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Triton College

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## **Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) Outcomes at Triton College Praised by Statewide Leaders**

RIVER GROVE, Ill. – Triton College’s Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) Grant has proven to be successful according to statewide research data. Triton is one of only 18 colleges to receive the WEI Grant for four consecutive years. Over that time, Triton College has achieved a phenomenal 92 percent employment rate.

WEI is a grant program sponsored by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) designed to accelerate the time for African American students to enter and succeed in high-skilled, high-wage; “in-demand” occupations.

Triton presently has four new programs for WEI including Engineering Technology, Network Services Technician, Dialysis Technician and Ophthalmic Technician.

In 2020, an \$18.7 million WEI Grant was successfully administered by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and led by Illinois Central College with 15 participating colleges, including Triton College.

In December 2021, ICCB announced third year WEI funding and awarded another \$18.7 million to 18 participating community colleges throughout Illinois. The initiative, led by ICCB and Illinois Central College, focuses on improving workforce inclusivity by providing a credential and a living-wage job for adults of poverty residing in disproportionately impacted areas (low income, low employment, high crime). African Americans participating represent a minimum of 60 percent of the population served by the grant due to their underrepresentation in high-demand, high-wage careers. The end goal is for participating students to secure full-time employment in a job paying at least 30 percent above the regional living wage.

With support from Gov. JB Pritzker, Speaker Pro Tempore Jehan Gordon-Booth, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, and local legislators Rep. Camille Y. Lilly, Rep. La Shawn Ford, Speaker Emanuel Chris Welch and Sen. Kimberly Lightford, funding of WEI allows participating colleges to develop or enhance training and career pathway programs in high-demand employment sectors experiencing workforce gaps – health care, manufacturing, construction, transportation, information technology and emergency services.

“The ongoing pandemic has disrupted education and employment opportunities for our hundreds and thousands of Illinoisans, disproportionately affecting African American and other minority communities. Supporting and scaling effective and equitable education and career opportunities is critical for helping these targeted populations for post-pandemic recovery,” said ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham.

“We are extremely pleased to strengthen our commitment to educating and serving the communities within our district,” said Triton College President Mary-Rita Moore. “Students will receive a high-quality education that will equip them with skills that are in demand and prepare them for sought after jobs. After completion, the students will be in a position to make an immediate positive impact on the local workforce and their quality of life.”

The WEI model is proving to be a successful methodology for achieving outstanding enrollment, completion and employment for African Americans and all participants of poverty outperforming Illinois and national performance data.

**Triton College achieved these outcomes:**

|                             |                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>TC WEI FY20 Outcomes</b> | 175 enrolled (102% of goal) | 117 credentials earned (102% of goal) |
|                             |                             |                                       |
| <b>WEI Goals</b>            | <b>FY 20 Outcomes</b>       | <b>Difference</b>                     |
| 60% AA Students enrolled    | 70% (123)                   | 10 points above target                |
| 65% Completers              | 67%                         | 2 points above target                 |

|                                       |                                |                        |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 60% Completers Employed               | 79%                            | 19 points above target |
| Hourly Wage Target:<br>2020 (\$17.60) | Average hourly wage of \$18.15 | Exceeded target        |

Students who participated in Triton’s WEI Program say the program has helped prepare them for their future careers.



Markesha Keefer – Dental Assistant

“I believe that the WEI Program is a great program and a very good opportunity to get a better career. The most helpful services during my time in the WEI Program were the great support team, assistance with transportation cost, job interviewing skills, one-on-one help with my cover letter and resume, and support with employment for my career,” said Markesha Keefer, a dental assistant graduate. “I am thankful for the WEI Program as they helped me find a great job as a dental assistant.”



Erica Jackson – Pharmacy Data Entry Technician

Erica Jackson, who received a Pharmacy Technician Certificate and is a pharmacy data entry technician, has advice for future WEI students.

“Do your best! Don’t give up, show initiative and be eager to learn. You will get the help you need to be successful in your career path.”

Nationally, comparative outcomes of students who start college at a community college, 41 percent of students have earned a postsecondary credential in six years. The comparable rate for African Americans is 29 percent (AACC, July 2020). WEI students in the Triton district have a 70 percent completion rate (41 points higher), which was achieved in one year.

For more information about the statewide initiative, visit <http://illinoiswei.org/>.

For local information on WEI at Triton College, visit <http://triton.edu/wei/>.

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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, Ill., Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs on its 110-acre campus, featuring a comfortable, friendly and diverse atmosphere. Triton also holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton’s dedicated faculty and staff work to provide high quality, convenient and affordable educational

opportunities to more than 14,000 students each year. Triton College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at [www.triton.edu](http://www.triton.edu).