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Triton College's SURGE Symposium Inspires Women of Color
EmpowerHER Conference Featured Speakers and Discussions

RIVER GROVE, Ill. – Triton College's SURGE (Sisterhood of Undergraduates Representing Great Excellence) Program aimed to inspire women at the SURGE Symposium: EmpowerHER Conference on Thursday, June 16, in the Student Center Cafeteria.

The symposium featured entrepreneur and author Tragil Wade-Johnson as the keynote speaker, as well as breakout sessions and a panel discussion.

The event began with welcoming remarks from Triton College President Mary-Rita Moore.

"SURGE provides academic support, mentoring and coaching, career development, community service projects, and assistance in transitioning to a four-year institution or into the workforce," said President Moore. "We recognize and appreciate our role in offering these and other elements of support that will enable our students to reach their educational goals and realize their dreams."

Following President Moore's welcome was keynote speaker Tragil Wade-Johnson, founder of America's Big Sisters Foundation, which helps young women who do not have mothers. Wade-Johnson is the sister of NBA star Dwyane Wade.

Wade-Johnson began her keynote with having the women in the audience link hands.

"Feel the *surge* from the sister on each side of you," she said. "This is not a one-person show."

Wade-Johnson shared how she overcame a difficult childhood, explaining that those challenges helped her build her life's skill set. Today, she starts her day with self-talk, affirmations and prayer. The song, *All I Do is Win* by DJ Khaled, motivates her.

"I made my disadvantages become my advantages," she said. "I am alive on purpose."

The remainder of the symposium included breakout sessions with Sally Delgado, vice president of Operations at Realty of Chicago, and Lucretzia Jamison, executive director of Youth Job Center.

The symposium concluded with a panel discussion from successful women in professions ranging from law enforcement to real estate. Triton's Dr. Purva Rushi, assistant vice president of Institutional Initiatives, Planning, and Accreditation, shared with the audience her views on confidence.

"Always remember that you deserve that interview, that promotion, that job, that opportunity," she said. "Do not let fear of not being enough stop you. You are good enough and deserve to be where you are."

Everyone in attendance received the book *Professional Troublemaker, The Fear-Fighter Manual* by Luvvie Ajayi Jones, in their swag bag.

Julia Willis, director of Student Support Initiatives for TRIUMPH and SURGE, felt the event was an inspiration to both Triton students and staff.

"The SURGE symposium provided tools to help students look at themselves in a professional manner," she said. "Women shouldn't be afraid to make power moves and be confident in themselves personally or professionally."

SURGE was designed to increase college persistence and graduation rates of women of color. The program provides mentoring, coaching, career development and other opportunities for women considering attending a four-year university or transitioning into the workforce. The goal of the symposium was to empower women of color to achieve success in life.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE

Triton College is a two-year college dedicated to helping members of the 25 Western Cook County communities in our district and beyond to achieve educational, professional and personal success. Located in River Grove, IL, Triton offers more than 110 degree and certificate programs on its 110-acre campus, featuring a comfortable, friendly and diverse atmosphere. Triton holds classes at several satellite locations as well and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's dedicated faculty and staff work to provide high quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 12,000 students each year. Triton College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at www.triton.edu.