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Triton College Celebrates Black Hair, Beauty With 'Crowns of Excellence' Exhibit



Triton College Visual Communications student Ethan Frazier stands between two portraits he photographed for Triton College's "Crowns of Excellence" exhibit.

RIVER GROVE, III. —Triton College proudly presents “Crowns of Excellence,” a photo exhibit honoring the artistry, cultural pride and rich traditions of Black hairstyles.

The exhibit, opening to the community on Feb. 2, is an institution-wide collaboration among the Triton College Library, Visual Communications (VIC), and Cosmetology and Barber programs. It celebrates the creativity, confidence and beauty that truly crown the Triton community, according to Librarian and Triton college Library Chair Shekinah Lawrence.

The exhibit will feature about 20 photographs of Triton College students, alumni, staff and faculty proudly showcasing their hair. Lawrence said the idea for the exhibit originated last spring and required campus-wide support to bring it to life.

“Everything about this effort is fully and completely Triton — across the board,” she said. “The photos you’ll see highlight the beauty and pride of our Triton community, and making this happen is thanks to so many on campus who provided their support. It’s so rewarding to see this come together, and I can’t wait for people to see it.”

All photos for the exhibit were taken by current and former students of the VIC program. Photographer and student Ethan Frazier, who took many of the photos on display, said he was proud to be part of the project. While capturing the likeness of the participants, Frazier said his focus was on conveying the confidence of the models and pride in their hair.

“I really wanted to do something that feels like I can make a big impact,” he said. “And being able to also help convey an identity that I’ve carried my entire life and to represent a community that I’ve been born into is really uplifting.”

In addition to contributions from VIC students, Lawrence said students in Triton’s new Cosmetology and Barber program were available to provide hairstyling services for participants, and the exhibit was also made possible through a generous donation from the Triton College Foundation.

According to Lawrence, the exhibit’s name, “Crowns of Excellence,” draws inspiration from the CROWN Act — Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair — which affirms the right to wear natural hair and prohibits discrimination based on hair texture or styles associated with race.

“Triton is a place where we deeply honor student and staff belonging and inclusiveness,” Lawrence said. “During Black History Month, we wanted to celebrate this exhibit and show that however someone chooses to wear their hair, it is considered beautiful, no matter who you are.”

A grand opening for the community is scheduled for Feb. 2. The exhibit will be on display on the library’s upper level in A-321 (A Building). Library hours are Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE:

Triton College 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 120 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 12,000 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.