



A MESSAGE FROM CIERRA MORRIS, WEI DIRECTOR



As we step into the 2025-2026 academic year at Triton College, I want to take a moment to reflect on the remarkable achievements from the past academic year. I am incredibly proud to celebrate 224 program completers who are now ready to enter the workforce. Each of these successes represents late nights, early mornings, hard work and an unshakable belief in what's possible. Their success is a direct reflection of the commitment our students have made to their education and the dedication our staff, faculty and partners have shown in supporting them every step of the way.

Each of our journeys to success is unique – shaped by challenges, growth and the people who stand beside us. That's what I love most about this work – it's never just one person's win. It's a village effort, and I'm honored to be part of an institution and community that has displayed such unwavering support for this initiative.

Triton's mission is to value the individual, educate and serve the community. The only way we fulfill our mission is by cultivating growth together. As we begin this new school year, let's not become complacent with our achievements. Let's keep finding ways to meet each other where we are, lifting one another higher, and setting our sights on what's next.

Let's continue to be the change we want to see.

Here's to another year of progress, opportunity and success – let's Power Forward together!

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New Name and Continued Support

We are excited to announce our new name – Workforce Empowerment Initiative Grant – and to share that we have been awarded funding for the seventh consecutive year!



Program Development

- Below are some of the ways our program continues to evolve, enhance student support and more:
- The college officially launched its Heating and Air Conditioning Program and we are proud to have contributed to enrollment by registering 30 students. In just one year, students can earn both the HVAC Installation Assistant and HVAC Technician certificates. With top earners in this field averaging a salary of \$34 per hour, the program offers strong economic opportunities for our community.
 - Implemented the BGI JTM Widget Tool in WEI orientation to help students visualize and plan intentional career pathways while identifying available resources to support their journey.



Strengthening Student Support

- WEI office hours are back to Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m. and Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Introduced an Emergency Relief Stipend for students facing urgent financial needs.
- Introduced the WEI Student Spotlight to share participant success stories.
- Collaborated with the Academic Success Center and faculty to launch WEI Academic Workshops, led by tutors, to help students maintain a B average or higher.



Academic Excellence by the Numbers

- 224 students completed their studies across multiple programs, including 22 in Welding, 14 in Diesel Technology, and 28 in Medical Billing & Coding.
- 74 completers earned a 3.0 GPA or higher.
- Early Childhood led Buddy Race with a 3.4 program GPA, followed by Welding and CCNA, which tied for second place at 3.0.



Breaking Down Barriers

- Partnered with the dean of Students to offer Lyft rideshare for students with transportation needs.
- Hosted monthly virtual information sessions for community partners and employers to connect with WEI programs.
- Collaborated with Adult Education and Continuing Education to recruit and transition qualifying prospects to the WEI Grant.



Building Employer Partnerships

- Welcomed Courtney Winfrey, our new employer relations specialist, who brings extensive experience in job placement and talent acquisition.
- Hosted WEI info sessions at Bellwood Library to recruit individuals from the surrounding communities.
- Launched the “Still Not Sure What's Next After Graduation?” series at East Leyden High School, showcasing career training opportunities in high-demand fields. This is a perfect chance to learn about opportunities that can help build a career without a four-year degree – or even help start working while continuing your education.
- Our director now proudly serves on the Maywood Advisory Council for Workforce Development.

WEI is a grant program sponsored by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB).
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Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m. • Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.