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Triton College

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## Triton College Chi Zeta Chapter Earns International Honor, Ranks Among Top Officer Teams Worldwide



*After being selected from more than 1,300 chapters, Triton College's Chi Zeta Chapter officer team was named a 2026 Distinguished Chapter Officer Team by Phi Theta Kappa, placing it in the top 2.5% of chapters worldwide.*

**RIVER GROVE, III.** — Triton College's Chi Zeta Chapter officer team has garnered international recognition after being named a 2026 Distinguished Chapter Officer Team Award recipient at the annual Phi Theta Kappa Catalyst International Conference in Baltimore in March.

After being selected from more than 1,300 chapters, the award places Triton's team in the top 2.5% of chapters around the world. Chapter adviser Johnny Urbina, director of Student Services, said the feat reflects the hard work and leadership shown by Chi Zeta and speaks to the quality of students enrolled at Triton.

Walking across the stage alongside his peers in front of more than 1,000 guests to accept the award, Chi Zeta President Paul Talia said the moment was surreal and one that he'll remember for life.

“It just felt fulfilling,” he said. “I think what’s special about our group is how well we work together and how our differing ideas meld together. I don’t think any other award would have felt as nice, because this one celebrated our entire board.”

Members of Chi Zeta’s officer team include Talia; Yanna Marie Flor, chapter vice president; Natalie Rodriguez, vice president of scholarship; Tobias Liebermann, vice president of leadership; Dylan Ramirez, vice president of service; Jaden Chandler, vice president of fellowship; Riley Jirsa, vice president of public relations; John Marino, treasurer; and Arturo Fajardo Jr., recording officer.

Phi Theta Kappa is an international organization that supports high-achieving students through scholarships, professional development and opportunities to invest in their community. Triton College’s Chi Zeta Chapter, established in 1970, has 6,871 members, including both current and former Triton students.

In November, the group hosted Brew For You, a campus event that invited people for coffee, cider and other treats while raising awareness for homelessness and the resources available at Triton — such as the Troy Care Collective — and in the surrounding communities for those in need. Chi Zeta Vice President Yanna Marie Flor is proud of the event and noted that the effort contributed to their achievement.

“Seeing our names on the screen like that, it was just so cool to realize that all the hard work we put in really paid off,” she said. “And we were just so happy because Brew For You was more of a success than we could have ever imagined.”

Urbina said he and fellow adviser Antigone Sharris, Engineering Technology faculty, learned of the award just 30 minutes prior to the chapter’s weekly meeting, prompting them to put together a quick congratulatory banner to display as students walked in. Urbina said the students were in disbelief and only allowed themselves to celebrate after he pulled up the official email with each of their names listed.

“Watching that moment unfold was incredibly rewarding,” he said. “Seeing them later recognized on an international stage and walk across that stage together was something I won’t forget. This is a tight-knit, welcoming team, and they earned every bit of that recognition.”

“This is a great team,” added Sharris. “I’m excited to see how they develop post-Triton.”

To join Chi Zeta, students must maintain a 3.5 GPA. Degree-seeking students need 12 college-level credit hours, while certificate-seeking students need six. Urbina noted that members gain access to vital scholarships and leadership projects—such as Honors in Action—that build research and collaboration skills.

Talia and Flor will soon walk across another stage in May as they graduate from Triton College. In the fall, Talia is transferring to Vanderbilt University to pursue a bachelor’s degree in economics. Reflecting on his experience at Triton, Talia emphasized the role of community colleges in providing students with affordable pathways to the workforce and four-year institutions.

“In two years at a community college, you could completely rewrite yourself,” he said. “In high school I was an average student, but now I feel like I’m emerging from Triton as a leader.”

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**ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE:**

Triton College, located at 2000 Fifth Ave., River Grove, is a public institution of higher education dedicated to student success. Recently recognized by the Aspen Institute as one of the Top 200 community colleges in the nation, Triton offers more than 130 degree and certificate programs that prepare students to pursue meaningful careers, transfer to four-year universities, and thrive in a global economy. Guided by our mission—*Valuing the individual, educating and serving the community*—Triton serves nearly 17,000 students annually on its 110-acre campus in River Grove, Illinois. Our dedicated faculty and staff provide high-quality, accessible and affordable educational opportunities that empower students and strengthens the communities we serve. Triton College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and a member of The Illinois Community College Board. Illinois is home to 45 colleges in 39 community college districts. Learn more at [triton.edu](http://triton.edu).

