

## **Triton College Language Programs Support Oak Park Library**

Online language learning platforms, conversation hours and multilingual books are ways the Oak Park Library welcomes and empowers its community. For the library, connecting with patrons is a core value.

So, when Staff Learning and Well-Being Specialist Ginger Slade had a conversation with a Triton College representative who connected her with Triton's Division of Corporate Partnerships and Academic Outreach, it led to 13 library staff members participating in an eight-week Staff Spanish Language Program.

"A Triton instructor led weekly on-site classes," said Slade. "This training supported our goal of improving staff communication and competency." Regardless of their Spanish-language proficiency at the beginning of the classes, she noted, "everyone walked away with new skills."

Oak Park already has a dedicated Latine Language and Culture Librarian, Nora Sanchez. The training program was a way for other staff to gain confidence conversing in Spanish.

"The Oak Park Library was looking to strengthen community partnerships and increase collaboration with local institutions," said Slade. "Triton was a natural fit."

Karina Santos, an [English as a Second Language \(ESL\)](#) tutor and [Workforce Empowerment Initiative \(WEI\)](#) advisor at Triton College, had already visited the library to streamline ESL registration.

"The more involved you are in your community, the (more the) community rises," said Santos. "As a community member myself, I want to meet people where they're at, with (a sense of) welcome. This is for you – it's like welcoming someone into your home. They are welcome, and there are resources."

Describing the training as "engaging and well-structured," Slade said, "We're grateful for the opportunity to partner with Triton College. Programs like these are a great way to invest in staff development and build stronger community ties."

By meeting the needs of both library patrons and staff, Triton is bringing to the community the same ethos of care it brings to students and employees like Santos.

"I believe that these programs are definitely life changing. I say that not as a marketing strategy but from personal experience," said Santos. "Triton saw something in me that I didn't see in myself and provided me not only with academic support but work opportunities."

“I began as a work-study employee,” Santos added. “They continued to make opportunities available to me so I could advance, and they look out for me like I’m literally a family member. I’ve seen them do that for many – that’s the Triton culture.”

To learn more about corporate training options for businesses or organizations, contact Laura Fisher, Triton’s Director of Corporate Partnerships and Academic Outreach, at 708-456-0300 Ext. 3768 or [laurafisher@triton.edu](mailto:laurafisher@triton.edu).