

Tri-C[®] TIMES

TRI-C CELEBRATES
more than **3,000**
Student Success Stories
AT COMMENCEMENT



Brunswick University Center Partnerships:
From Associate to Bachelor's and Master's Degrees

Medical Billing:
Two Paths with a Single Goal



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JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL
HUMANITIES CENTER





Message from the President

On May 18, the achievements of 3,124 students were recognized at Cuyahoga Community College's Spring 2017 Commencement ceremony.

This year's spring graduating class was seven percent larger than last year's, making it the second-largest graduating class in the College's history. These students have become part of a growing story of success as we work to reset and reframe the Tri-C experience to ensure more students attain their educational goals quicker and in larger numbers.

The College's commitment to student success is further reflected in the 225 spring graduates who completed their associate degrees in two years or less, as well as the 28 College Credit Plus students who earned associate degrees from Tri-C in tandem with their high school diplomas.

This year's graduates represent the countless opportunities Tri-C provides Northeast Ohio residents to further their education and gain valuable workforce skills, including fast-track certificate programs that build career readiness as well as university partnerships that allow students to earn bachelor's and master's degrees on a Tri-C campus.

Tri-C welcomes those just starting out, those looking to begin a career in a new field and those who need a push to find their true passion and purpose. In this issue of Tri-C Times, you will read about students from all three of these groups. Although their paths to success follow different narratives, these exceptional individuals have one thing in common: ambition.

If there is one quality that defines a successful Tri-C student, it's the drive to achieve. Our students apply this determination both inside and outside the classroom — a fact that is evidenced by the state and national honors received by student-athletes with record-setting careers in baseball, softball and track. Read more about these extracurricular achievements on pages 20-21.

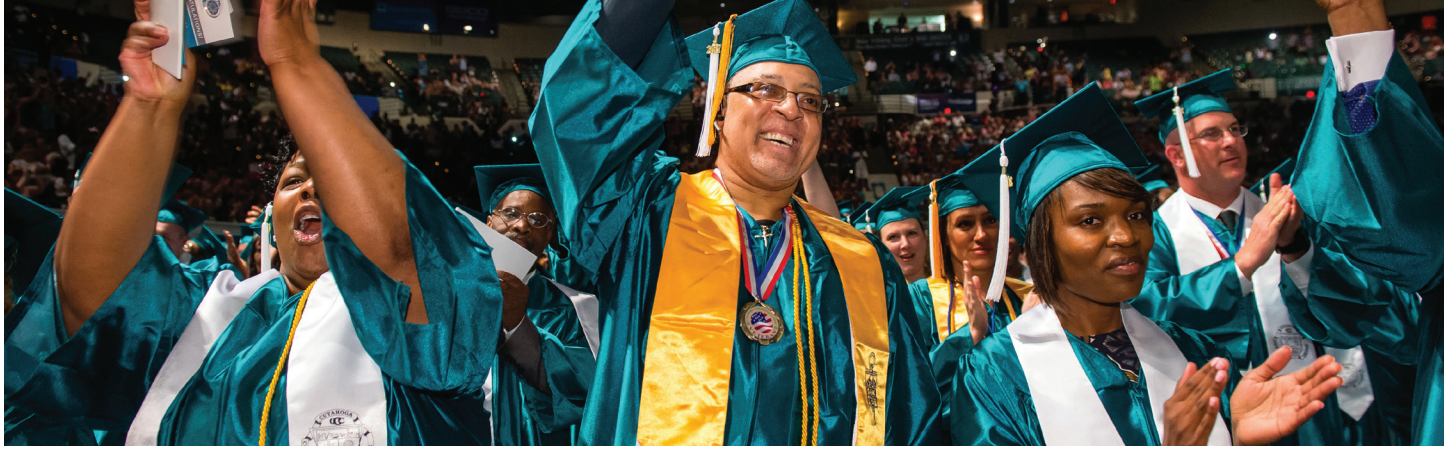
Through their dedication and hard work, our graduates are poised to take on meaningful careers throughout the region and continue their education at many universities. Their bright futures demonstrate our community's continued investment in affordable higher education.

Please join me in celebrating the accomplishments of our graduates as we anticipate the positive influence their success will impart on the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alex Johnson, Ph.D.
President



Tri-C Times is published by the Cuyahoga Community College 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, Ohio 44115, call 216-987-4322, or email editorial@tri-c.edu.

SUMMER 2017

Advanced Technology
Training Center
3409 Woodland Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Brunswick University Center
3605 Center Road
Brunswick, Ohio 44212

Corporate College® East
4400 Richmond Road
Warrensville Hts., Ohio 44128

Corporate College® West
25425 Center Ridge Road
Westlake, Ohio 44145

District Administrative Services
700 Carnegie Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Eastern Campus
4250 Richmond Road
Highland Hills, Ohio 44122

Gill and Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts
2809 Woodland Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Hospitality Management Center
at Public Square
180 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Jerry Sue Thornton Center
2500 E. 22nd St.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Metropolitan Campus
2900 Community College Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Truck Driving Academy
Heritage Business Park
23555 Euclid Ave., Suite 105
Euclid, Ohio 44117

Unified Technologies Center
2415 Woodland Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Western Campus
11000 Pleasant Valley Road
Parma, Ohio 44130

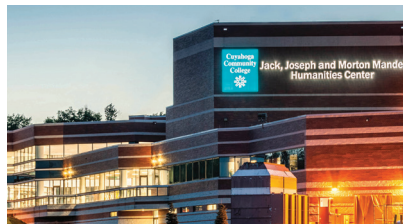
Westshore Campus
31001 Clemens Road
Westlake, Ohio 44145

COVER STORY: TRI-C CELEBRATES MORE THAN 3,000 STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES AT SPRING COMMENCEMENT

Degrees and certificates represent the achievement of dreams.

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"AN INVESTMENT IN ALL OF OUR FUTURES"



Mandel Foundation awards Tri-C and CSU \$3.5 million to create Continuing Scholars Program that will serve as a national model for honors student transfers.

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DESIGNING A NEW CAREER



Interior designers create the environments where we work, play and live. Tri-C is helping to educate the next generation.

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Serving Those Who Served

Crile Veterans Center and Archives opens at Western Campus

Military veterans have a new home base at Tri-C's Western Campus in Parma.

The College opened the Crile Veterans Center and Archives in May to help veterans reach educational and career goals as they transition from soldiers to civilians and become contributors to the economic vitality of Northeast Ohio.

The new center includes an area for academic advising and counseling; computer access to enable veterans to participate in online courses and services; meeting space; and a resource area providing information on veteran programs.

"Cuyahoga Community College is dedicated to serving those who served this nation," Tri-C President Alex Johnson said. "The addition of the Crile Veterans Center and Archives builds on our commitment to military families across Northeast Ohio."

The Kisco Foundation awarded Tri-C \$80,000 to help establish the Crile Veterans Center. The gift followed the College receiving the foundation's Kohlberg Prize, given annually to increase support for veterans attending community colleges.

The new center sits adjacent to the Crile Archives, which preserve and present artifact that document the experiences of veterans on the battlefield and at home. The archives focus on the health and healing of veterans returning to civilian life.

The Parma campus sits on the site of the former Crile Military Hospital, which opened during World War II as a temporary wartime hospital. It remained an active military site for more than two decades.



On a Roll

College debuts Citizens Bank Mobile Training Unit to bring programs to manufacturers

A gift from Citizens Bank will help Tri-C's Manufacturing Center of Excellence make house calls.

The College received \$60,000 from the bank in year one of a multi-year commitment supporting the center's new mobile training unit. Tri-C dedicated the Citizens Bank Mobile Training Unit during a June ceremony.

The mobile unit will bring the College's award-winning training programs to the doorsteps of Northeast Ohio companies and schools in nine counties. It houses a versatile lab area for hands-on training and a classroom space with 10 desk stations, a whiteboard and video system.

The 53-foot-long trailer allows the College to offer customized programs at client sites, increasing access to essential training to address the region's manufacturing skills gap. Programs include CNC machining, welding, 3D printing and programmable logic controllers, with others in development.

"Tri-C is a valued community partner, and we are proud to support this unique educational resource," said Mike Shiplett, Ohio market executive at Citizens Bank. "This investment will bring advanced, hands-on training to many who may have not have had the opportunity without it. This is an investment in job training and the local economy in Northeast Ohio."

The gift for the mobile unit builds on the bank's long-standing partnership with the College. Citizens Bank has contributed more than \$135,000 to Tri-C for various programs.

"Citizens Bank has always had a deep commitment to enhancing our region's economic prosperity," said Alex Johnson, president of Cuyahoga Community College. "This new gift will enable Tri-C to reach out to students, communities and organizations to expand access to advanced manufacturing training opportunities."

Teaming for Student Success

Tri-C partners with Hiram College on mentorship pilot program

Tri-C is partnering with Hiram College on a student mentorship pilot program aimed at encouraging community college students to continue their education at four-year schools.

The goal of the Mentorship for Student Excellence program is to determine whether peer mentorship can play a role in improving academic achievement, economic efficiency and degree completion. The program will pair a mentor student from Hiram with a mentee from Tri-C.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education awarded \$680,000 through its Innovation Program Awards to launch the project.

TRI-C CELEBRATES

more than **3,000**

Student Success Stories

AT SPRING COMMENCEMENT

Degrees and
certificates awarded
represent the
achievement of
dreams.

Cuyahoga Community College celebrated the academic achievements of 3,124 petitioning graduates at its commencement ceremony on May 18. The second-largest class in Tri-C history, this total reflects the College's unwavering dedication to student success.

"Through their commitment and hard work, these graduates are poised to take on meaningful careers in our region or continue their education at other universities," said Alex Johnson, president of Cuyahoga Community College. "Their bright futures reflect our community's continued investment in affordable higher education."

The student speaker at commencement, Doraja Lake, was chosen by classmates to share her story at the ceremony. Lake, who earned an Associate of Arts degree, said the inner strength gained at the College "changed the script" of her life. Lake intends to transfer to The Ohio State University in the fall to pursue a career in bariatric medicine. She is the first in her family to earn a college degree.

Read Lake's and other graduates' success stories from the Class of 2017 on the following pages or visit www.tri-c.edu/commencement/graduatestories.html.



A TRI-C STORY

Made for the Movies

Chris Leszkowicz earns degree and lands job on film being shot in Cleveland

Chris Leszkowicz looked at his life three years ago and saw a guy clocking long shifts as a restaurant kitchen manager. Despite the title on his nametag, the job fell short of his dreams.

So he turned to Cuyahoga Community College and started work on his Hollywood ending.

The aspiring cinematographer graduated in May with an Associate of Applied Business in Media Arts and Filmmaking. He immediately put his degree to use after landing a job on the set of *White Boy Rick*, a crime drama starring Matthew McConaughey.

The 23-year-old spent this past spring on the crew shooting scenes around Cleveland. "I still can't believe I was part of something like that," he said.

The Brecksville resident decided in 2014 to follow his love of movies and focus on a career in the film industry. Leszkowicz enrolled at Tri-C and began taking classes in cinematography at Metropolitan Campus.

He quickly found a home in the Student Production Office, where he received hands-on training working behind the camera.

Leszkowicz said his experience working on *White Boy Rick* made him realize how much he learned at the College. He said the training helped him build the skills demanded by studios shooting in Northeast Ohio.

"If it wasn't for this program, I would have been lost on that set," he said.



Chris Leszkowicz

The new graduate now becomes part of the workforce needed to support the region's fast-growing film industry. Tri-C has been developing training programs in cooperation with the Greater Cleveland Film Commission.

Leszkowicz said he hopes to be hired to work on another local film set this summer. He's also involved in several freelance projects.

"I'm excited about the future," Leszkowicz said. "Tri-C put me in a position to succeed."

"The professors here go out of their way to help you. They do whatever they can as far as connecting you with job opportunities or transferring to a four-year school."

JATHIKAA PUSHPARAJAH said Tri-C provided her the structure and encouragement needed to graduate with an Associate of Applied Science in Criminal Justice. The 24-year-old from Cleveland Heights said she found focus at the College.



HEALTHY *Change*

Tri-C degree puts Doraja Lake on path to a career in bariatric medicine

Doraja Lake clutched the steering wheel and focused on the highway while holding back tears. Disappointments littered her life. She thought of her failed marriage, her health problems and her unmet goals.

Then a voice sounded out from the passenger seat: “Mom, what’s going on with you?” asked her high school-aged son, Robert.

Lake opened up and shared how she felt useless. Robert listened and then offered advice. “You always talked about wanting to be a doctor,” he told his mother. “You should go back to school and do it. It’s not too late.”

That car-ride conversation in 2015 brought Lake to Cuyahoga Community College and turned her life around.

The 39-year-old Willoughby resident graduated from Tri-C in May with academic honors and an Associate of Arts degree.

Lake’s classmates selected her to serve as student speaker at Spring Commencement to tell her story of perseverance.

In the fall, she will begin classes at The Ohio State University to work toward a career in bariatric medicine.

“The world can beat you up sometimes,” Lake said. “I went through a period where I didn’t see any success and I fell into a negative pattern. Tri-C pulled me out of that, gave me

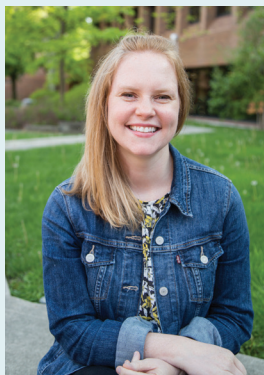
confidence and made me believe. It changed the script of my life.”

The rewrite involved both mind and body. Lake linked many of her health problems — diabetes, high blood pressure, heart issues — with being overweight. So she revised her diet and began a rigorous exercise routine. To date, she has lost 90 pounds.

That life-altering experience convinced her to pursue a career in bariatric medicine. “I know what losing



Doraja Lake



“Tri-C has really helped me make this transition to a new career.”

SARA HUGHES worked a decade in the insurance field before opting for a change. The 35-year-old from Fairview Park turned to Tri-C and in May graduated with an associate degree through the College’s Electroneurodiagnostic Technology program

PERFECT *Harmony*

Tri-C degree leads to prestigious Berklee College of Music for Claire Mulvaney

Claire Mulvaney was in elementary school when her parents encouraged her to take up piano. She had a different idea: “Guitar was for me,” Mulvaney said.

The decision turned out to be a good one.

Mulvaney, now 20, graduated from Cuyahoga Community College in May

with an Associate of Arts degree. Tri-C served as a steppingstone to the Berklee College of Music, where she will study guitar and voice beginning this fall.

The Aurora resident said it has been her longtime dream to attend Berklee. “It has always been an intimidating goal,” she said. “I hear you either sink or swim.”

The College’s matriculation agreement with Berklee will allow



“There are boundless opportunities at a community college if students are willing to take them. Tri-C has so many programs for anything you would want to do.”

BRUCE HYDE graduated wearing various pins and medals reflecting the academic accolades he accumulated on his way to an Associate of Applied Science degree in Information Technology. He plans to continue his studies at the College while working toward a bachelor’s degree at Tiffin University through a partnership between the schools.

weight did for me,” Lake said. “Now I want to help other people get their lives back.”

Lake poured herself into her studies, too. She attended Tri-C’s Eastern Campus and took advantage of online classes given a hectic schedule that includes a full-time job as an insurance agent and raising two sons — Robert, 19, and Anden, 9.

She typically studied late into the night and throughout the weekend to keep up with classwork. The work paid off. Her GPA topped 3.7.

That’s the success she envisioned for herself when she first enrolled at Tri-C in 1997, a year after graduating from Euclid High School. She left

following one semester after getting pregnant and devoting herself to home and family.

Returning after so many years challenged Lake: “It was hard,” she said. “But I made a promise to my sons, to myself, not to quit.”

Lake’s grades earned her membership in the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and she became active in Tri-C’s Black American Council. Away from campus, she launched a mentoring program at her Euclid church and began an assistance service for the elderly and homebound.

All of the success comes from strength built at Tri-C, Lake said. She’s

the first person in her family to earn a college degree.

Lake wasn’t the only family member graduating this past spring, however. Her son Robert received his diploma from Eastlake North High School the day before Tri-C’s commencement. He also has been accepted to Ohio State for next fall.

“I think back to a few years ago and can’t believe this all happening now,” Lake said. “My life has changed so drastically, and I owe so much of that to Tri-C.”

her to find out. She said she probably would not have made it to Berklee without Tri-C and the money she saved given the school’s affordable tuition.

Mulvaney said she discovered what the College offered when her rock band, Toxic Lemons, competed in the Tri-C High School Rock Off. She met with Steve Enos — director of jazz studies and Metropolitan Campus music faculty coordinator — and was off and running.

Her time at Tri-C included opportunities to learn from high-caliber musicians such as Terence Blanchard, Dominick Farinacci and

The Manhattan Transfer through master classes at the Gill and Tommy LiPuma Center for Creative Arts.

“I’ve been really impressed,” she said of her experience at Tri-C.

The guitarist and vocalist has performed at Cleveland Classical Guitar Society recitals and regional venues. She is dipping her toes in jazz now, too, and has played at Blu Jazz, Bop Stop and Take 5 Rhythm and Jazz.

When she’s not doing that, she is singing in her church choir, practicing or working at Aurora School of Music.

“Pretty much all I do is music,” she said. But still no piano.



Claire Mulvaney



Meagan Sabo

TURNING NEAR *Tragedy Into a Degree*

Family dog being hit by car led Meagan Sabo to Tri-C's Veterinary Technology program

career in veterinary medicine. She graduated from Cuyahoga Community College in May with an Associate of Applied Science in Veterinary Technology.

"When I saw everyone working on Bella at the animal hospital, I knew right then that this is what I want to do," said Sabo, 25, of Parma. "It gave me my direction."

Graduation day followed more than six years of taking classes part-time at Tri-C's Western Campus in Parma. Sabo enrolled at Tri-C in 2011 after online research led her to the College's Veterinary Technology program.

Sabo embraced campus life and immersed herself in activities through groups such as the Active Minds Club, Japanese Culture Club and the Veterinary Technicians Club.

She said her experience at Tri-C helped her grow comfortable meeting new people. Sabo has Asperger's Syndrome, a mild form of autism that sometimes translates into awkwardness in social settings.

"I thought I'd just come to class and leave," Sabo said. "But there was so much going on, I started doing things.

College really helped me open up to people."

Sabo thrived in the classroom, too, and spent the past semester interning with a local veterinarian and a veterinary lab to gain hands-on experience. She learned she enjoys working with exotic animals such as reptiles, snakes and birds.

She is already talking with several local veterinarian offices about a job after graduation. The Veterinary Technician National Examination also awaits so she can earn her professional credentials.

"I'm looking at getting my dream job," Sabo said, "and it's because of the people and classes at Tri-C."

The gray-and-white blur of fur darted past Meagan Sabo the moment she opened the front door. Bella bolted into the yard with every ounce of puppy energy in her 13-pound body. The dog reached the street in a blink.

Then came the moment Sabo can never forget: "I heard a sickening thud," she remembers. "Then I saw Bella under the wheels of a car."

What happened next saved the dog and changed Sabo's life.

Watching caregivers at a nearby animal hospital nurse Bella back to health convinced Sabo to pursue a



"I will always be appreciative of my time at Tri-C. College Credit Plus has been such an amazing opportunity. My advice to a high school student would be to seriously consider the CCP option because it can really help you in the long run."

ALEX LENHART earned two associate degrees from Tri-C before graduating from Rocky River High School thanks to the College Credit Plus program. He will enter Case Western Reserve University in the fall as a junior.



Morelle McCane

A CAREER *Reboot*

Tri-C helps Shaoib Khan build a new future in information technology

Shaoib Khan began working for his family's business after graduating high school. But as he approached his 30s, the Cleveland resident wondered if managing a local gas station franchise was the life he wanted.

After much handwringing, he decided he needed to make a change and enrolled at Cuyahoga Community College to study information technology.

He graduated from Tri-C in May with an Associate of Arts degree.

"I took a leap of faith," said Khan, now 31. "It was rough, but I made it through."

It wasn't easy. Doctors discovered a mass in Khan's brain soon after he

enrolled at Tri-C in the fall of 2014. It proved benign, but the situation left him nerve-racked as he returned to the classroom.

Khan said strong support from professors, counselors and tutors kept him motivated. He juggled classes, two jobs and doctor's appointments as he worked toward his degree at Westshore Campus in Westlake.

He credited Martin Walsh, assistant professor of information technology, for helping him recognize a talent for math that he applied to his IT studies.

Khan said his time at the College solidified his future while making him a more energetic and positive



Shaoib Khan

person. He intends to begin classes at Cleveland State University in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree. He is excited about his future job prospects.

"My experience overall was great," Khan said. "Now there's something in my heart, and I want to keep going."

BUILDING *Business Muscle*

Morelle McCane opens fitness company after finding strength at Tri-C

Morelle McCane found her entrepreneurial spirit at Cuyahoga Community College.

The 21-year-old Cleveland resident opened a mobile fitness company called MoFitt The Movement based on her lessons at Tri-C. She said the College gave her the knowledge and confidence to step into the world of business.

McCane crossed the commencement stage in May after earning an Associate of Applied Business degree.

"Tri-C opened my eyes to what is possible," McCane said. "I never thought I'd open my own business until I came here."

The idea for MoFitt grew out of McCane's time working at a preschool. She said she discovered that youngsters learned better after getting up and moving. Much of her work with MoFitt involves children, though she works with people of all ages.

The company specializes in developing fun and creative routines to encourage exercise. McCane said MoFitt's mission is to help clients build a healthy body and healthy mind while developing an active lifestyle.

McCane brings a knockout resume to the business, too: The accomplished boxer won a Cleveland Area Golden Gloves championship in 2015.



"Tri-C has provided me with a great start. There have been a lot of opportunities to improve myself. There are opportunities I probably would not have had in my home country. I'm very glad I decided to come here."

ADEKUNLE POPOOLA enrolled at Tri-C soon after immigrating to Cleveland from Nigeria in 2014. The 21-year-old earned an Associate of Arts degree in May and intends to return to the College this fall to pursue an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing.



PASSING THE TEST

Job-ready students graduate from Tri-C's first Adult Diploma Program with a high school diploma and career credential

The inaugural class of Adult Diploma Program students at Cuyahoga Community College graduated in June with high school diplomas and the workforce credentials needed to land in-demand jobs.

Sixty-five students completed the Ohio Department of Education pilot program at Tri-C. The majority of

graduates either landed jobs or enrolled at the College to continue building their academic and workforce skills.

"Education is the key to success in life," said JaNice Marshall, associate vice president of access and community engagement at Tri-C. "For each of these graduates, gaining a diploma and professional certification opens the door to a better future."

Participants were adults age 22 or older who left high school before graduation. The free, state-funded program allowed each to earn a high school diploma while simultaneously taking job-training courses in growth industries.

Students applied for the pilot program at Tri-C in the fall of 2015. They began their studies in 2016 after

ASPIRE TO LEARN MORE



Graduates of Tri-C's Adult Diploma Program shared the commencement stage with another group making the most of a second chance.

The ceremony honored more than 100 additional students who earned their high school equivalency diploma through Ohio Aspire programs offered at the College. (Aspire was formerly known as the state's Adult Basic and Literacy Education, or ABLE, program.)

Ohio Aspire provides free services for individuals who need assistance acquiring the skills to be successful. For information on the state programs offered at the College, visit www.tri-c.edu/aspire or call 216-987-3029.

choosing a career pathway in fields such as healthcare, manufacturing, logistics and construction.

The program embedded academics — such as math and reading — into career and technical coursework that took place at College locations such as the Advanced Technology Training Center in Cleveland.

Unlike in traditional classrooms, students showed they mastered their courses by passing a job skills test rather than a traditional academic test.

“Knowledge is measured in different ways,” said Vincent Briley, who managed the pilot program for the College. “The format of the Adult Diploma Program puts an emphasis on mastering the technical skills needed to thrive in the workforce. It offers a pathway to career success.”

The state developed the Adult Diploma Program to connect undereducated Ohio residents with the education and training needed to secure jobs with a living wage. Data shows that adults without a high school diploma are twice as likely to live in poverty.

Approximately 1.1 million Ohio residents age 22 or older have dropped out of high school, a number that reflects the need behind the Adult Diploma Program.

The Department of Education launched the pilot program at Cuyahoga Community College and four other sites to offer a solution. The state expanded the program to 26 locations across the state this year.

“The success of our first class showed the potential of this program,” Briley said. “This challenging program provides new opportunity. I am excited to see the heights reached by these graduates and all who follow.”

The application period for Tri-C’s next Adult Diploma Program session opened July 7. For information on the program, visit www.tri-c.edu/aduldiploma or call 216-987-0610.

POWER JOBS

FirstEnergy hires entire graduating class from Power Systems Institute at Tri-C



The newest graduates of the Power Systems Institute at Tri-C finished spring semester with an associate degree and a job.

FirstEnergy Corp. hired all 22 graduates from the utility worker training program as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance service reliability for Northeast Ohio customers. The new employees will work for The Illuminating Company and Ohio Edison.

The new line workers represent the first graduating class since FirstEnergy reinstituted the award-winning Power Systems Institute (PSI) training program at Tri-C in 2014. The program is a partnership between the College and The Illuminating Company.

The two-year workforce program combines hands-on utility skills training at a FirstEnergy facility in Brooklyn with technical coursework taught in Tri-C classrooms. Graduates earn an Associate of Technical Studies degree with a focus on electric power utility technology.

“The PSI program is an effective pipeline for adding well-trained, highly skilled employees to our workforce,” said John Skory, regional president of The Illuminating Company. “By teaming with our veteran linemen as part of the training process, these new employees will help ensure reliable service for our customers, now and in the future.”

The recently hired PSI graduates include:

Richard Balcer of Sagamore Hills	Caleb Henery of Ashtabula	Keith Novak of Parma	Cory Trojan of Macedonia
Patrick Canfield of LaGrange	Devin Knapp of Fairview Park	Cody Novatny of Avon Lake	Zach Truman of Lorain
David Fitzgerald of Brecksville	Jesse Kyovsky of Broadview Heights	Kevin Oyler of Broadview Heights	Devin Warat of Chardon
Matthew Flanigan of Conneaut	Ryan Ladegaard of Bay Village	Trevor Schneck of Parma	Matthew Wargo of Mentor-on-the-Lake
Craig Gedeon of Parma Heights	Jacob Martinelli of Lakewood	Cory Sestak of Medina	
Nate Graber of Lakewood	Justin Morway of Cleveland	Jeremy Simon of Westlake	

FirstEnergy originally introduced the PSI in 2000 to prepare the company’s next generation of utility line and substation workers. Programs were established at colleges throughout the company’s six-state service area, including Tri-C.

Since the program’s inception, FirstEnergy has hired nearly 1,500 line and substation personnel who completed PSI programs in Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

For information on the program, visit www.firstenergycorp.com/psi or call 800-829-6801.

“An Investment IN ALL OF OUR FUTURES”



Mandel Foundation awards Tri-C and CSU \$3.5 million to create Continuing Scholars Program that will serve as a national model for honors student transfers

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation awarded nearly \$3.5 million to Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University to create a scholars program connecting high-achieving Tri-C students with CSU's honors college.

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Continuing Scholars Program forges a new partnership between the academic institutions in a collaboration that aims to be a national model for honors student transfers between two-year and four-year schools.

This academic pathway will link students from Tri-C's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Scholars

Academy to CSU's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Honors College. The program will offer a seamless transition as students continue rigorous coursework in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

“Our Foundation believes in the mission of Tri-C and Cleveland State and is committed to supporting that effort,” said Morton Mandel, chairman and CEO of the Mandel Foundation. “These schools change the lives of students who, in turn, make an impact on the city, the region, the nation and the world. This grant is an investment in all of our futures.”

The program will provide students full-tuition scholarships and stipends; summer research



workshops and training opportunities; and a peer mentoring network and dedicated academic advisors to guide students through to graduation.

“The Continuing Scholars Program established with this generous gift from the Mandel Foundation builds an environment that promises to bring out the best in some of our brightest students,” Tri-C President Alex Johnson said. “This partnership reflects a steadfast commitment to exceptional academic outcomes for the betterment of the community.”

“This significant investment by the Mandel Foundation paves a pathway to success between Tri-C and Cleveland State,” CSU President Ronald M. Berkman said. “The innovative collaboration between the institutions and the new level of student support will lead to honors graduates who will be ready and motivated to transform the world.”

The grant agreement calls for the first group of Mandel Scholars to transition between the schools this fall. Students must have at least a 3.5 GPA at Tri-C to be considered. The goal is to transfer 25 students per year by 2020.

Transfer students will enter CSU as juniors after earning an associate degree at Tri-C. Once at CSU, they

will be on course to graduate with distinction within two years.

Collaboration between faculty and advisors from Tri-C and CSU will enhance the student experience and act as a bridge between the institutions. The grant calls for joint curriculum development and enrichment activities to advance studies.

The Mandel Continuing Scholars Program builds upon academic initiatives launched at Tri-C and CSU in recent years through the generosity of the Mandel Foundation.

CSU created the Mandel Honors College in 2014 after receiving a \$3.6 million grant from the Mandel Foundation. The highly selective honors program has graduated more than 400 students since its inception.

A year later, Tri-C established The



Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel CONTINUING SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center — the home of the College’s Mandel Scholars Academy — after receiving a \$10 million gift from the Mandel Foundation. The center promotes the study of the humanities to expand critical thinking and leadership skills.

The new Mandel Continuing Scholars Program creates a process by which academic talent nurtured at Tri-C can mature at CSU, leading to graduates ready to enter the workforce and assume leadership positions in the community.

The Mandel Continuing Scholars Program grant will be administered through the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation and the Cleveland State University Foundation. Approximately \$1.5 million will go to Tri-C.



Julie Harton (far left) instructs her interior design students during a recent class. The students are (left to right): Megan Thompson, Lewis Phipps, Deborah Chapman, Jordan Kahn and David Vazquez.

DESIGNING

a new career

Interior designers create the environments where we work, play and live. Tri-C is helping to educate the next generation.

How often do you stop and look around when you're in a home or building?

There is a story behind every chair, wall and square foot of flooring. Somebody had to envision the finished space and decide what materials, furniture, wall coverings and lighting could bring that vision to life.

In almost all commercial spaces and many homes, this process is guided by an interior designer. It's a profession expanding throughout Northeast Ohio. From new residential and office construction in the suburbs to urban renovation projects in the neighborhoods of Cleveland and Akron, there are untold thousands of square feet of interior space in need of a designer's skilled eye.

It's a big reason why students file into the interior design classroom on Cuyahoga Community College's Eastern Campus every year.

"It's a growing field, and our program is one that will prepare a student to enter both commercial and residential design," said Jakecia Durham, the program's director.

MORE THAN LOOKS

A popular misconception about interior design is that it focuses primarily on surface-level aesthetics. To make it in this field, however, you need to learn about much more than drapery color and upholstery texture. Depending on the project, an interior designer might need working knowledge of the building's architecture,



Jakecia Durham has managed Tri-C's Interior Design program for two years.

electrical wiring, plumbing, HVAC equipment and the local building codes.

"Some students come in on the first day and don't realize how much knowledge is involved in being a good interior designer," Durham said. "It's not just about what you see when you watch HGTV. You're not just making a space look pretty. There are discussions with architects, construction managers, building inspectors and others.

"You have to think about how the space will be used, how the electrical, plumbing and HVAC are installed, what adhesives can be used for wallpaper. It all has to be taken into consideration."

That's why Tri-C's Interior Design program places an emphasis on immersive experience. Durham wants her students to get out of the classroom and into the field.

"That's what I think sets our program apart," Durham said. "A lot of programs at other schools focus heavily on the classroom aspect, but you don't just want to teach the technical knowledge in the classroom without applying it in the field."

Students receive field experience in a variety of ways, including charity design projects for area schools, part-time work and internships. Many students find their first job through their fieldwork.

"We have a graduate placement rate of 97 or 98 percent," Durham said.



Prior to graduating, students must complete a final project. This project is the work of program graduate Jancine Fann.



Interior design student Megan Thompson works during a recent class.

"Some students come in on the first day and don't realize how much knowledge is involved in being a good interior designer. It's not just what you see when you watch HGTV."

— Jakecia Durham, Interior Design program manager

"Many times, a student will start working for a firm while still in school and will stay on with that firm after graduation."

Durham and her staff of adjunct faculty also encourage their students to matriculate at four-year schools and pursue a bachelor's degree in interior design. Tri-C's Interior Design program has an articulation agreement with the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. Many students also transfer to Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania.

"We also have many students go on to the University of Akron, because most of our credits transfer there," Durham said. "There are a number of options available to students once they complete their studies here."

SUCCESS AFTER GRADUATION

Jancine Fann and Lisa Lynn graduated from Tri-C's Interior Design program in May. Both came to Tri-C after years away from formal schooling.

Fann had a longtime interest in interior design and started taking classes to learn about interior design for home projects. She stuck with the program, completing it on a part-time

basis over the span of three years, and now works as a professional designer.

"Tri-C's program exposes you to a lot of things in a relatively short time," Fann said. "But they don't just let you sink or swim. The classes are smaller, so there is a higher level of one-on-one communication with the teachers. They were always ready to help me if I didn't understand something right away."

Lynn decided to enroll at Tri-C in 2015. Like Fann, she now works as a designer.

"After my kids had gotten a little older, I decided to take the opportunity to go back to school," Lynn said. "Way back when, I had gone to vocational school for commercial illustration, so a career in the design field was always in the back of my mind."

Lynn said the program is challenging, but thoroughly prepares students to enter the field.

"The teachers are tough at Tri-C," Lynn said. "But if you are there to learn, they are there to help you. Everything I learned in the program I'm putting to use now. My time at Tri-C has been a great foundation for my career."



Aiming **HIGHER**

Brunswick University Center partnerships enable students to earn bachelor's and master's degrees

Those eyeing careers in business or criminal justice need look no further than Brunswick for a comprehensive education that fits their busy lifestyle.

Tri-C's Brunswick University Center (BUC) offers opportunities for students to earn baccalaureate and advanced degrees on-site through partnerships with Tiffin University and Franklin University. Tiffin offers bachelor's and master's degrees in Criminal Justice, while Franklin – a school known for its business programs – offers bachelor's degrees in Accounting and Business Administration.

With offices at BUC, representatives from both universities travel regularly between campuses and in the community to spread awareness of these unique transfer programs. That's how Melissa Hill first became aware of Franklin's "3+1" program back in 2012.

With her associate degree in Business Management nearly complete, Hill was ready to take the next step.

"I knew I wanted to transfer to a four-year school, but wasn't sure which one," she said. "Franklin's program caught my attention because I could stay at Tri-C – a place I was already comfortable with – instead of going elsewhere."

Five years later, Hill holds two associate degrees from Tri-C plus a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's in Business Psychology, both from Franklin.

"That's almost unheard of," said Hill. "Not to mention, I have much less debt since I was able to take so many of my required courses at Tri-C."

Franklin's 3+1 model allows full-time students to complete three years of courses at Tri-C and finish their bachelor's degree within four years. The accelerated format consists of 6-week and 12-week courses that meet once a week, either face-to-face or online.

"For someone who's busy, it's a no-brainer," said Hill.

Michael Cox earned an associate degree in Law Enforcement from Tri-C in 2013. On his way to meet with an advisor to discuss next steps, he stopped at a table outside of the counseling office. It was an info table for Tiffin University.

"I had looked into several options, but Tiffin's program worked best for me," said Cox, who was balancing school with a full-time job and caring for a family member. "The classes were so convenient, and I liked that I could take two courses at a time and finish in four semesters."



Stacy McGrath



Melissa Hill

HIRAM COLLEGE AT EASTERN CAMPUS

Besides Brunswick University Center, a similar partnership exists between Hiram College and Tri-C's Eastern Campus that gives students the opportunity to earn bachelor's degrees in business management or accounting and financial operations. Call 216-987-0306 for more information.

Tiffin University's cohort-based program offers hybrid classes one night or Saturday per week. Each course is seven weeks long, allowing students to earn a bachelor's degree in as little as 16 months. As with Franklin's program, students are encouraged to complete as many courses as possible at Tri-C.

"I received personal guidance and attention from both schools," said Cox, who will finish his master's degree this spring. "They helped me figure out which credits would transfer, and there was always someone willing to answer questions. BUC is great because everything you need is right there."

Stacy McGrath came to Tri-C in 2012 to pursue an associate degree in Criminal Justice. Once she finished that, she moved on to the College's Police Academy and a certificate in conflict resolution. McGrath was in Jordan working with Syrian refugees when she received an email reminding her about Tiffin's off-campus program.

"Bill (Schumacher, Tiffin representative) had come to one of my classes to talk about the program," said McGrath. "His persistence paid off – I enrolled as soon as I got back to the States."

The program's cohort model appealed to McGrath because of the teamwork and camaraderie it promotes among students. She also appreciates that most of the work is completed and submitted online, allowing for greater freedom and flexibility.

"You can adjust your personal schedule to fit with your classes," she said. "You can still have a job, enjoy your family and never miss a holiday."

McGrath will receive her bachelor's in Criminal Justice in May 2018. She is in the process of opening her own international investigation and security business and hopes to become a licensed private investigator. Her three daughters are also pursuing degrees at Tri-C.

"It can be intimidating to think about completing a degree while working and caring for your family," said

McGrath, now a full-time police officer. "But when you go after your dreams, you inspire those around you."

Michael Cox is currently seeking a position with a federal law enforcement agency specializing in homeland security. The credentials he's earned through Tri-C and Tiffin help him appeal to a greater number of employers.

"The more you can distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack, the better," he said.

Melissa Hill works full time in the medical records department of a skilled nursing facility and will begin teaching in Franklin's program at Tri-C this fall. She hopes one day to work for herself as a consultant, coach and online business instructor. Her experience at Tri-C gave her the confidence she needed to go after her dreams.

"I often say that it's not just the future that begins at Tri-C," said Hill. "Tri-C is where life begins."

Brunswick University Center is located at 3605 Center Road. Visit www.tri-c.edu/campuses-and-locations/brunswick or call 216-987-3997 for more information.

Franklin University's courses will move to Tri-C's Western Campus in fall 2017.

MEET ME AT BUC

Opened in 2011, Brunswick University Center serves as Medina County's "Gateway to Education." More than 1,000 students enroll at the center each semester. It is the main campus for more than 60 percent of these students, with the remainder enrolled in at least one course at the location.

The center offers more than 100 courses leading to an associate degree, including courses in health care, business and education. Programs are available for students of all ages, including high school students and senior citizens.

EARNED HONORS

Student-athletes stuffed the trophy case during a memorable 2017 season wearing Tri-C teal on ballfields and at the track. Here are some highlights.

ALL-AMERICAN ENDINGS FOR TWO TRI-C RECORD SETTERS

Rashida Harris and Amber Ruiz-Bueno excel at national championships

Rashida Harris and Amber Ruiz-Bueno capped record-setting track careers at Cuyahoga Community College with All-American performances at the 2017 NJCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

Harris placed second in the shot put and seventh in the hammer throw, while Ruiz-Bueno finished fifth in the 800-meter run at the national finals in May.

“Rashida and Amber certainly left their mark on the Tri-C track program,” said Don Cox, the College’s longtime coach. “And as incredible as they’ve been during their two years at the school, they somehow saved their best for last.”

Harris became only the second Tri-C student-athlete to earn All-American honors in two individual events at nationals. (Ruiz-Bueno was the first, accomplishing the feat during the 2017 indoor track season.)

In addition, the runner-up finish by Harris in the shot put matches the best-ever individual placing by a Challenger at finals.

The sophomore from Euclid also shattered the school record

in the hammer throw during the championships with a toss of 156 feet, 4 inches. Her throw bettered the previous Tri-C mark by more than 12 feet.

Harris will compete next year on scholarship at the University of Louisville, an NCAA Division I school where she will continue studying physical therapy.

She leaves Tri-C as a five-time NJCAA All-American and a school record holder in four events.

More importantly, Harris said she leaves as a better student.

“Tri-C emphasized the ‘student’ in student-athlete,” Harris said. “The College really helped me with school and classes. My coaches, professors and tutors all helped get me where I am today.”

As for Ruiz-Bueno, the middle-distance standout lowered her school record in the 800-meter run to make the podium at nationals. She ran a

2:13.05 at the championships, topping her previous best of 2:13.40 set earlier in the season. Before this year, Tri-C’s record in the 800 was 2:18.20.

Ruiz-Bueno graduated from the College in May with an Associate of Arts degree and a near-perfect GPA that resulted in Academic All-American recognition during each of the four semesters she took classes.

She crossed the finish line at Tri-C as a four-time NJCAA All-American and a school record holder in four events. The Willowick resident will run on scholarship next year for Southern Illinois University, an NCAA Division I school where she will study sports administration.

“I never dreamed I would have that sort of opportunity,” Ruiz-Bueno said. “Tri-C made it possible because the people here believed in me. They saw something in me before I did.”



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Softball player Racquel Ward turns in award-winning season with arm and bat

One award wasn't enough to capture the dominance of Tri-C's Racquel Ward during the 2017 softball season.

Ward claimed both Player of the Year and Pitcher of the Year honors from the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference (OCCAC) after leading the Challengers to a 28-10 record and the top of the standings.

"Racquel excelled at everything she did," said Bryan Komlos, the team's head coach. "I've never seen another season like it. She amazed every time she stepped on the field."

Ward overwhelmed opposing batters from the pitcher's mound while going 18-5 with one save. The right-hander struck out 137 batters in 124.1 innings while throwing 13 complete games in 18 starts.



Racquel Ward



She ranked among the national leaders in wins, strikeouts and ERA and won the conference Pitcher of the Week Award six times this season.

Offensively, Ward batted .453 with a team-leading seven home runs and 45 RBI.

The sophomore from Ashland transferred to the College in 2016 to be closer to home after attending Indiana's Trine University immediately after high school. She is in the pre-nursing program at Tri-C.

Despite scholarship offers to play softball at four-year schools, she intends to remain at Tri-C next year to work toward her associate degree and a career in health care.

"Tri-C has been my home away from home," Ward said. "I love it here."

Four teammates joined Ward in earning all-conference honors, including:

- Outfielder Courtney Cadle, who batted .382 with 41 runs scored.
- Second baseman Madison Smith, who batted .373 with 20 RBI and 30 runs scored.
- Shortstop Serena Tucciarelli, who batted .395 with a home run and 35 RBI.
- First baseman Beth Wills, who batted .455 with three home runs and 22 RBI.

The OCCAC also honored Komlos with its Coach of the Year award after the Challengers won their first conference title since 2013.

BAT MAN

Outfielder Matt Starcovic slugs his way to baseball honors

Tri-C's Matt Starcovic made life miserable for opposing pitchers in 2017.

The outfielder batted .400 for the Challengers and ranked among the team's top sluggers with 11 home runs and 18 doubles. He also scored 64 runs and added 54 RBI while reaching base in nearly half his at-bats.

Those numbers lifted Starcovic toward the top of the national leaderboard in various batting categories, leading to All-American recognition by the NJCAA and Player of the Year honors from the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference (OCCAC).

Starcovic's stellar second season at Tri-C followed an all-conference performance as a freshman. He claimed the OCCAC Player of the Week award five times as a Challenger.

"Matt has been a big-time player for us the past two years," said Evan Agona, the College's head baseball coach. "He walked in here a talented kid and then worked hard to make himself even better."

Starcovic is considering several scholarship offers from four-year schools to continue playing baseball. He enrolled at Tri-C to study business after graduating from North Olmsted High School.

Three teammates joined Starcovic in earning all-conference honors, including:

- Pitcher Anthony Savarino, a right-hander who went 8-1 with a 2.13 ERA over 12 starts.
- First baseman Garrett Robberts, who batted .318 with eight home runs and 42 RBI.



Matt Starcovic

- Pitcher Juan Perez, a left-hander who went 5-1 with two saves while working out of the team's bullpen.

The Challengers ended the season ranked 13th in the nation with a record of 45-14. The team finished second in the conference standings and third in the NJCAA Region XII regional tournament.



TRI-C JAZZFEST

Hits All the Right Notes

38th annual festival is music to the ears of fun-loving crowds

Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, presented by KeyBank, took over Playhouse Square June 22-24. The performing arts center's historic theatres hosted eight ticketed concerts and live music, games, vendors and more were offered outside.

The kick-off event, Keyed Up!, took place Friday afternoon and revved the energy with performers, a Big Phat Line Dance and Parade The Circle puppets. WCPN-FM broadcast from the Idea Center a live performance by Jane Bunnett & Maqueque, who performed later in the Allen Theatre.

Inside, artists in Connor Palace ranged from the romantic trumpeting of festival opener Chris Botti to jazz-pop stalwart Boz Scaggs. Smaller theaters hosted forward-looking artists like Kamasi Washington and Terence Blanchard featuring the E-Collective.

The outdoor Strassman Insurance Stage welcomed 17 regional bands that performed during free concerts Friday and Saturday. A dance floor occupied space next to the stage and under the GE Chandelier.

More than 20 local vendors, featuring everything



from Cleveland-centric T-shirts to gourmet popcorn, populated the inaugural outdoor Vendor Village. U.S. Bank KidBop had crafts, artist meet-and-greets, puppets and more for kids, including a scavenger hunt that rewarded finishers with an ice cream treat from Mitchell's Homemade Ice Cream.

Chef Karen Monath led cooking demonstrations in the Hospitality Management Center of Excellence tent, and the Chemical Bank Jazz Talk Tent welcomed artists for casual interviews.

The festival, in its 38th year, proved again that "Jazz Lives Here."





STUDENT PRODUCTION OFFICE GETS A *JAZZY* *PROJECT*

Team creates JazzFest spots that hit
Northeast Ohio airwaves

Early this year, Terri Pontremoli picked up the phone and called Mike Pella. Pontremoli, director of Tri-C JazzFest and Performing Arts Series, wanted Pella to make a TV commercial for the 2017 jazz festival. Pella, project manager in the student production office, didn't hesitate.

"We are always looking for interesting projects, so yeah, we jumped on it," Pella said.

Pella and his team began brainstorming.

The idea was to riff on the JazzFest tagline, "Jazz Lives Here." "We wanted to take the idea and narrow it down to what we could actually pull off," Pella said.

Working on the project with Pella were students Erahlea Haidet, Chris Leszkowicz, Thomas Matheis and Adam Suntken. They came up with the idea of putting jazz in places where one might not expect to find it. They filmed at Six Shooter Coffee, Great Lakes Brewing Company, Anderson Industries and Zygot Press. The commercials showed workers at these locations going about their business but



“We’re at the level of an outside production company right now.”

— Mike Pella, project manager, Student Production Office

creating JazzFest messaging on the sly. The big reveal at the end of the commercial shot at Anderson, for example, is a fabrication worker holding a metal plate that reads “Jazz Lives Here.”

The four locations each produced a 10-second spot. These spots, primarily used to promote the annual jazz festival on social media, were also combined to make a 30-second commercial that aired on Channel 5 and Fox 8. In addition, videos were used on the ConcertVision screens at House of Blues, Jacobs Pavilion at Nautica and Blossom Music Center. The finished product had a slick, polished and undeniably professional look. Pontremoli and the JazzFest team were impressed.

No surprise. The student production office, now about three years old, can pull off quite a bit.

“We are at the level of an outside production company right now,” Pella said. “These are all students [who worked on the commercials], which speaks to the quality of the program and the real-world experience students get.”

The student production office operates under the Television and Video Production department, itself part of Tri-C’s Media Arts and Filmmaking program. The office has an array of state-of-the-art equipment, and students are paid interns with the option of receiving course credit. Those who complete the program earn a certificate and are ready to go to work. Pella said there is plenty of work to be had, too.

Most students come to the program with dreams of becoming the next great filmmaker. Pella said he encourages those ambitions but understands that there are bills to be paid in the meantime. Many who complete the program find corporate work – filming retreats or editing presentations, for example.

Much of the work the student production office engages in is of this sort, which is why the opportunity to film the JazzFest commercials was special.

“The students were really excited to see their work out in the real world,” Pella said.



Medical Billing: **TWO PATHS WITH A SINGLE GOAL**

Medical billing specialists don't administer tests, write prescriptions or deliver medical treatment. But without them, every medical practice would grind to a halt.

Each service rendered by a medical establishment comes with a cost. Billing specialists make sure those costs are properly assessed and categorized and that claims are filed and billed to the correct insurance provider. Once an insurance provider has a claim, the billing specialist ensures the claim is paid in full and within the agreed-upon timeframe.

It's a juggling act that requires a billing specialist to keep a lot of balls in the air at once. Hospitals, private physician practices and third-party billing services rely on skilled billing experts to oversee the financial aspect of their operations — a need that will only increase as the medical field continues its rapid growth to meet the demands of an aging population.

Cuyahoga Community College offers two paths to a career as a medical billing specialist: an associate degree and a certificate. Each path provides different opportunities, but both have the singular goal of providing essential billing support to medical practices.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE

Tri-C students in the medical billing degree program study for an Associate of Applied Science in Health Information Management Technology (HIMT).

The degree takes more time to complete than the certificate, but offers a broader knowledge base from which graduates can begin their careers.

“Students can attend full time or part time, with classes available days, evenings and Saturdays,” said Kathy Loflin, HIMT program manager at the Metropolitan Campus. “If you take night classes part time, you can finish in three years. Full-time day students can finish in 22 months.”

Tri-C’s HIMT program covers subject matter including HIPAA regulations, medical coding, medical terminology and basic biology.

After graduation, medical billing specialists with an HIMT degree can work in a wide range of medical settings, including hospitals — where detailed knowledge of medical coding standards such as ICD-10 is required.

“Our degree program dives deeper into the coding side,” Loflin said. “It allows graduates to pursue employment where that deeper knowledge is needed, as in facilities where surgery is performed.”

An HIMT degree also opens doors for graduates to take on project management work.

“With enough project management hours under your belt, you can become certified as a project manager,” Loflin said. “That can be very useful in a hospital setting, where teams need to be assembled and coordinated, and timelines need to be met.”

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Though Loflin recommends the degree program to anyone who is able to make the time and study commitment, it doesn’t take two or three years to become a medical billing specialist. For those interested in a fast-track path to a medical billing career, Tri-C also offers a short-term certificate program that can be completed in two semesters.

The medical billing certificate is for those who need a high degree of schedule flexibility or who want to expedite the start of a new career.

“The certificate program can be completed entirely online,” Loflin said. “Since it’s shorter in duration, it’s obviously not going to be as intensive as the degree program; but it will still adequately prepare you to enter the field.”

The program does not require completion of a biology course, which means certificate students will lack some of the basic firsthand knowledge



“There is fierce competition out there for good billing specialists. I always tell my students that if you’re good ... you can move up in this field and make a good living.”

— Kathy Loflin, HIMT program manager

of anatomy and physiology that degree students receive. However, certificate students do complete two semesters of medical terminology coursework.

Ultimately, this means certificate program graduates are not as qualified to work in hospital and surgical settings, where anatomical knowledge is useful for coders and billers. Instead, these graduates often find employment in private practices and third-party billing companies.

THE FUTURE

Whether a student opts for a degree or a certificate, employment prospects for medical billing specialists are good and projected to improve in the coming years. The expansion of the medical field, combined with attrition due to retirement, will continue to create a need for new billing specialists to enter the field.

“There is fierce competition out there for good billing specialists,” Loflin said. “I always tell my students that if you’re good and you’re willing to change jobs, you can move up in this field and make a good living. With a degree, you can probably start out making \$18 an hour; but if you’re good, you could easily be making \$25 an hour or more within five or 10 years. The need is definitely there.”

HEALING *hands*

Tri-C graduate Karen Posner finds a new career and a new purpose with the Lakota people.

Karen Posner was at a career crossroads when she arrived at Cuyahoga Community College. She was already in her 40s and had 15 years as a real estate agent under her belt. But at a time when many people begin to contemplate their readiness for eventual retirement, Posner was headed toward a career reboot.

In the aftermath of the 2008 and 2009 housing market crash, the Brook Park resident's real estate career was drying up before her eyes. Staying the course was no longer an option – she had to find a new career.

At Tri-C, she found that. She also found a new path in life.

"I actually started at Tri-C focusing solely on international business," Posner said. "Once I realized my career in real estate was no longer a viable option, I decided I wanted to have a career where I could travel the world and work for human rights, which I've always been passionate about. I felt an international business degree would allow me to get into that type of work."

But it was when Posner met Tri-C professors Tyler Olson and Susan Lohwater that the work turned into a mission. Olson introduced Posner to Tri-C's Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies certificate program; Lohwater introduced her to the plight of Native Americans living on reservations throughout the Great Plains.

In particular, Posner was moved by the challenges faced by the Lakota people at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

"Dr. Lohwater puts on an event called 'Culture Shock' at Tri-C West, and that's where I heard about the problems at Pine Ridge – the low graduation rates, the high suicide rates," Posner said. "I wanted to see more for myself."

In March 2015, Posner coordinated a weeklong trip to Pine Ridge for Tri-C students and faculty. The contingent met with community organizations and tribal leaders and visited historical sites, including the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890.

The trip inspired her to create a nonprofit called Honor the Drums. The organization aims to improve the lives of those at Pine Ridge. Already, Posner has helped spearhead a book drive for the reservation's library and organized a donation drive for prom dresses and tuxedos for the reservation's high schoolers.

"For the book drive, we collected about 3,500 books and drove them to the reservation," Posner said. "We let the kids there pick up the books, which was rewarding. They have a library to call their own."

Posner graduated from Tri-C in 2015 with a Conflict Resolution and Peace



Karen Posner and daughter Nicole at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center in Badlands National Park, South Dakota. The park is partially located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Studies certificate. She received a scholarship to John Carroll University, from which she graduated this spring with a degree in Peace, Justice and Human Rights. She plans to study for a master's degree in youth counseling and eventually relocate to Pine Ridge.

"I want to live near the reservation and provide community services," she said. "Youth counseling, suicide prevention, things like that. But that probably won't happen for a few years yet. I have a daughter in high school, and I promised I wouldn't move while she was still in school."

BEHIND THE SCENES:

Maricelly Bliss

Maricelly Bliss has worked at Tri-C for eight years. She started in the budget department, but moved to the academic side. On May 22, she started a new position as administrative coordinator in Health Careers. She lives in Shaker Heights.

TRI-C TIMES: How did you get started at the College?

MARICELLY BLISS: My high school alma mater, Jane Addams Business Career Center, is across the street from the Metro Campus, so growing up, I knew about Tri-C's positive reputation in the community.

I started at the College as a budget analyst. My primary duties involved the College's general fund; analytical reviews of the budget and results of operations; processing budget-change requests and Banner uploads, purchase requisitions and a lot more. I helped prepare the annual general fund budget.

TCT: What made you want to move to the academic side?

MB: Being the first in my family to attend and graduate from college, I have always valued education. My heart has always been in academia. Apart from health, I cannot think of any other part of society that is more important than education.

I know how difficult it was for me to obtain my education, so that experience made me a great supporter of and advocate for education, especially for minority students.

My move to academics came in 2013, when I was given the opportunity to work as an office assistant in the Office of Academic Affairs. Working with the dean helped me realize the importance of student success from behind the scenes.



Maricelly Bliss

Now, I am an administrative coordinator to the associate dean of Health Careers. I will continue to provide administrative assistance to the associate dean and work with colleagues to achieve the goals of the department, division and College.

TCT: How was the transition from finance to academics?

MB: It was a smooth transition. I've had the privilege to work with a great team working toward the same goal of student completion and success.

TCT: What do you enjoy most about your new position?

MB: Although new to the job, I look forward to assisting and supporting the associate dean, faculty and students. I will take every opportunity to advocate student success and completion in science. Academic track and focus are important. Engaging

with colleagues and faculty to enhance student outcomes will be one of my primary roles.

TCT: What do you like to do in your free time?

MB: I volunteer my time to represent the College. I have volunteered for the levy campaigns, Relay for Life, festivals, commencement, New Student Convocation and welcome tables.

I am a member of the Hispanic Council, the Equity Taskforce and the Tobacco-Free Taskforce.

I also take full advantage of Tri-C's recreational programs, specifically swimming. Because — as I am always called out on — although I am from the island of Puerto Rico, I never learned to swim.

Lastly, I enjoy spending time with my daughters. I love to make the most of our time together.

Meet Me @ Tri-C:

Amer Odat

Amer Odat of Westlake recently completed Cuyahoga Community College's Adult Diploma Program. The 46-year-old is now working for his cousin's trucking company and said he has doubled the salary he earned prior to completing the program. "This program does not just give you a high school diploma; it gives you a career," he said.

TRI-C TIMES: What inspired you to enroll in the Adult Diploma Program?

AMER ODAT: My sister — after many, many years — got her GED, and that's what inspired me. When I found out about the Adult Diploma Program, I couldn't believe it really existed. It was a second chance for me, and I advise everyone who needs it to take it. It is really an opportunity for anyone who feels the train left him behind. You wouldn't believe how much confidence I have after this program. I started feeling confidence the first week. It started building up little by little, all the way until I got the diploma in my hand. I started to think positively all the time. I started respecting myself.

TCT: What industry did you focus on and why?

AO: I chose to focus on a commercial driver's license because working for a trucking company is one of the most

in-demand jobs in America. You can start at \$50,000 a year and go higher and higher every year after that. Some college graduates don't make that much.

TCT: What did you find most challenging about the program?

AO: The most challenging thing was getting over the fear that I wouldn't succeed, but every day and every week my confidence increased. The fear goes away little by little, and it was gone after about a month. The program is not that hard at all. Tri-C offers so much help — computers, staff, library, advice. I even had teachers sit right next to me and show me what to do when I was struggling with some courses.

TCT: When did you move to the United States and for what reasons?

AO: I came to the United States in 1994. I'm from Jordan. I served in the army for two years, and I was responsible



for protecting the royal family. Queen Noor [Al-Hussein], wife of the late King Hussein, showed us the beauty of the United States. She was so kind and very human and beautiful. We would watch American movies, and that was the biggest reason I wanted to come to the United States: I wanted to live the American Dream.

TCT: What do you like to do in your free time?

AO: I love to spend it with my wife and our six beautiful children.

#mytricstory

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"I feel strongly that Tri-C is a good place to be – both as an employee and as a student."
Sandy Keovisay

Sandy was a College Credit Plus student at Tri-C while in high school; a college transfer student to Tri-C; a proud 2017 Tri-C graduate and a Tri-C employee.

Sandy plans to continue her education, pursuing a Bachelor of Criminal Justice in Justice Administration on Tri-C campuses through the Tri-C/Tiffin University partnership. (see page 18). Her professional goal is to work as a Victim Advocate.

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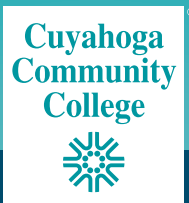
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