



Triton College

For Immediate Release: June 17, 2025

Triton College Graduate Earns Psychology Degree After Long-awaited Return to School

RIVER GROVE, Ill. — Twenty years after initially setting out to earn her degree at Triton College, Keisha Solomon of Broadview returned to campus in the spring of 2024 to finish what she started. Newly graduated at age 39 with an associate degree in psychology under her belt, Solomon is looking forward to a new career and blossoming opportunities.

“Triton is a place where you can make your own experience,” said Solomon, adding that Triton is a place where students have the freedom to explore interests and build connections.

Solomon first enrolled at Triton College when she was 18, just out of high school. But after years of studying on and off, coupled with personal challenges, she decided to pause her education and focus on working. After reconnecting with Triton College staff, she was able to resume her studies, gain a second wind, and cross the finish line.

Solomon is one of many students Triton has worked with to reengage in higher education and earn a degree. Through its partnership with ReUp, Triton College has re-enrolled more than 600 students and graduated 77 adult learners ages 21-57, per recent data. This spring, Triton had 280 active students through its adult learning initiative. Top programs of study among returning students include General Studies, Associate in Arts and Pre-Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

Reflecting on her graduation this past month, Solomon said the moment still feels surreal.

“I think I’m still processing it,” she said. “I’m still at the point where I’m like, ‘Okay, you set a goal and you made it.’ I feel like I had the opportunity to access the tools to accomplish a goal through Triton.”

While relishing in her achievement, Solomon is eager to keep moving forward. She plans to take what she learned at Triton and enroll in a four-year institution to pursue a bachelor’s degree in psychology and become a counselor.

Working with adult learners to help them complete their education is a key goal of Triton College’s strategic plan, said Hilary Meyer, dean of academic success. Within Triton’s district towns, 19 percent of residents have completed some college but do not hold a degree.

“That’s a huge number of people we can help reach completion,” Meyer said. “That was the germ of why we made this a priority—because we have so many stop-out students. Those are

students who've been out for a year or more, who have some college credits, and usually, for life reasons, have not returned."

When Solomon first came to Triton College after high school, she said she was unsure of what she wanted to do.

"I was just going because I thought that's what I should be doing. So I might take a class, drop a class, take another class, wait some years, go back. Off and on for a long time."

Solomon said she was working full-time and dealing with personal hardships, which led her to pause her education. Attending school while supporting oneself is challenging, she noted.

"Just having a busy schedule and carving out that time and making school a priority can be very difficult," she said.

After stepping away from her education, Solomon worked full-time as a medical staff coordinator. But she wasn't satisfied with the idea of doing that for the rest of her career. Through Triton's adult learning initiative, Solomon was able to remain employed full-time while continuing her academic journey in psychology—a subject she had enjoyed as a teen.

For other returning students like herself, Solomon encouraged them to engage with all the services Triton has to offer, especially its faculty.

"I had instructors that I engaged with that I love and that I am still in communication with," she said. "I feel like I had an opportunity to have the tools to accomplish a goal through Triton."

From a pool of students surveyed through Triton's partnership with ReUp, a majority of respondents said that affordability, flexible schedules and online course offerings were their top reasons for choosing Triton College.

Denise Jones, dean of retention and student engagement, shared that the heart of the adult learning initiative is supporting students in their pursuit of a degree—especially when many had already made significant progress.

"It was something that we saw as a need in our students who stopped out and were not returning," she said. "Some of them were just 10 to 12 credits short of completing. So how do we get them back on track? How do we get them into the workforce? Or how do we help them transfer to a four-year institution if that's their goal?"

Jones acknowledged that students may need to pause their education for various reasons, including financial difficulties, job responsibilities, or family obligations. Triton is committed to meeting each student where they are and connecting them with the resources they need to complete their academic goals.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE

Triton College is an institution of higher education dedicated to student success. Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs designed for students to realize their career aspirations and effectively compete in a global economy. The college campus spans 110 acres in River Grove, Illinois, holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's exemplary faculty and staff work to provide high-quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 10,000 students each year. Triton College is a member of The Community Colleges of Illinois and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at triton.edu.