

TRI-C®

TIMES

**SPRING
COMMENCEMENT**

Stories from the
Class of 2022



A NEW ERA

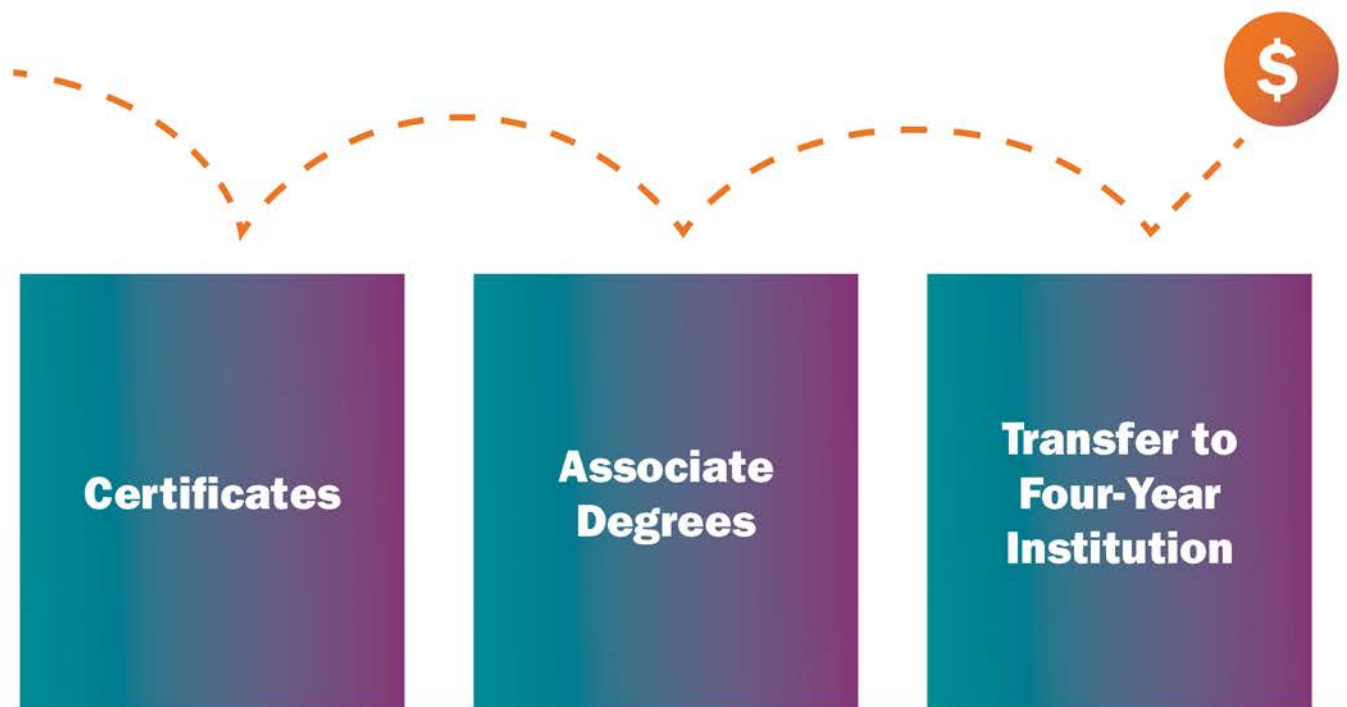
INTRODUCING OUR
NEW PRESIDENT
DR. MICHAEL BASTON

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HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE
IN TUNE WITH TEACHING

The right education can boost your lifetime earning power by hundreds of thousands of dollars.



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PRESIDENT'S Message

TO OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

Greetings, Northeast Ohio.

I am both proud and humbled to have been chosen as the fifth president of Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®). Thank you for welcoming me and my wife, Tasha, into the fold.

We recently relocated to the area from Suffern, New York, where I had served as president of Rockland Community College since 2017. Even from our first visit, we could tell that Cuyahoga County residents value Tri-C and recognize the important role it has played over the past six decades.

I grew up in a tight-knit community of working-class families — not unlike many here in Greater Cleveland. That's where my commitment to helping others succeed truly began, and I see an opportunity to use what I've learned since then to help people in Northeast Ohio.

Throughout my 20-year career in higher education, I've worked with community colleges across the country to help strengthen their leadership teams and explore systemic issues affecting access and student success.



IN THE SHORT TIME I HAVE BEEN PART OF THIS ILLUSTRIOUS INSTITUTION, I HAVE ALREADY DEVELOPED AN IMMENSE APPRECIATION FOR THE WAYS IN WHICH THE COLLEGE ADDRESSES THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES.

Serving a largely urban population — with 85% of our graduates living and working in the region — Tri-C creates generational opportunities for advancement and plays a significant role in the region's economic viability. I plan to ensure that these opportunities remain real and relevant by continuing to build upon our longstanding connections with business and industry, K-12 schools and community organizations.

There's powerful momentum, and my varied experiences have prepared me to devise solutions addressing the ongoing need for accessible and affordable education and training that leads to well-paying, in-demand jobs right here in Northeast Ohio.

Just as Tri-C has inspired hope and determination in countless students through the years, so has it inspired hope and determination in me.

I'm ready to lead Ohio's oldest and largest community college with courage, conviction, compassion and confidence. Please join me in empowering students to turn today's dreams into tomorrow's reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MABA". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Michael A. Baston, Ed.D., J.D.
President

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EDITOR

Anthony Moujaes

MANAGING EDITOR

Jarrold Zickefoose

COPY EDITOR

Beth Cieslik

WRITERS

Erik Cassano

Beth Cieslik

Stephanie Metzger

Anthony Moujaes

Madeline Shepherd

Jarrold Zickefoose

ART DIRECTOR

Eric Wheeler

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Cody York

McKinley Wiley

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Tri-C Times is published by Cuyahoga Community College's Integrated Communications department for its friends and constituents. Feedback and story ideas are welcome. Send correspondence to Tri-C Times, 2500 E. 22nd St., Cleveland, OH 44115; call 216-987-4322; or email editorial@tri-c.edu.

PURPLE STAR RECOGNITION

Tri-C was one of Ohio's first institutions of higher education to achieve Collegiate Purple Star campus designation for supporting student veterans. The College was among the inaugural group of 33 Collegiate Purple Star campuses. The Purple Star Award recognizes schools that make a major commitment to students and families connected to the nation's military.



JAZZFEST RETURNS TO PLAYHOUSE SQUARE

After two years away, Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, presented by Key Bank, returned to its home at Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland in June for the annual music celebration. The homecoming festival featured eight concerts in Playhouse Square's historic theatres, with a special opening night concert and gala — dedicated to Tri-C President Emeritus Alex Johnson — featuring Anthony Hamilton.

MMER 2022

EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY

In recognition of the College's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education and the local community, Tri-C received the Advancing Diversity Award from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The honor recognizes the College's high achievement and advancement of best practices among community colleges and its administrators, trustees and faculty.



AACC Awards of Excellence
 ADVANCING DIVERSITY



**THE
FUTURE
BEGINS
NOW**

**DR. MICHAEL
BAS**

MICHAEL BASTON, TRI-C'S FIFTH PRESIDENT, THINKS BIG WHILE UNDERSTANDING THAT EDUCATION HAPPENS ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

To be a transformative college president, Dr. Michael Baston believes you must be passionate about education on a personal level. While acknowledging that the job entails implementing broad initiatives, such as community access, student success and workforce innovation, he believes education is fundamentally personal. Education needs a human face and human touch; otherwise, it's just conveying information.

Baston, who became Cuyahoga Community College's fifth president on July 1, recalls learning this important lesson when he was a professor of legal studies and business at Berkeley College in New York more than 20 years ago.

"At the time, I was practicing law by day and teaching at night," he said. "But as I spent more time around students, I started to see the classroom as more than just a place to teach lessons. It is a laboratory for opportunity, innovation and great ideas. That's what really set me on the path to a full-time career in education — the power of connecting with students, both teaching and learning from them."

That philosophy has defined Baston's educational career. Through the positions he has held, the boards he has served and the initiatives he has developed, he has continuously sought ways to open and engage the minds of students, even as the landscape of higher education changes and the role of community colleges evolves.



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STORY BY [Erik Cassano](#)
PHOTOS BY [Cody York](#)

OPPORTUNI

A NEW OPPORTUNITY

Baston comes to Cleveland from Suffern, New York, where he served as president of Rockland Community College for five years.

"I loved my time at Rockland, and the people there will always be a part of me," he said. "At my last commencement [spring 2022], I held it together until they brought in the local high school band to give me a sendoff. That was quite an emotional farewell. But I'm thrilled to be coming to Tri-C, because I see a chance to do something great here."

Tri-C and the wider Cleveland community are getting more than just an experienced community college president — they're getting a national thought leader in higher education.

"I serve on the board of the American Association of Community Colleges, and major organizations such as the Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation and Aspen Institute have supported my work throughout the years," Baston said. "As people get to know me over time, I think they will see all the experience and resources I bring to the table."

In Tri-C, Baston sees an opportunity to use his cumulative experience to serve a changing region and build upon the "exceptional work and upward momentum" of former Tri-C President Alex Johnson to increase educational access and open new pathways to degrees and certification.

"When I look at Tri-C and its role in the Cleveland community, I see an institution that is a critical connector in the educational pipeline," he said. "And that is vitally important, particularly because of the disruptions that have been created by the pandemic. How do we connect with students in high school so they have a pathway to college? How do we keep working with local industries to make sure we're providing qualified workers? How do we find new ways to connect with other people in the community, such as adult learners, who might want or need education and training? How do we continue developing partnerships with four-year institutions? These are all questions that will help define our future."

Few cities rely on their community college quite like Cleveland relies on Tri-C. As the largest community college in Ohio, it's a key partner in the region's economic growth — and Baston recognizes the importance of the role he assumes as its president.

"You can't go anywhere in Cuyahoga County without hearing about the positive impact a Tri-C education has had on someone," he said. "Tri-C is where people come to find a better life. Its reach, breadth and depth are evident throughout this community, and it's a powerful statement about the place this institution holds in the area. This is a place of hope and opportunity."





TAKING THE WHEEL

In the coming months, Tri-C students and employees — and the community at large — will learn more about Baston’s philosophies on education and how he envisions Tri-C’s changing and expanding role in Northeast Ohio.

But what will day-to-day life look like? Who is Michael Baston as a person, college leader and community member?

“I am blessed to bring with me a host of practical experiences and achievements to Tri-C, as does my wife, Tasha, but we are still very much regular people,” Baston said. “This won’t be a stuffy presidency. We laugh and joke, we like to have fun, and we are people of faith who believe everyone deserves a chance. That is who we are.”

Tasha Baston, pastor at St. Luke Cathedral in Laurelton, New York, is pursuing a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University.

College presidents have to think big, but Baston remembers well the lessons he learned from his students at Berkeley College all those years ago — and it influences his leadership style to this day.

“I believe that power has to be in the hands of the people,” he said. “My job is to co-create the vision for what this College will be in the coming years — to support, inspire, energize and support all the efforts to advance our community and our region by improving economic mobility and workforce innovation. My role is to create the conditions that will help us become the next best version of ourselves. Northeast Ohio will continue to rise, and Tri-C will be part of its thrust.”



“I AM BLESSED TO BRING WITH ME A HOST OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO TRI-C, AS DOES MY WIFE, TASHA, BUT WE ARE STILL VERY MUCH REGULAR PEOPLE.”

— Dr. Michael Baston,
President, Cuyahoga Community College



INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

As a national thought leader in higher education, Tri-C President Michael Baston has served – and continues to serve – numerous boards, organizations and initiatives, applying his expertise and leadership to advancing a wide range of causes that are essential to improving the quality of higher education across the nation. They include:

- Chair, Black Male CEO Educators network
- Board of Directors, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
- Chair, AACC Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- National Guided Pathways and Equity Transfer Initiative Coach, AACC
- Faculty Advisor, Aspen Institute’s Community College Excellence New President Fellowship program
- Co-chair, Jobs for the Future Policy Leadership Trust
- Member of the National Advisory Board, Center for Community College Student Engagement
- Designer in Residence, Education Design Lab
- Complete College America Fellow
- Member, Community College Workforce Coalition
- Trustee, Teachers College, Columbia University
- Contributing Author, *Race, Education and Reintegrating Incarcerated Citizens*
- Contributing Author, *The Handbook for Student Affairs in Community Colleges*

Baston’s work has been featured in national media outlets including MSNBC, *USA Today*, *The Atlantic*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Community College Daily*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, *The Community College Times* and *Black Enterprise Magazine*.

"MY ROLE IS TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT WILL HELP US BECOME THE NEXT BEST VERSION OF OURSELVES. NORTHEAST OHIO WILL CONTINUE TO RISE, AND TRI-C WILL BE PART OF ITS THRUST."

— Dr. Michael Baston

INVOLVEM



CAREER

Baston began his career as a public interest lawyer representing various educational institutions and social justice organizations. His work with academic clients led him to pursue a second career in academia as both a professor of legal studies and business, and as a student affairs administrator.

Prior to serving as president of Rockland Community College (RCC), he was vice president for Student Affairs and associate provost at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, NY and dean of student development and campus life at Berkeley College in New York City.

Under his leadership, RCC launched a Hospitality and Culinary Arts Center, a guided-pathway-influenced academic school model, Career and English Skills Academies, and secured \$30 million in grant, capital, and other fundraising efforts, including back-to-back Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institution awards, the largest grants in RCC history.

ALL IN!

EDUCATION AND AWARDS

Baston holds a B.A. from Iona College, a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School, and an Ed.D. from St. John Fisher College. He received the National Council on Student Development's Terry O'Banion Gold Prize in 2015 and the NAACP Community Leadership Award in 2010.

ENT

CONNECTING

THREE-YEAR GIFT FROM PNC PROVIDES CRITICAL ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS WITH GUIDANCE FROM BLACK AMERICAN COUNCIL



When it was announced in October 2021, a gift from PNC Bank and the PNC Foundation was earmarked to help Cuyahoga Community College implement additional social equity and wraparound services and resources for students.

The services funded by the three-year gift provide emergency assistance and support for students in need, especially African-American students from low to moderate income households, and connect them with job-skills and readiness training for career opportunities.

The Black American Council (BAC), which historically has provided supportive resources to Tri-C students, is facilitating these newer wraparound services and has seen greater student interest and participation in the program.

“Many of the students who benefitted from the wraparound services made possible by the grant were not affiliated with BAC,” said Jacques Smith, BAC program manager. “Students have joined, received a mentor and the necessary tools needed to succeed academically at Tri-C.”

STORY BY **Anthony Moujaes**



FOR A CAUSE

Tri-C has broadened its capacity to connect students to paid internships, job-shadowing opportunities and work-study programs. So far, 47 students have begun working with the BAC toward internship opportunities.

In addition, more than 25 students gained experience in their field of study. Most of the internship placements occurred during the summer term.

“Entering the internship process was pretty straightforward because of everyone at the College who reached out to me,” said Paulette Burton, who interned with Apex Dermatology this summer. “They answered questions and took the needed time to see what area I was interested in for a potential internship site.”

PNC’s funding also provided emergency resources for 75 students and their families to address technology needs and other challenges such as housing and food insecurity or child care. The emergency funds prevented students from falling behind and failing to complete their education – 60 recipients have completed their courses or are on the path to completion.

“The relief dollars helped me purchase my books for the semester and class materials for my EMT program, said Jeremy Taylor. “I will always be grateful to the BAC and PNC for the opportunities presented and how much they have helped me.”

To prepare students for their upcoming work experience, the BAC facilitates career readiness workshops that provide hard and soft skills while giving the students a cohort with which to grow. More than 200 students have expressed ongoing interest in these services.

“We aren’t letting go of any student we’ve worked with,” Smith said. “PNC is generously supporting this effort for three years, so we look forward to reaching more students through this initiative in the coming years and preparing them for their futures.”

“THE RELIEF DOLLARS HELPED ME PURCHASE MY BOOKS FOR THE SEMESTER AND CLASS MATERIALS FOR MY EMT PROGRAM.”

— Jeremy Taylor, Tri-C Student

For more information about the program, contact program coordinator BreJona Whitlock at brejona.whitlock@tri-c.edu





GAME

**TRI-C WELCOMES ITS FIRST ATHLETICS DIRECTOR,
AIMS FOR SUCCESS ON THE FIELD,
COURT AND CLASSROOM**



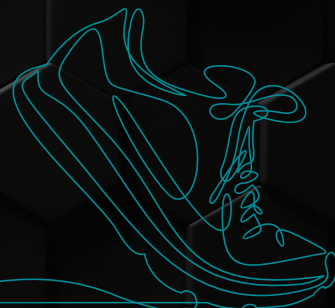
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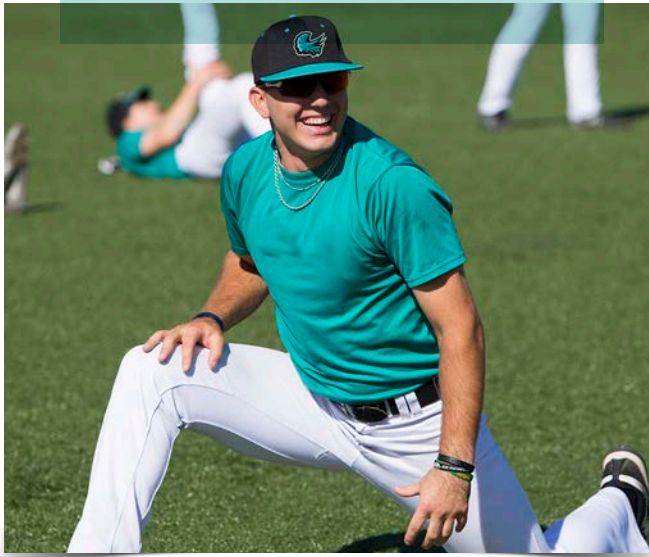
In October 2021, Anthony Cipollone became the first athletics director in Cuyahoga Community College history. His charge was simple: to re-establish the College's athletics program in time for fall 2022 competition.

But as Cipollone fills his rosters, he's also playing a long game. He aims to fill the College's trophy case.

"I think Tri-C has the opportunity to be a national powerhouse," he said. "That's the goal."

STORY BY **Jarrold Zickefoose**
PHOTOS BY **McKinley Wiley**
Cody York





“Recruiting is the name of the game,” he said.
“Good athletes make good teams.”

The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique situation for the College’s recruiting efforts. All new players are on equal footing. There are no veterans. Cipollone challenges his recruits to bet on themselves and show what they can do. Any one of them could be Tri-C’s next superstar.

“That’s exciting. That’s competition,” he said. “If you get 20 of those athletes, that’s going to make your team better. We’re bringing in the type of student-athletes who will be competitive right away.”

Many of the coaches Cipollone has brought on are community college graduates themselves; two are Tri-C alums. They understand and appreciate the value of education and will work with faculty to ensure student-athletes are competitive in the classroom, too, to achieve their educational and career goals.

“We all want our student-athletes to be leaders,” Cipollone said.

Tri-C’s coaching staff includes Devan Anderson, men’s soccer; Tionne El-Amin, women’s volleyball; Dan Graber, women’s cross country and track; Bryan Komlos, softball; Aaron Nixon, men’s basketball; Kyle Stahlberg, men’s baseball; and Omar Williams, women’s basketball.



“The goal this season is to be competitive in the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference. I fully expect to compete for conference championships,” Cipollone said. “The ultimate goal is to bring some national championships to Tri-C.”

“WE ALL WANT OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES TO BE LEADERS.”

— Anthony Cipollone, Executive Director, Athletics

And it’s a lofty one. Tri-C’s sports teams haven’t played since the coronavirus pandemic shut things down in spring 2020. In addition to that, athletics were previously managed through Student Life, divided among campuses with no central oversight.

But Cipollone’s goal isn’t unattainable — not by any stretch. Beneath the surface lies a great deal of potential. Tri-C’s sports facilities better its rivals, and the College’s breadth and depth of academic programming make it attractive to recruits. Its location in a major metropolitan area gives it a rich pool from which to draw athletes.

Add to that Tri-C’s Triceratops mascot, Stomp, and its unique teal, black and white color scheme. For Cipollone, it’s a winning formula.

Tri-C’s basketball team were 2004 NJCAA Division II champions. Its softball team qualified for the Division II national tournament in 2004, 2013 and 2019.

“I look at that and think, ‘How much better can we be?’”

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

These assets put Tri-C in a strong position — and Cipollone, a bulldog with boundless enthusiasm, is already leveraging it. His priority since coming on board has been recruiting. He has entire teams to build from scratch. By late spring 2022, he had filled nearly all coaching positions and recruited more than 75 student-athletes.



Winning is the root from which a flourishing program can grow. Winning teams cultivate interest. Interest fosters participation. Participation fosters collaboration.

Field a winning team, and community members start wearing Stomp T-shirts. Students start attending games. Media starts paying attention.

“Everybody wants to come see a winner,” Cipollone said.

Even more importantly, Cipollone sees Tri-C’s athletics program as integral to student success, enriching the experience for every student by generating enthusiasm and engagement.

REDEFINING THE PROGRAM

With Cipollone’s hiring, the College’s Athletics, Wellness and Recreation department was born.

Before that, Student Life managers at three Tri-C campuses oversaw individual sports: men’s basketball and women’s cross country and track at the Metropolitan Campus; women’s volleyball and basketball at Eastern Campus; and men’s soccer, baseball and women’s softball at Western Campus.

The College’s new commitment to athletics recognizes its benefits to student and community engagement as well as to enrollment and student success.

“The big picture is that we want our students, faculty, staff and community to be healthy, both physically and mentally,” Cipollone said.

This will involve enhancing and updating campus fitness centers (some new workout equipment arrived in July) and offering expanded noncredit programming. Reopening the pools is also a priority, though a lifeguard shortage has made that a challenge.

“I would love to walk into a fitness center and see it full,” Cipollone said. “We’ll get people moving.”

But athletics is at the heart of the new program, and the to-do list is longer than just recruiting top players.

‘A GREAT EXPERIENCE’

Athletics will soon unveil a new website with a slick look and enhanced and more frequently updated content, including scores and stats. Its presence on social media will increase. Campus and team fitness facilities and locker rooms will get fresh paint and Stomp graphics. New team uniforms are also on the agenda.

“The details matter,” Cipollone said. “This is a collegiate athletics program, and when we bring in recruits, if they’re going to be serious about Tri-C, we better be serious about how we’re going to run our teams.”



A successful athletics program can directly benefit academic programs, too. Cipollone envisions partnering with the College's Sport and Exercise Studies program, for example.

Before coming to Tri-C, Cipollone served as athletics director for Westlake City Schools, where he was responsible for 25 high school varsity sports with more than 500 student-athletes. Additionally, he directed 14 middle school sports programs with 250 student-athletes. Before that he was associate director of athletics and recreational services at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania, where he supervised 21 intercollegiate sports and 20 club sports, including intramurals and all fitness- and recreation-related activities.

He believes that his career brought him to Tri-C for a reason.

"Winning a championship is a great experience — one that all student-athletes remember for the rest of their lives. I want that for our athletes," Cipollone said. "I want them to look back on their time at Tri-C and remember the journey they took to get to that pinnacle. That journey will help them succeed in whatever they choose to do after their time as a Triceratops."



Follow #TriCAthletics for news and updates this fall and beyond



A HELPING HAND



TRI-C AIMS TO DESTIGMATIZE POVERTY AND SUPPORT STUDENTS IN NEED

Research by Cuyahoga Community College’s Institute on Poverty and Urban Education has found that poverty can be common and crippling for students — both in terms of degree and certificate attainment and long-term economic success.

The good news is that, at Tri-C, help is available; however, an invisible barrier often keeps students from seeking it.

“It’s always the stigma,” said De Auntha Logan-Cosme, director of financial aid at Tri-C’s Metropolitan Campus. She oversees the College’s Project GO! benefits access program, which helps students in need.

Project GO! discreetly connects students to resources in five areas: housing, food, health care, child care and utilities. It does not provide cash assistance; rather, it works with agencies such as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Benefit Bank and United Way to plug students into the help they need.



→ FOOD



→ HOUSING



→ CHILD CARE



→ UTILITIES



→ HEALTH CARE

“IT’S SO IMPORTANT THAT WE NORMALIZE POVERTY AND MAKE IT OK TO TALK ABOUT.”

— Courtney Clarke, Associate Dean of Social Sciences

STORY BY **Jarrold Zickefoose**

Tri-C’s Poverty Institute found that while a college degree reduces economic inequities, students from under-resourced families earned relatively less at ages 30 and 35 than those from better-resourced families. (Visit tri-c.edu/povertyinstitute to view the research.) The stigma of poverty perpetuates the cycle: Postsecondary education can help lift people out of poverty, but those who most need a helping hand often don’t ask for it and consequently fail to attain their educational goals.

Each month, Logan-Cosme and Project GO! representatives at the College’s Eastern, Western and Westshore campuses send out 200-300 emails to students, based on FAFSA information. In a good month, however, five students might respond.



BENEFITS ACCESS



“It’s so important that we normalize poverty and make it OK to talk about,” said Courtney Clarke, associate dean of social sciences at the College’s Western Campus and assistant director of the Institute on Poverty and Urban Education. “We know students are in need, but there shouldn’t be a stigma around that. That stigma just compounds the problem.”

The College has unveiled improved student food banks at its Metro and Western campuses, thanks to gifts from Char and Chuck Fowler and Medical Mutual, respectively. Dubbed The Pantry: A Tri-C Connect Initiative, the inviting and integrated spaces look and feel like small neighborhood grocery stores.

“Streamlined wraparound support resources that focus on students’ holistic needs can help them overcome an immediate crisis,” said Megan O’Bryan, president of the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation, which supports student resources and scholarships. “However, we also link students to long-term solutions that will help prevent future crises so they can achieve their educational goals and focus on a successful future.”

Logan-Cosme will work in the coming months with the College’s Integrated Communications Department to enhance the visibility of Project GO! while aiming to minimize the stigma of poverty. Like O’Bryan, she is targeting long-term solutions for students rather than “Band-Aid” fixes.

“It’s all about students being vocal. To be honest, situations usually get worse than they need to before students reach out.

“If a student is constantly using the food bank, maybe there is a bigger issue than what they are letting on,” she said.

“It’s connecting the dots. If they reach out to us, we are going to do our best to solve the problem.”

“WE ALSO LINK STUDENTS TO LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS THAT WILL HELP PREVENT FUTURE CRISES SO THEY CAN ACHIEVE THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND FOCUS ON A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE.”

— Megan O’Bryan, President,
Cuyahoga Community College Foundation

Learn more at tri-c.edu/projectgo





Tri-C Class of 2022

JUST GETTING STARTED

STORY BY **Anthony Moujaes, Stephanie Metzger and Madeline Shepherd**
PHOTOS BY **Cody York**



Going Beyond

JOHN RODRIGUEZ FOUND SUCCESS AT TRI-C THROUGH ENERGETIC LEARNING

John Rodriguez owes most of his success to what he learned when life didn't go as planned. After years of pursuing a career in the performing arts — and realizing it wasn't for him — Rodriguez enrolled at Cuyahoga Community College to forge a new path.

"Instead of getting dejected, I realized that I had learned a lot about myself in the pursuit of my goals," he said. "I applied that hard-earned wisdom at Tri-C."

After four straight semesters with full course loads of 15-20 credit hours, Rodriguez graduated in June with two degrees: an Associate of Arts and an Associate of Science. He transferred to The Ohio State University and will pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology on a pre-med track.

Chosen to serve as student speaker for the Spring 2022 Commencement ceremony, he shared how much he and his fellow graduates achieved during their journeys.

"This class faced so many unique challenges, and yet we've persevered and even thrived," he said. "That's an incredible accomplishment, and it shouldn't be taken lightly."

Rodriguez is especially proud of the relationships he forged with his instructors. Realizing that professors respond better to energized students just as students respond better to energized professors, he found ways to convey his enthusiasm to create a great learning experience for himself.

His advice to other students is simple: Go beyond.

"Don't just show up to class," Rodriguez said. "Leave an impression. Make it a goal to be remembered by your professor. Keep doing that again and again, and success will find you."

"THIS CLASS FACED SO MANY UNIQUE CHALLENGES, AND YET WE'VE PERSEVERED AND EVEN THRIVED."

— John Rodriguez, Tri-C Graduate



earned to escape. She surrendered her financial assets, cut ties with family and drove 2,500 miles to Cleveland.

Homeless with no savings, no income and two daughters to care for, Cabrera relied on local resources to help rebuild her life. She went back to school after almost 20 years and earned her GED while caring for her elderly father, whom she had brought from Mexico to live with her.

After that metamorphic moment with Lohwater, Cabrera enrolled in the Mandel Scholars Academy and solidified her path toward a career in social work.

“I understood that this was my purpose in life — and perhaps the reason I went through adversity and endured all that hardship,” she noted.

A Fresh Start

EDITH CABRERA REBUILDS HER LIFE TO BECOME MANDEL SCHOLAR, TRI-C GRADUATE

It all started with a Hershey’s Kiss.

Edith Cabrera had just earned her GED and enrolled in English as a Second Language courses at Cuyahoga Community College when she met associate professor Susan Lohwater.

Cabrera, 43, calls Lohwater “the lady who made magic with Hershey’s Kisses.” It was Lohwater who casually slipped her a piece of chocolate and told her to apply for the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Scholars Academy, citing her tireless work ethic and excellent writing skills.



The simple act of sharing sweets and conversation became a bedrock memory for Cabrera, an immigrant, mother and survivor who has faced homelessness, poverty and abuse. Today, she aims to help others find their own fresh start.

Born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, Cabrera moved to the United States at 18 in search of a better life — a life that started when she earned her citizenship and became a successful small-business owner. She settled in San Diego, married young and took advantage of opportunities to travel the world.

But the honeymoon phase slammed to a halt when Cabrera’s husband became abusive toward her and their two daughters, causing her to risk everything she’d



Cabrera also joined the Continuing Scholars Program, Democracy Fellows and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society during her time at the College.

“Tri-C was my happy place, filled with some of the most incredible human beings. Since I moved to Ohio, the best thing that happened to me is Tri-C,” she said.

Cabrera graduated summa cum laude in June with an Associate of Arts degree. She plans to transfer to Cleveland State University’s Mandel Honors College to complete her bachelor’s degree and, ultimately, a master’s degree in social work and nonprofit administration.

“My dream is to be a social worker and open a one-stop nonprofit with all the necessary resources to help victims and survivors of abuse.”

“I UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WAS MY PURPOSE IN LIFE — AND PERHAPS THE REASON I WENT THROUGH ADVERSITY AND ENDURED ALL THAT HARDSHIP.”

— Edith Cabrera, Tri-C Graduate



Taking a Stand

UKRAINIAN STUDENT MIA OSTROVSKA COMPLETES DEGREE AT TRI-C, USES SKILLS FOR ACTIVISM

As Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Mia Ostrovska sat on her bed watching it all unfold.

“It brought me so much sadness,” she said. “I knew I had to do something.”

Ostrovska graduated from Cuyahoga Community College in June with an Associate of Arts degree. She says Tri-C helped hone her social media and marketing skills, which she’s used to help the people of her home country.

“I organized a charity night and two peaceful protests to raise money for Ukraine. All the social media classes I took at Tri-C really helped me with everything,” she said.

Using connections she’s made in the Cleveland area, Ostrovska engaged a group of friends to help raise \$10,000 on the charity night and rally close to 600 people at two protests on Public Square.



“I mostly helped with the setup of these events and making connections,” she said. “I used social media to spread the word to get people to come, and I took photos as an event photographer.”

Ostrovska had a good foundation in social media, but Tri-C took her skills to the next level. She mentioned that her Media and Journalism Studies Professor John Kerezy encouraged her while in school.

“As soon as he found out about Ukraine, he put the time into helping me,” she said. “No professor has ever done that for me. He checked up on me and made sure I was doing OK.”

She also says that a lot of her other professors helped her overcome effects of the COVID-19 pandemic with the shift from in-person to online classes.

“It was a challenge because I had never done online classes before, but my professors helped with everything I needed,” she said. “I was scared and confused, but I got used to it. Now I love doing it all online.”

Coming to Tri-C initially as a College Credit Plus student while attending Valley Forge High School, Ostrovska especially appreciates the freedom and straightforwardness of a community college.

“I started taking classes at Tri-C because I knew I’d be able to graduate early,” she said. “I don’t like school very much, but Tri-C was so open and free-willed. I appreciate that I get to work at my own pace, on my own schedule.”

After graduation, Ostrovska plans to pursue a career in social media marketing — after she takes a little time to focus on herself.

“I’ve been in school a long time, so I want to give myself a little break,” she said. “Then, I intend to fully pursue *me*.”

“I ORGANIZED A CHARITY NIGHT AND TWO PEACEFUL PROTESTS TO RAISE MONEY FOR UKRAINE. ALL THE SOCIAL MEDIA CLASSES I TOOK AT TRI-C REALLY HELPED ME WITH EVERYTHING.”

— Mia Ostrovska, Tri-C Graduate

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

STORY BY Beth Cieslik

FOUNDED IN 1971, TRI-C'S CAPTIONING AND COURT REPORTING PROGRAM CONTINUES TO THRIVE — THANKS IN LARGE PART TO PROGRAM DIRECTOR, **KELLY MORANZ**

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced a sudden move to virtual instruction in 2020, Kelly Moranz and her team were more than ready. That's because Cuyahoga Community College's Captioning and Court Reporting (CCR) program has offered fully online degrees and certificates for more than two decades.

Moranz, who has directed the program since 2015, is proud of its ability to attract, engage and graduate students from all over the world. But she remembers a time when its scope was much smaller.

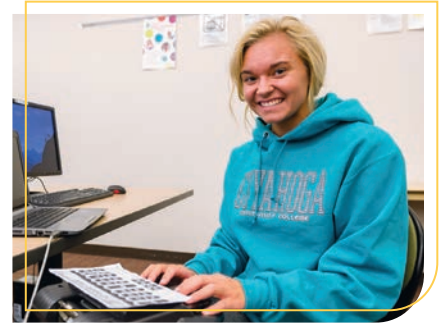
As a Tri-C student in the early 1980s, Moranz studied under the late Angela Hergenroeder, Ph.D., founder of the CCR program. At that time, everything had to be typed manually. Aspiring court reporters attended classes at Western Campus, where specialized equipment was housed.

"Dr. Hergenroeder was the best teacher you could ever have. She truly cared about every one of her students," Moranz said. "Having someone that nurturing as part of my first college experience really was amazing."

Upon graduation, Moranz began freelancing with local court reporting firms. Over the next two decades she served as an office manager, a professional transcript editor (known in the industry as a scopist) and a proofreader. One thing she especially enjoyed was training and mentoring new court reporters.

"When I left high school, I thought I had to decide between court reporting and teaching," she remembers. "But with this, I get to enjoy the best of both worlds."





A chance encounter with Tri-C instructors at a 2006 conference led to an adjunct appointment, and soon Moranz was teaching her first online course: Briefs and Phrases. She served as grant coordinator and preceptor before taking the reins as director of the same program that gave her the skills to succeed in an industry that continues to grow and evolve.

Inspired by the care and concern Hergenroeder showed her years ago, Moranz focuses on building trusting relationships with CCR students. While it seems more challenging to accomplish from afar, she and her fellow instructors — eight of whom also graduated from the program — are committed to ensuring their students succeed no matter where they're located.

“My goal is to establish myself as their go-to person, as well as their cheerleader,” Moranz said. “There’s a high bar set in the program, but I do everything I can to make sure every student can reach it.”

Celebrating small accomplishments as steppingstones to the finish line is critical to keeping students motivated. That’s why the CCR team sends students a special ribbon for completing each course.

“We encourage them to hang the ribbons in the space where they practice as a reminder of how far they’ve come,” Moranz said. “They can also attach them to their nametag or badge at industry conferences to show off their progress.”

Now in its 50th year, the CCR program offers degree and certificate tracks in steno writing, voice writing, and digital reporting and transcription. National training standards are rigorous and require students to gain experience in different areas. All students complete at least one internship, many of which lead to offers of employment upon graduation. In fact, CCR is one of only a few programs that can boast a 100% job placement rate for those seeking employment.

The inherent flexibility of the work makes captioning and court reporting a fantastic career for those seeking work-life balance. And since it doesn’t require a bachelor’s degree, individuals looking to enter the field can feel confident pursuing training at a community college. The potential to earn more than \$100K annually doesn’t hurt, either.

“It’s high-demand work, but it changes lives in terms of the flexibility it offers,” Moranz said. “You can choose to work full or part time in an on-site capacity, or you can work remotely as your schedule allows. Either way, it can be extremely lucrative.”

Career options for graduates include broadcast or post-production captioning; deposition, hearings and arbitration; official court proceedings; sporting events and theater; and communication access realtime translation (CART), in which captioners translate speech into text in real time for deaf individuals and others with hearing loss.

“Some CART providers will follow a student all the way through college, even up through med school, helping them in every class,” Moranz explains. “A deaf resident can have a tablet with them in the operating room and know exactly what’s being said. It’s a real game-changer.”

As for Moranz herself, she’s settled into the role of teacher, mentor and advisor quite well. A respected member of numerous industry boards and committees, she’s also a recipient of several national awards for leadership and professional excellence. But the recognition she’s most proud of is Tri-C’s Excellence in Teaching Award in Honor of Ralph M. Besse, which she received in 2015.

“I feel like I’ve come full circle,” she said. “On the occasions when I do come to campus, I get to walk the same hallways where I studied and where my career really started. It’s an incredible feeling.”

Learn more about the Captioning and Court Reporting program at tri-c.edu/ccr

“WHEN I LEFT HIGH SCHOOL, I THOUGHT I HAD TO DECIDE BETWEEN COURT REPORTING AND TEACHING. BUT WITH THIS, I GOT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.”

— Kelly Moranz, Program Director,
Captioning and Court Reporting



HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE

TRI-C ALUMNI PROFILE

STORY BY Erik Cassano

PHOTOS BY McKinley Wiley



VENNIE PALMER DIDN'T SET OUT TO BECOME A MUSIC EDUCATOR. BUT NOW, THE MANAGER OF TRI-C'S RECORDING ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM WOULDN'T TRADE IT FOR ANY OTHER CAREER.

Vennie Palmer can't remember a time when music wasn't a part of his life.

"Some of my earliest memories are of music," said Palmer, the manager of Cuyahoga Community College's Recording Arts and Technology (RAT) program. "I played drums in church. Then my mom bought me a keyboard, and that really became my niche. I also picked up bass guitar along the way."

Throughout his adult life, Palmer, 41, has played with bands in and around Cleveland, covering a range of styles including jazz, gospel, R&B and rock. But that life took a few twists and turns before he was able to make music into a career.



Looking for something to fall back on in case band gigs couldn't pay the bills, Palmer attended Baldwin Wallace University, graduating with a business degree in 2004. He spent the next nine years in various jobs, including insurance sales and auto parts delivery, while performing and producing music as a side job.

But music was his true passion — and he wanted to be involved in it full time.

“My wife told me to check out the RAT program at Tri-C,” Palmer said. “I was blown away by it — all the classes available and all the state-of-the-art equipment you could work with. I decided to finally enroll in 2012, and when I did, the lights just went on. I was really, truly engaged as a student again.”

Discouraged by failing to convert his business degree into a sustainable career, Palmer's interest in higher education was renewed by his experience in the RAT program. He attended classes part time for four years, also gaining video production experience in the College's Student Production Office, before graduating in 2016.

As he neared graduation, however, he encountered the same questions that had vexed him previously. With two kids at home, he needed to find a way to support his family with his new degree.

“That's when [former RAT program manager] David Kennedy asked me if I ever thought about teaching,” Palmer said. “He thought I would make a good teacher. I had never taught before, but I soon found out Cleveland High School for Digital Arts was looking for an instructor.”

There, Palmer discovered his second love. He enjoyed playing and producing music, but he loved sharing his knowledge with students just as much.

“Music is a huge part of who I am, and it's a great feeling to be able to open my students' minds using the medium of music — to take what I've learned and pass it on to them,” he said. “I didn't know I was a teacher until I was kind of thrown in the waters and figured out how to swim, but I love teaching now.”

“MY WIFE TOLD ME TO CHECK OUT THE RAT PROGRAM AT TRI-C. I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY IT.”

— Vennie Palmer, Manager, Recording Arts and Technology

Palmer spent five years teaching at Cleveland High School for the Digital Arts. He also returned to Tri-C as adjunct faculty in 2017. At Tri-C, he has taught classes covering studio operations, audio transducers and sound recording.

And he might have been happy doing that for the remainder of his career, if not for another call from Kennedy last year.

“Dave told me he was stepping down as RAT program manager, and he encouraged me to apply,” Palmer said. “I did — and last fall, they hired me.”

Now, Palmer uses his musical expertise in a whole new way. As a teacher, he was limited by the subject matter of each course. As manager, he provides vital input regarding the curriculum of the entire RAT program and helps develop awareness of the program throughout the Cleveland area.

“One of the first things I noticed is that a lot of people still don’t know that we have all these resources under one roof,” he said. “They might see the building along Woodland Avenue downtown, but they don’t know all of the facilities, the equipment and, most importantly, the expertise we have here. When I was a student, I quickly saw that the instructors in this program are second to none. They all work in the industry.”

Palmer wants to increase the program’s reach into racially and ethnically diverse communities around Cleveland, bringing music education to underserved areas. He aims to create and broaden partnerships with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and other nearby districts to introduce high schoolers to music careers and the RAT program.

But it’s not just about enrolling students. It’s about helping them build pathways to their next step — whether that be employment, an associate degree or transfer to a four-year school.

“IT’S IMPORTANT FOR US TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING AGREEMENTS WITH FOUR-YEAR SCHOOLS SO OUR STUDENTS CAN PURSUE BACHELOR’S DEGREES IF THEY SO CHOOSE. THE EDUCATION OUR STUDENTS RECEIVE INTRODUCES THEM TO CAREER OPTIONS THEY MIGHT NEVER HAVE CONSIDERED. I’M PROOF OF THAT.”

— Vennie Palmer



ONE LAST THING



From left, Ali Martin Scoufield, Assistant Vice President for Campus Engagement & Dean of Students, Cleveland State University; Dr. Denise McCarty, President, Cuyahoga Community College Metro Campus; Alex Stokes; Augie Napoli, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Cleveland; Chris Warren, Board Chair, CHN Housing Partners; Kevin Nowak, Executive Director, CHN Housing Partners; Mayor Justin Bibb; Councilman Richard Starr; Cordell Stokes; Brett Stokes; Jeffery Patterson, President and CEO, CMHA; and Dr. Jacklyn Chisholm, President and CEO, Step Forward

CLEVELAND SCHOLAR HOUSE PROJECT UNDERScores IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

ONE OF TRI-C'S MANY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IS BRINGING THE CLEVELAND SCHOLAR HOUSE — A 40-UNIT SERVICE-ENRICHED APARTMENT COMPLEX FOR SINGLE COLLEGE-STUDENT PARENTS AND THEIR MINOR CHILDREN — A STEP CLOSER TO COMPLETION.

The complex, to be located across Community College Ave. from Tri-C's Metropolitan Campus, will bear the honorary name of Louise C. Stokes, the mother of former Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes and Ohio Congressman Louis Stokes.

Tri-C is a core partner in the project, which broke ground in June and is being managed by CHN Housing Partners with United Way of Greater Cleveland coordinating wraparound services. Other project partners include the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority, Cleveland State University and Step Forward.

The apartment complex will serve students at Tri-C Metro Campus and Cleveland State, both of which are within walking distance.

"It is incredibly gratifying to see this project come to life," said Tri-C Metro Campus President Denise McCarty. "It is very fitting that it will bear the name of Louise Stokes, the mother who worked so hard to raise two African-American leaders who played significant roles in the advancement of Cleveland and the nation. The parents who will reside at the Cleveland Scholar House will have the opportunity to create meaningful futures for themselves and their children."

The project is being funded through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency. The tax credit is expected to generate more than \$9 million — about 75% of the building's \$12 million cost.

Announced in May 2021, the Scholar House will provide affordable housing, free childcare and support services. The complex is slated to open in the fall of 2023.



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