

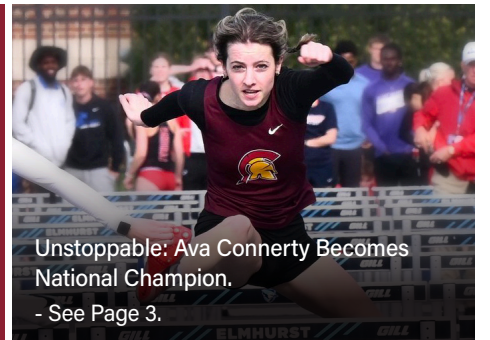


Triton College

# CONNECT

A newsletter from your community college.

Summer 2025



Unstoppable: Ava Connerty Becomes National Champion.  
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## Unlocking Opportunities



President Mary-Rita Moore

In today's competitive job market, earning an industry-recognized certificate has become a launchpad for students advancing or changing their careers. Community colleges like Triton play an important role in providing accessible pathways to these certificates, which are valued by employers in a variety of industries.

According to a recent survey from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's 2024 *Undergraduate Degree Earner's Report*, more students earned a certificate last year than in any of the past 10 years. There were more certificate earners among traditional college-aged students, 18-20 years of age, than any other age group. Nearly 154,000 students in this age group earned a certificate, a 10.9% increase over the previous year. Certificates often focus on specific skills and knowledge required for in-demand jobs, allowing students to quickly gain the competencies necessary for employment.

An advantage of certificates is their alignment with labor market needs. Community colleges collaborate with local industries to make sure that their programs are relevant and tailored to the skills employers are seeking. This not only boosts students' employability, but also fosters stronger connections between community colleges and local economies.

Many of Triton College graduates began their journey with a certificate and later pursued an associate or bachelor's degree, building on their foundational skills. As students reach their goals, they gain a sense of accomplishment.

Triton College offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs to choose from! Among our newest offerings are Cosmetology and Barbering, where students can turn their passion into rewarding careers. At Triton, we are uniquely positioned to provide these opportunities without high tuition costs – empowering students to unlock their full potential. Be sure to explore our new and current certificate programs at [Triton.edu](http://Triton.edu).

## Honoring the Academic Achievements of Students

Triton College finished its academic year with several celebratory events, including the 2025 Commencement held at the Rosemont Theatre on May 17.

Through its commitment to lifelong learning, Triton College graduated nearly 2,000 students – ranging in age from 15 to 76 – who have earned certificates and degrees.

During the ceremony, Mark Kouria of Elmwood Park, president of the Triton College Student Association (TCSA), delivered a student reflection. Kouria earned an Associate in Science degree and will transfer to Governors State University to pursue a Bachelor and Master of Science in nursing. "I've made so many wonderful connections and friendships these past two years," he said. "Graduating feels like I'm leaving home and a family. I want to stay in touch with all the incredible people I've met here and for our kids to grow up together. I want to stay connected to this amazing community and Triton College."

The Triton College Board of Trustees also recognized Scholars Program students, Lavonia Black, Eliska Horakova, Alexandra Mercado, Jana Milicevic and Emily Urueta-Hernandez for their extraordinary academic achievements and successful degree completion. During its May meeting, the board applauded the students.

The Scholars Program is a competitive, two-year program for academically talented in-district students planning to transfer to four-year institutions.

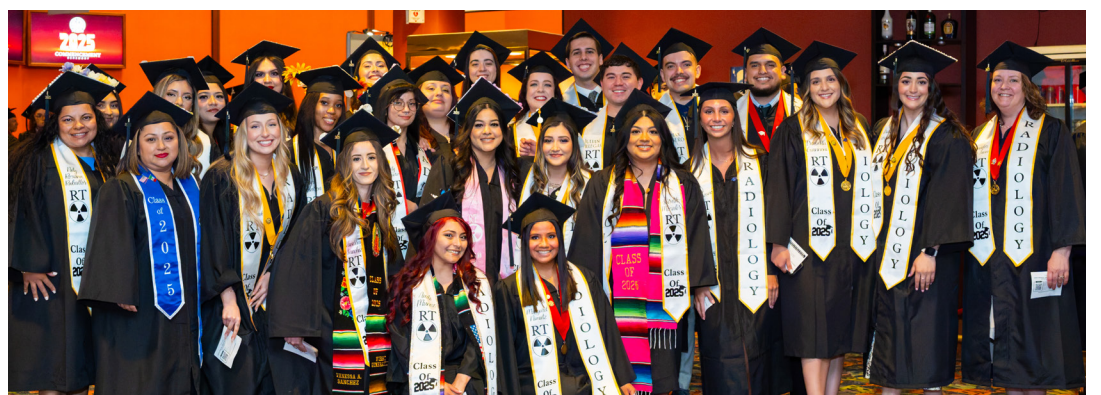
Additionally, Triton hosted its annual Honors Social on April 28. Graduating students who earned a place on the Dean's or President's Honors Lists were invited to take a photo with



Left to right: Jana Milicevic, Alexandra Mercado, Emily Urueta-Hernandez, Eliska Horakova and Lavonia Black

Triton College President Mary-Rita Moore and receive a commemorative pin.

On May 8, Triton celebrated 189 students of the Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI), a program sponsored by the Illinois Community College Board. "This has been an incredible year for WEI," said Cierra Morris, program director. "Each completer has demonstrated remarkable resilience, pushing through rigorous coursework while overcoming personal challenges. Their grit, their focus and their unwavering commitment to their goals have inspired us all," said Morris, adding that students "are living proof that when opportunity meets determination, powerful things happen."





# Triton Student Selected as a 2025 Hites Scholar



Melania "M" Mazur

Triton College student Melania "M" Mazur is one of 22 Phi Theta Kappa members selected as a 2025 Hites Scholar and will receive a \$7,500 scholarship for baccalaureate studies. "When you put in the work, it's never too late to do something great," said Mazur. "I feel like this scholarship has validated my determination."

"M is an exceptional leader who exemplifies integrity, patience, positivity and persistence," said Johnny Urbina, Triton College's director of Student Services. "Her unwavering commitment to helping

others succeed drives her own academic achievements and she consistently leads by example."

The Hites Transfer Scholarship is awarded to Phi Theta Kappa members ready to transfer to a bachelor's-degree-granting college or university. Winners are chosen from nearly 2,800 applicants nationwide, based on their outstanding academic achievement, leadership skills, rigor and engagement in college and community activities.

# Triton Students Land Prestigious Internships at Fermilab



Nathan Campos

Triton College students Nathan Campos and Carroll Creedon have been selected for one of the most competitive research opportunities in the country – the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science, Community College Internships (CCI). At Fermilab, Nathan and Carroll will gain hands-on technical experience. The internship paves the way for students to pursue exciting careers in science, technology, engineering and math.



Carroll Creedon

CCI is a paid internship sponsored and managed by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science's Office, through its Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists (WDTs). The opportunity places students at DOE laboratories and facilities across the country. Students participate in a 10-week paid internship during the summer (May-August) or the academic year (August-December or January-May).

Congratulations, Nathan and Carroll!

# Four Alums Inducted into Triton's Wall of Fame



Left to right: Nicholas Steker, Madonna Fantetti Slepicka, Michele Fiore and Albin Lechowski

Recognized for their outstanding accomplishments professionally and contributions to the communities they serve, four individuals who graduated and/or attended Triton College were inducted into the college's 2025 Alumni Wall of Fame. Honorees were Michele Fiore, TV/radio journalist; Albin Lechowski, owner and president of HVAC-Carrier Dealership; Nicholas Steker, Franklin Park Fire Department battalion chief; and Madonna Fantetti Slepicka, River Forest chocolatier. Hosted by the Triton College Alumni Association, the honorees were celebrated in a special induction ceremony this past spring.

# Barber Certificate at Triton Offers Creative Path to a Dynamic Career



Program Chair Zachary Morris

Triton College's Barber Certificate Program provides students hands-on experience and expert instruction in a rapidly growing industry, equipping them with the tools and training needed to enter a dynamic and in-demand field.

Program Chair Zachary Morris, a licensed barber with over 16 years of experience, teaches in a cutting-edge learning facility on the Triton College campus. The space is designed to simulate a real-world barbershop environment. Students gain skills in haircutting, styling, coloring techniques, skincare and business fundamentals.

The Barber Certificate requires 50 credit hours, equivalent to the 1,500 clock hours mandated by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Upon completion, students are eligible to take the Illinois Licensed Barber Examination.

Graduates of the program will be prepared to enter a growing field. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for barbers, hairstylists and cosmetologists is projected to grow 8% by 2032 – faster than the average for all occupations. Visit [triton.edu/barber](http://triton.edu/barber) to learn more.



# Blaylock and Halm Honored as Outstanding Faculty of the Year



Andrea Blaylock, Outstanding Faculty of the Year



Dr. James Halm, Outstanding Adjunct Faculty of the Year

Triton College proudly presented faculty member Andrea Blaylock with the Outstanding Faculty of the Year Award and Dr. James Halm with the Outstanding Adjunct Faculty of the Year Award during a Triton Board of Trustees meeting this spring.

Blaylock, chair of the Engineering Technology Department, began her career at Triton in 2011 as an adjunct instructor and has played a key role in strengthening the college's mechatronics curriculum. With degrees in electrical engineering, apparel design, and career and technical education, Blaylock said the recognition feels humbling and reflects her dedication to student success.

Dr. Halm, who has taught sociology at Triton since 2013, expressed deep appreciation for being named Outstanding Adjunct Faculty of the Year. Passionate about education, he also teaches at Morton College and the University of St. Francis. "This award has been a huge honor for me," he said. Triton's Outstanding Faculty of the Year Award is an annual recognition that celebrates excellence in teaching and service among both full-time and adjunct instructors.

# Your Future Begins this Fall

Registration is now open for the fall semester and Triton College is excited to introduce several new academic programs. These include:



▪ **Heating and Air Conditioning**, offering two industry-recognized certificates: Installation Assistant and Installation Technician.



▪ **Cosmetology\* and Barber**, providing hands-on training in state-of-the-art facilities.



▪ **Electronic Vehicle Technology**, where students shift into high gear in the automotive industry.



▪ **Forklift Operator**, leading to an industry-recognized certificate.



▪ **Associate in Engineering Science**, offering a strong foundation in engineering principles with seamless transfer into the University of Illinois' Grainger College of Engineering.

Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, five students in the engineering program will receive scholarships and participate in a paid summer internship at Fermilab after their first year.

Visit [Triton.edu](http://Triton.edu) for program updates.

\*Pending ICCB approval.

# Triton Trojans Wrap Up a Strong Spring Season



Ava Connerty

The Triton Trojans capped off an exciting spring season with standout performances across multiple sports.

Ava Connerty was crowned national champion in the women's 100-meter hurdles at the NJCAA Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championship held Saturday, May 10, in Utica, New York. She won by just two-tenths of a second! Connerty, a graduate of Riverside-Brookfield High School, is Triton's first women's track national champion and a back-to-back NJCAA All-American.

The men's basketball team finished 29-6, winning the Region 4 Division I championship and advancing to the second round of the NJCAA Division I Championship in Hutchinson, Kansas. Star player Dayjaun Anderson earned NJCAA Division I First-Team All-American, Region 4 First Team and Region 4 Player of the Year honors.

The women's basketball team were Region 4 Division I runners-up with a 27-5 record. Jordyn Coleman received NJCAA Division I Honorable Mention All-American and Region 4 First Team recognition. Coaches Brian Burns and Drew Winston were named NJCAA Division I Co-Coaches of the Year by the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association.

Triton's softball team finished with a strong 29-13 record, advancing to the Region 4 Division II quarterfinals. "They're a family, and I couldn't be prouder," said head Coach Ken Jurasz.



Amelia Rieger

On the mat, nine Trojan wrestlers competed at the NJCAA Wrestling Championships in Iowa, with three earning All-American status: Ghee Rachal (197, sixth place), Ryan Boersma (285, sixth place), and Ashton Hayhurst (149, fifth place).



Dayjaun Anderson



Jordyn Coleman



Connor Svanter



2000 Fifth Ave. • River Grove, IL 60171  
triton.edu • (708) 456-0300, Ext. 3130  
Triton College is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution.

Triton College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (hlcommission.org), an institutional accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to accredit degree-granting colleges and universities.



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Triton College reaffirms its commitment to affirmative action and equal employment for all qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, age, or any other basis which is protected by law except where such characteristics are bonafide occupational requirements.

**EMPLOYEES**  
Joe Klinger  
AVP, Human Resources  
Title IX Coordinator  
Triton College  
2000 Fifth Ave.  
River Grove, IL 60171  
(708) 456-0300, Ext. 3743  
joeklinger@triton.edu

**STUDENTS**  
Julia Willis  
Dean of Students  
Deputy Title IX Coordinator  
Triton College  
2000 Fifth Ave.  
River Grove, IL 60171  
(708) 456-0300, Ext. 3865  
juliawillis@triton.edu

**SECTION 504**  
Dominique Dial  
Director, Center for Access  
and Accommodative Services  
Triton College  
2000 Fifth Ave.  
River Grove, IL 60171  
(708) 456-0300, Ext. 3854  
dominiquedial@triton.edu



## Diesel and Transportation Technology Program A career that's designed for the long haul!

Our Diesel Program is geared toward hands-on learners who want to dive into the technical skills needed to repair today's modern Class 4–8 trucks. This program is all about real-world training that gets you under the hood fast. Upon completion, you'll be ready to step into the workforce as a truck repair technician.

**Get on the road toward a high-demand career today!**



For more information  
go to [triton.edu/diesel](https://triton.edu/diesel),  
or scan the QR code  
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