, and we need more of that,” Olson said. “We need people who can make our communities better.”



NO



ANTOINE BROWN DID NOT LET EARLY CHALLENGES DEFINE HIM, AND HE DEMANDS THE SAME OF HIS STUDENTS

If you're looking for a reason not to do something, you'll always find one," says Antoine Brown.

This expression is more than just a platitude to him — it's a foundational principle.

From where he sits now, the assistant professor of manufacturing and industrial engineering technology looks back on a life that began in project housing on the west side of Cleveland; a life populated with rough crowds. He remembers dropping out of high school and spending time in a correctional facility.

But Brown insisted that these things were not going to define him, and a new path began to open up when he found a full-time job in CNC machining. He suddenly had a steady income, and his life took on structure. Eventually, that job inspired him to go back to school.

"One of my co-workers was attending classes at Tri-C, and he told me all about how he planned to use his degree. It sounded like a good step forward," said Brown. His factory experience, coupled with a natural affinity for math and science, led him to the College's mechanical engineering technology program.

At 28, he was older than many college freshmen, but this did not intimidate him. On the contrary, those extra years of life experience gave him the tenacity he needed to complete not one, but three degrees: an Associate of Science from Tri-C, along with bachelor's and master's degrees from Cleveland State University. He accomplished all of this while working third shift at his machining job.

EXCUSES



STORY BY **Beth Cieslik**

PHOTOS BY **Cody York**

If Brown's story sounds familiar, it's probably because his experiences mirror those of many Tri-C students. With an average age of 25.6, the typical Tri-C student works one or more jobs while taking classes. Many have struggled to find their path in life. And a good number of students — including Brown — come to Tri-C for a fresh start.

"I share my own story to try and make students realize they're doing the right thing," he said. "At the end of the day, regardless of what's happened in your life, you have a task to do. No excuses."

Brown kept in touch with his Tri-C professors after transferring to Cleveland State, and in 2014 they encouraged him to apply for an open lab supervisor position. Soon, Brown was back at the Metropolitan Campus — working for the same program he'd recently graduated from.

His keen ambition and extensive industry knowledge resulted in two promotions: first to additive manufacturing preceptor and later to tenure-track professor.

"I'm in year three of the five-year track," he said. "Going from high school dropout to first-generation college graduate to tenure-track faculty member is my proudest accomplishment."

Brown's tenure portfolio will surely be enhanced by his winning proposal for Tri-C's 2019-2020 Faculty Innovation Grant. The grant money was used to purchase CNC router kits for his students to assemble and program.

"Usually, students are looking at the clock waiting for class to end. But when it comes to these types of projects, they get so engaged that they don't want to stop working. That's always a good thing."

This kind of hands-on experience is important for those seeking careers in Northeast Ohio's manufacturing industry. Employees who are able to step in ready for work, without training, are invaluable to companies that supply the world, especially during a supply-chain crunch. Jet engine components, plumbing tools, medical devices, auto parts and more are manufactured here in Northeast Ohio.

TRI-C FACULTY PROFILE

The current worker shortage has made long hours mandatory, but employers are compensating for this by raising pay. Sign-on bonuses of up to \$2,000 are common.

If you like hands-on work, a career in manufacturing offers a stable, family-sustaining wage as well as a real sense of accomplishment.

“At Tri-C, you can get a CNC certification in as little as four to six months and start a career where you could earn as much as an engineer with a four-year degree,” Brown said. “And there will always be a need. Because literally everything we touch, someone had to make it.”

Brown keeps up with industry trends and technology by working in the field himself. In summer 2021, he worked for a company that manufactures bridge parts. He says that one thing most companies have in common is that they encourage employees to think about how the parts they make will be used.

“You’re creating something that’s going to hold up a bridge or power an engine, and so you know you need to do it right — because it could be you driving over that bridge or flying in that plane one day.”

Tri-C students benefit from Brown’s life experience just as much as his industry experience. It’s important to him to be transparent and relatable, and he encourages the same from his students. Many of them are older,

looking to start second or third careers. Some even have advanced degrees in areas totally unrelated to manufacturing.

But regardless of age, cultural background or any other factor, they all need to be reminded from time to time that they’re on the right path.

“I tell them, wherever you are in life, it’s not too late. You can still accomplish your goals,” Brown said. “Because if I did it, then they can, too.”

“GOING FROM HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT TO FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATE TO TENURE-TRACK FACULTY MEMBER IS MY PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT.”

— Antoine Brown, Assistant Professor,
Manufacturing Industrial Engineering Technology





THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS LASTED FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS. NURSES LIKE TRI-C GRADUATE **JACOB KINGZETT HAVE BEEN ON THE FRONT LINES FOR ITS ENTIRETY, EXPERIENCING ITS TOLL LIKE FEW OTHERS.**

ANSWERING THE CALL

Pandemic health and safety precautions have been the norm for a while now. Mask-wearing, social distancing and vaccines are just a fact of life. News stories about COVID-19? Routine. And because of that, frontline workers — particularly those in the medical field — have faded from the headlines.

In the early days of the pandemic, the news was full of stories chronicling the massive task placed in front of health care workers and the excruciating toll the global health crisis took on them. Nearly two years later, though, their work has largely joined the background noise of daily pandemic life. But the burden is still there. Health-care workers like Cuyahoga Community College nursing graduate Jacob Kingzett still fight to save lives every day.

A critical care nurse who graduated from Tri-C in spring 2019, Kingzett’s journey has taken him from New York City to Pittsburgh to Daytona Beach, Florida. At each stop, he’s seen a different aspect of the pandemic and its costs.

“Nursing combines the art of human compassion with the science of medicine,” Kingzett said. “As a critical care nurse, you often see patients come to you in a pretty bad state. You work to rehabilitate them, improve their quality of life and, hopefully, have a good final outcome. During the pandemic, however, you didn’t see as many good outcomes, to say the least.”

STORY BY **Erik Cassano**

Into the fire

Kingzett, 27, is an Independence High School graduate who followed his grandmother and aunt into the nursing field. He had been working at the Cleveland Clinic for about seven months when the pandemic reached the United States in March 2020.

Though he planned to attend Ohio University to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing that spring, Kingzett knew that his associate degree from Tri-C had given him the skills needed to work on the front lines, assisting patients in some of the nation's most stricken areas.

He headed to New York City in April to work at New York Presbyterian Hospital in Queens — an early COVID-19 hotspot.

"The ratio of nurses to patients is normally one to two," Kingzett said. "When I got there, I was taking five to seven patients at a time. It was terrible. We were putting patients in the auditorium, cafeteria and wherever else we could find room."

Wearing full-body vinyl suits with respirators, all Kingzett and his fellow nurses could often do was try to maintain patient stability and comfort.

"In a lot of cases, we could only make sure the ventilators were working properly and that the medication keeping the patients alive didn't run out," he said. "Many couldn't have family in the hospital with them, so we were the only ones who could be with them. If they died, they often died alone because we were stretched so thin helping others. It was very hard to watch all of that."

"I LEARNED A STRONG SENSE OF PROFESSIONALISM AT TRI-C, ALONG WITH SOME OF THE WAYS THAT RESEARCH IS LEADING TO PROGRESSIVE CHANGE IN THE MEDICAL FIELD."

— Jacob Kingzett, Tri-C alumnus

Nothing could have prepared Kingzett for what he saw in New York. The only thing he had to fall back on was his training. He relied heavily on what he learned at Tri-C as he worked on the front lines.

"I learned a strong sense of professionalism at Tri-C, along with some of the ways that research is leading to progressive change in the medical field," he said. "When you're in the middle of such a terrible ordeal, you focus on the task at hand. You also start to pay attention to what you — and the medical field as a whole — can learn. You eventually start to see the long-term good that can arise from enduring such a bad time. I think that's what gets you through.

"For example, the research from the early 2000s SARS epidemic in Asia served as a springboard to quickly develop and produce the current COVID vaccines. It really drives home how research leads to those outcomes."





Moving to research

Kingzett's early pandemic experience reinforced a growing interest in research. In July 2020, he accepted a position with the UPMC system in the Pittsburgh area, where he worked in an oncology ICU and learned about additional advancements in medical research. In a year's time, he was able to complete his bachelor's degree from Ohio University.

With a growing background in research and a second college degree under his belt, Kingzett decided to pursue a doctoral degree from the University of Pittsburgh, aiming for a career as a research nurse. But not before he headed back to the front lines once again.

In early summer 2021, COVID-19 cases began flaring up — particularly in the southern United States. With hospitals surpassing capacity and in dire need of nurses, he once again put his academic plans on hold for a six-month stint at a hospital in Daytona Beach.

"I've been working in the ICU with COVID patients since the summer," Kingzett said. "In the late summer, our ICU was at 200% capacity. It does bring back some of the memories from New York, which I don't think you ever completely get over. But as a critical care nurse, you go where you're needed."

Kingzett hopes to begin his doctoral studies this spring. As a research nurse, he wants to work toward ensuring that nothing like the COVID-19 pandemic ever happens again.

"I want to specialize in infectious diseases or public health," he said. "For reasons that are probably apparent, I'm very motivated and impassioned to make a difference in those areas."

Kingzett has faced much adversity in his young career, but it has also motivated him to continue learning, improving and working to provide the best possible care for his patients. His pandemic experience has, in many ways, reinforced the lessons he learned during his days at Tri-C.

"Tri-C helped get me to where I am now," he said.

"I had a strong foundation for facing the challenges I have encountered with the pandemic, and my Tri-C education will continue to support me in my future studies. You get a great education, and it's very cost-effective. I'm glad I decided to start my journey at Tri-C."

"I HAD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR FACING THE CHALLENGES I HAVE ENCOUNTERED WITH THE PANDEMIC, AND MY TRI-C EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ME IN MY FUTURE STUDIES."

— Jacob Kingzett

ONE LAST THING



HISPANIC COUNCIL

JESSICA CARTAGENA IS THE NEW PROGRAM MANAGER FOR TRI-C'S HISPANIC COUNCIL, WHICH HELPS LATINX STUDENTS NAVIGATE AND PROSPER AT THE COLLEGE AND IN THE COMMUNITY. SHE PLANS TO BRING NEW ENERGY TO THE ROLE WHILE HONORING THE COUNCIL'S LEGACY.



BY **Jessica Cartagena**



Hispanic Council

When things got tough, and I needed to dig deeper and give it my all, I turned to my mother for words of encouragement. She would always say “*ponte las pilas*,” which means “put your batteries on.” Many people in the Hispanic community use this saying to encourage those who need that extra jolt of energy — something to help them get back on track.

In high school, I struggled with the state-required math exam. Graduation sometimes seemed farfetched. I turned to my mother, and her advice was always the same: *Ponte las pilas*. And that’s what I did. I redirected my energy, sought tutoring, passed the math exam and graduated. I continued my academic pursuits and earned a bachelor’s degree in marketing from Cleveland State University. Achieving a balance between work and school was challenging, but “*ponte las pilas*” remained my mantra through it all.

As program manager for Tri-C’s Hispanic Council, I intend to put my batteries on. The council’s rich history of providing resources and support to Hispanic students goes back to 1992. Among many other services, it provides bilingual support and scholarships and hosts the annual Hispanic Education Conference for high school students. In 2021, the Hispanic Council awarded 78 scholarships totaling more than \$55,000.

The council is based at Western Campus, but it serves Latinx students at all campuses through the Student Centers for Multicultural Engagement. Check out tri-c.edu/hispaniccouncil for more information.

I will continue the critical work of my predecessor, Esther Kraft, by supporting and guiding students on their academic journey. It’s an honor to carry on the commitment and legacy of encouraging Latinx students to *ponte las pilas*.

ALEX JOHNSON, Ph.D.

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**Alex
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*President
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FOREWORD BY RICK CHIRICOSTA,
CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT, AND CEO, MEDICAL MUTUAL OF OHIO

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