**Student Success**

**Goal of improving college retention rate & student success set on college & state level**

Illinois government passes bill to improve performance standards at educational institutions; Triton College maintains, creates community partnerships to benefit student success

At a time when the college student retention rate is decreasing, the Illinois General Assembly and Triton College are taking action to make sure students remain on track to graduate college. This goal aligns well with the national agenda on college completion and the focused strategy of the American Association of Community Colleges.

The state government has created a financial incentive for colleges, universities and community colleges to improve graduation rates by setting performance standards. House Bill 1503, which is expected to go into effect in 2014 or 2015, will supply the same amount of government funds to public colleges, but 3 to 5 percent of those funds will go specifically toward improving student performance.

Triton College has taken steps to ensure its students' success by creating partnerships with area institutions - from grade schools to four-year universities - which have a shared
interest in helping their students succeed. A reception acknowledging such educational partnerships kicked off the 2011-2012 academic year, as administrators from universities, local high schools and elementary schools shared their new initiatives for the coming school year.

"Strengthening our relationships with our education partners is valuable to our outreach efforts for strengthening the community," said Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados. "All of us want to contribute to student success, so it's important to gather and exchange ideas that could help further each other's goals."

Attendees at the Salute to Partnerships reception represented such institutions as Elmwood Park School District 401; Governors State University in University Park; Trinity High School in River Forest; Eastern Illinois University in Charleston; National Louis University, with five locations around Chicagoland; Southern Illinois University in Carbondale; Ridgewood High School in Norridge; Lindop School District 92 in Broadview; Franklin Park School District 84; Rhodes School District 84.5 in River Grove; and Benedictine University in Lisle.

Trinity High School in River Forest and Triton have carried on a partnership for the last 20 years, including collaborating on fine arts shows and giving Trinity access to Triton's softball fields for games. "More and more of our girls attend Triton, not only for the sports, but for the academics," said Trinity High School President Sister Michelle Germanson. "This college is essential for students who can't afford a four-year university. Triton is an affordable option close to home that we're blessed to share a partnership with."

The Dual Degree Program (DDP) - a partnership Triton shares with four-year university Governors State - is an example of how sharing ideas among educational institutions results in new initiatives for student success. Recognizing that finances often play a role in a student's decision to pursue a higher education, the DDP was created in 2010 to increase the completion rates of students studying for an associate or bachelor degree by providing academic and financial incentives, including a savings in tuition.
Under the Chicagoland Alliance for Degree Completion, the DDP emphasizes the importance of achieving an associate degree, a short-term goal, prior to pursuing the long-term objective of a bachelor degree. "The completion of an associate degree becomes an asset that documents success, provides leverage in the workplace and validates the student's education and experience at the community college level," said Brenda Jones-Watkins, outreach and communications assistant at Triton. "The associate degree is a notable achievement for the student, the college and community."

Governors State University offers the DDP through Triton and five other area community colleges. DDP students lock in the Governors State University tuition rate for their first semester of study once they enroll in the program at Triton, enabling them to save tuition costs even before they transfer to Governors State. Low-income students are also eligible to receive a GSU Promise Scholarship that covers tuition, fees, mandatory course materials and books not covered by Pell or the Monetary Award Program (MAP). Plus, students who enroll in the program during their freshman year at Triton and go on to complete their associate degree are guaranteed admission into Governors State.

Successful partnership between Benedictine University and Triton College comes full circle at nursing alumni reception

The academic partnership between Triton College and Benedictine University was celebrated at an Aug. 10 dinner reception on Triton's campus, recognizing the continuing success & education of alumni of both institutions who hold a bachelor’s degree and advanced degrees in nursing.
Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados and Lisa Scalessi, director of alumni relations, welcomed alumni, administrators and professors from each institution to the Triton College/Benedictine University Nursing Alumni Reception. "The collaboration and cooperation between Triton College and Benedictine University has proven to provide an excellent and affordable education for our students and community," Dr. Granados said. "The efforts between the two schools have further enhanced educational opportunities and programs that are offered locally to our residents, and it is wonderful to see that the partnership between the two schools is positively impacting the lives of our students."

Scalessi added, "The achievements of our alumni are a testament to Triton's commitment to lifelong learning and student success."

Triton College and Benedictine University afford students the opportunity to continue their higher education pursuits for select bachelor and graduate degree programs with courses offered in Triton's University Center.

As a two-time graduate of Triton, Alesha Young received her first associate's degree in Hospitality for Hotel/Motel Management from Triton, and subsequently returned to pursue a degree in nursing. Now, she is on the verge of completing her Master of Science in Nursing degree at Benedictine.

"When I decided to pursue nursing, I was aware of the partnership that Triton College shares with Benedictine University's nursing program," she said. "And I knew that partnership would be beneficial for me in that it provided me an avenue following my associate's degree."

Julie Fountain, who is also an alumna of Triton and Benedictine, received her certification in nursing assistance in 1991 and surgical technology in 1995 from Triton. Her achievements have led her to receive the Evelyn R. Simmers Scholarship, an endowment for students pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree in nursing from the Department of Nursing at Benedictine University.

"I've come a long way," she says, having worked as a school nurse, surgical technology nurse, and currently, as the Occupational Health Nurse at Arlington Park Racetrack. "Triton gave me my foundation for my nursing career that carried on with me to further my education."
Alumni Spotlight on Shawn Tyrrell

Tyrrell, RVP for Nursing at Adventist Midwest Health, continually sought out educational opportunities; found rewarding career in nursing.

Triton College inspired education as a continuing path for Shawn Tyrrell. Often receiving encouragement from her Triton instructors to pursue a higher education beyond the two-year community college, Tyrrell found herself taking that advice above and beyond. Tyrrell currently holds a bachelor's and two master's degrees, as Regional Vice President for Nursing at Adventist Midwest Health and Chief Nursing Officer at Adventist Hinsdale Hospital. After earning her associate's degree in nursing at Triton in 1975, Tyrrell went onto Lewis University in Romeoville for her bachelor's degree in nursing, and then to Loyola University in Chicago to pursue her Master of Science degree in Nursing. And three years ago, Tyrrell received her Master of Business Administration degree from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. "I credit Triton," she says, "because I could afford to pay my own tuition and become a nurse. ... Triton was the best value for me and set me on a path to career success and growth." Read more...

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Educating Our Youth

Power drill and band saw proved no match for local girls learning about engineering technology at Triton College

Venturing into Engineering Technology may not have originally been a career option under consideration by the 16 girls who participated in GADgET Camp on Triton College's campus. But after their experience with the four-day program, the girls found their interest piqued - many eager to take part in the program next year. Triton Engineering Instructor Antigone Sharris developed the summer camp to expose girls to a possible future in engineering in the hopes of creating a new generation of female engineers in a field that is currently male dominated.

GADgET - standing for Girls Adventuring in Design Engineering and Technology - was partly funded through a grant from the national manufacturing summer camp program, Nuts, Bolts and Thingamajigs. GADgET is the only all-girls engineering camp funded by the national program.

The camp brought together girls, ages 12 to 16, from Oak Park, Maywood, Elmwood Park, Bellwood, Chicago and other neighboring communities. Participants had the opportunity to work on individual and group projects led by female leaders from Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society and Proviso Mathematics...
and Science Academy in Forest Park. A prime example of the national STEM initiative - a program that encourages the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics - the camp exposed the girls to math and science concepts, which they applied to their projects.

Included in camp activities were tours of MSI Testing and Engineering, Inc. in Melrose Park and Tru-Way, Inc. metal fabrication shop in Northlake. Each girl got the chance to create her own gadget using tools, machinery and materials in Triton's fabrication lab. Pop-up boxes, a bird feeder, lemon squeezer and flashlight necklace were just some of the projects the girls designed and built.

Lawanda White attested to her 12-year-old daughter K'lyn Glass' excitement about the program. "She's talked about the camp every night since she started, showing me her prototypes, telling me what they talked about and did that day. She's really enjoyed her time with the camp."

Martha Silva beamed over her daughter Elizabeth's candy dispenser. "I wanted her to participate in the program because I thought it would be an open-minded experience for her," she said.

"It took a lot of thinking," Elizabeth remarked about her project. "I like that we got the choice to pick out our own design and build it. ... I hadn't considered (engineering) before, but now it's something I may want to be involved with later."

Sharris noted that females represent only 15 percent of students enrolled in Triton's Engineering Technology program, but she believes that opportunities like GADgET will fuel more growth. "Not only do I want to generate interest in the field among young girls, but I want them to feel independent and empowered," she said.

Community joins in festivities celebrating 30 years of student success at Nuevos Horizontes
Angeles Guzman, Edith Alba and Juanita Valdez were all seeking a more promising future for themselves and their families, after immigrating to the United States. Learning the English language was each woman's first step up the ladder of success which, through the guidance of Triton College's community center Nuevos Horizontes in Melrose Park, made reaching the top more possible.

Aside from learning to speak English, each woman received her GED and took citizenship classes at Nuevos before deciding to continue their education at Triton. Responsible for many more stories like these over its history, Nuevos Horizontes celebrated its 30th Anniversary on Aug. 13 with a community street festival and ceremony that recognized the accomplishments of the center and the people who have accessed its programs and services.

Established by Triton College in 1981, Nuevos Horizontes addresses the needs of the growing Hispanic community. Nuevos offers English as a Second Language (ESL) and GED classes, as well as tutoring and citizenship preparation workshops.

The ceremony included an awards presentation acknowledging the contributions and support of Village of Melrose Park Mayor Ronald M. Serpico; RSVP Volunteers Thomas and Joyce Jurek who teach English language classes; and Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados, who served as one of five directors.

"I grew up in this area," Dr. Granados stated, "so Nuevos holds a very special place in my heart as it serves an important purpose for this community."
The first director of Nuevos, Sarah Bingaman, also shared her sentiments. "Our dream was to provide an easily accessible, resourceful opportunity in the heart of the neighborhood where Spanish is the dominated language. ... It was a place you could begin a new adventure."

Alba's adventure began with English language and GED classes at Nuevos, and now she holds an associate's degree in accounting from Triton. "Learning English is essential to succeeding in this country. I urge all ESL students to finish their classes. It will bring many benefits to your life and your family's," she said.

Valdez earned her GED at Nuevos, before continuing her education with computer technology certification programs. Today, Valdez runs a chain of electronic repair shops and a supermarket. "I really enjoy learning to work with computers. I thank Nuevos for making my dream come true."

Triton students sign a commemorative poster recognizing the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

Residents from Triton College's district accompanied faculty, staff and students at the River Grove campus to commemorate the first-decade milestone of 9/11. About 3,000 American flags representing the number of lives lost on that fateful day waved in the breeze on the campus lawn on Sept. 6.

Among the missing was his cousin, Tommy, a New York firefighter, who ended up being one of the lives lost in the tragedy.

"It was the most devastating thing I've seen in my lifetime," Pulia said, describing the scene at Ground Zero a week following 9/11. "I can vividly remember walking around the grounds, taking photos ... and finding papers that had flown off the desks of the damaged office buildings."
Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados recalled, "The sense of pain, loss and fear was experienced widely throughout our campus community and around the country. In varying degrees even now, those difficult emotions related to the attacks remain the experience of many here and across the country... It is important to consider positive steps we can take toward unity and serving others."

She mentioned the U.S. President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge in which Triton College will participate with a focus on veterans and military families. The initiative elicits a one-year commitment from colleges around the nation to promote interfaith cooperation and community service programming on campus.

From 2010-2011, Triton College served 470 veterans and anticipates serving 1,000 soldiers within its district over the next year. Triton will work with and provide events in conjunction with area interfaith leaders to gain a greater understanding of the challenges veterans face and to bring awareness to the population of veterans on campus and within the district.

President's Leadership Academy members return from retreat ready to lead

The newest members of the President's Leadership Academy learned at a September kick-off retreat that you don't have to be in a leadership role to be a leader. Made up of Triton College staff and faculty, the yearlong academy experience is intended to develop leadership talent from within the college's ranks so they are well-prepared to advance the college into the future.

The three-day retreat brought together 22 chosen participants for an exchange of ideas on projects that required teamwork, communication and the exploration of leadership potential. Community college presidents and other educational leaders were among the speakers who reinforced similar messages about what it means and the skills it takes to be a good leader, while upholding Triton's mission and vision.
Connie Ganshow, coordinator for the Center for Business and Professional Development, got to know her fellow colleagues at the retreat and their role in the operation of the college, giving her a better understanding of the part she plays in the college's success. "We were encouraged to express ourselves without restrictions of title and position," she said. "It was a very free atmosphere where we were all able to work together without any barriers."

"There was camaraderie among the group, and the projects and speakers really made us think about how to apply what we were learning to our current positions," said Sujith Zachariah, Director of Admission and Records. "The retreat really encouraged me to become more involved with the college to ensure its success."

During the retreat, the group developed a professional development plan for themselves and selected two projects to focus on for the 2011-2012 academic year. The group plans to put their support behind the upcoming 50th Anniversary of Triton College and the College Readiness student success strategy.

Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados created the Leadership Academy for the purpose of fostering quality leadership and developing leaders among existing staff. While the president facilitated a session regarding the college master plan and strategic planning, the retreat also included informal interaction with Dr. Granados, including cooking s'mores by a campfire. Dr. Granados stated, "I was extremely pleased to engage with the participants of the Leadership Academy and to support their great ideas sure to enhance collaboration at the college and contribute to student success."

Community Outreach

Triton College honors River Grove partnership with Sept. 7 ceremony

Community members joined Triton College staff, faculty and students for the Sept. 7 celebration honoring the Village of River Grove, and its lifelong partnership with and the support of the college's educational mission.

Held in the Botanical Gardens on Triton's campus, Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados and Chairman Mark Stephens presented Village of River Grove President Marilynn J. May with a plaque honoring the symbiotic relationship the college and its hometown shares.

Welcoming "the village of friendly neighbors," Dr. Granados recognized little known facts about River Grove, including that the town was once home to the Potawatomi Indians and that the village's iconic hot dog stand, Gene and Jude's, has been nationally recognized for making "the best hot dog in America."

"We are honored to call River Grove our home," Dr. Granados said. "As an educational institution, we
welcome the residents of River Grove to take advantage of our resources and services offered at the college."

May returned the appreciation. "We should be thanking you for this institution that has brought higher education to this community."

The evening event also included music by the Triton Jazz Trio, a raffle and refreshments.

Fall Family Fun Fest brought families together for fun-filled time

Triton College placed its focus on family and community with its annual Fall Family Fun Fest on Oct. 1. Taking advantage of the Fall Family Portraits and picture-perfect weather, families, including those of Triton's staff and faculty, filled the Botanical Gardens on Triton's River Grove campus, finding creative activities and learning experiences at every corner.

In its third year, the community event encompassed fun and educational activities that ushered in the fall season as well as informed on the resources and services offered at Triton and area organizations. Activities like pumpkin painting, mask decorating and cupcake and cookie decorating offered children the opportunity to showcase their creativity; while Maggie the Mechanical Cow, a nutrition information booth and "Body Quest," a puzzle of the human digestive system, provided fun lessons. The ever-popular pumpkin patch was scattered with children picking out the perfect pumpkin, as families found their way through the corn and straw mazes.

Several Triton departments were represented at the festival, including the Alumni Office, Hospitality Industry Administration and the college's retail flower shop. Clair Malo, manager of the flower shop, said, "We hope to increase our visibility in the community and let community members know we're open to them as well."

Kim Hefner of Oak Park attended the event with her two children. "The amount of activities for the kids blows me away, and it's so organized and well put together," she said. "I didn't know Triton offered baking classes. This event has really opened my eyes up to Triton and what they have to offer."
Triton College President Dr. Patricia Granados greeted families as they entered the gardens. "We're living in a time when it's difficult for parents to afford to take their family out for an entertaining experience, so Triton takes pride in offering a minimal cost event for the community to enjoy," she said. "It's wonderful to be able to share our resources with the community through this educational and engaging event."

Marking a Milestone

Celebrating a Decade of Accomplishments

Triton College's commitment to the success of its students hasn't changed over the course of 10 years. Yet, much about the community college has changed under the leadership of Dr. Patricia Granados, who is in her 10th year as president. From its programs to campus renovations to new projects in place, Triton has stayed on task in creating an optimal learning environment for its students, while keeping with the pace and demands of our ever-changing society. The abundance of accomplishments the college has amassed in a decade is astonishing, and a prime example of what the collaborative efforts of President Granados, faculty, staff, students and the surrounding community can achieve as a unit.

We'll highlight several of these notable accomplishments over the next several issues of "Community Connection." Each issue will feature a specific topic encompassing several noteworthy successes from Triton's past decade.

Triton College Takes the Initiative

- Triton College, selected in 2009 as one of more than 160 community colleges across the nation, has participated in the national initiative "Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count" (ATD). Triton continues its work for student success by providing the resources and support students need to succeed, i.e. its Academic Success Center and Scholars Program.

- Triton expanded its sustainability efforts around campus, with the formation of the Greening the Campus Committee. Achievements have included the planting of a sustainable prairie garden, which is maintained and managed by Triton students.

- Triton student veterans are the focus of the college's participation in the U.S.
President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge. The national initiative asks for a one-year commitment from community colleges to promote interfaith cooperation and community service programming on campus in an effort to bring together people of religious and non-religious backgrounds to address challenges in their communities.

- In fall 2011, iPads were made available for students to use while studying in the Academic Success Center. The iPads help build students' technology skills, while familiarizing them with the capabilities of this exciting technology tool.

- Following Triton's Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation Visit in 2007, the college received affirmation and recognition from HLC on the completion and implementation of the college's comprehensive Master Plan designed to guide Triton toward future success. The Master Plan has put support behind teaching, learning, technology and facility upgrades over the last three years. The mission of strengthening shared ownership and college readiness has derived from the initiative.