Alumna Susan Porter Lauds Scholarships
AS THE KEY TO HER SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC JOURNEY FROM TRI-C TO CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Susan Mason Porter was an entrepreneur in the software and restaurant industries before enrolling at Cuyahoga Community College in January 2010. One of the biggest obstacles she faced when making the decision to go to college was paying for it. Fortuitously, a friend convinced Porter that an affordable path to education could be found through a combination of financial aid and grants.

In her first semester, Porter took three online classes with the hope that this would help her ease back into the academic process. Porter's perseverance paid off and she was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa, the academic honor society for two-year colleges; was accepted into the Robert L. Lewis Academy of Scholars; and received financial support. Porter said, “Being accepted into Tri-C’s Robert L. Lewis Academy of Scholars forged my academic path. The program provided scholarship money which paid for my courses, books, the materials needed to research social justice issues around the globe, and a website that shined a spotlight on the issues I felt were most pressing at the time.”

Porter earned her associate degree from Tri-C in 2012 and transferred to the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations on a full scholarship to pursue her lifelong interests in social justice and human rights.

Looking back, Porter is proud of her academic accomplishments but underscores the importance of scholarship support. “There was no way I could have completed my education in four years had it not been for scholarship money. Working hard to obtain high grades was my job. If I had to work outside of school, I would not have been able to take a full load every semester. I am forever thankful for the programs and individuals who invested in me at Tri-C and at Cornell.”

In 2014 Porter returned to Cleveland after earning her Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell. She is currently employed by Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP). Along with her full-time job at LEAP, Porter has been researching best policing practices for former Ohio Lt. Governor and Attorney General Lee Fisher, who serves as CEO of CEOs for Cities and is a member of the Cleveland Police Commission. Porter is an alumni representative on the steering committee for the Robert L. Lewis Academy of Scholars. In addition, Porter is on the board of directors for the Cornell Club of Northeast Ohio where she is actively engaged in building relationships between Cornell and the Cleveland community.

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Margaret Taber began her career at Cuyahoga Community College in the 1960s, beginning as a part-time engineering instructor. She earned her master’s and her doctorate during her tenure at Tri-C, rising through the ranks as assistant, associate and full professor before ultimately chairing the department.

Taber’s commitment to education, particularly the education of women in engineering, stemmed from her experiences with limited educational choices due to her family’s financial situation and her gender. At various points, both proved to be hindrances in her education and her choices moving forward addressed her commitment to removing these barriers for others.

In 2012, Taber received the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in Greater Lafayette. The YWCA stated, “Through her extreme tenacity, enthusiasm for life and reliability, Marge has become a true inspiration for many.” These words aptly describe Taber and her dedication to equality and accessibility in education.

Taber and her husband, William, continued their focus on education when they named the Tri-C Foundation in their estate plans. Their gift will benefit students for generations to come through an endowed scholarship fund established to support engineering technology students. The Tri-C Foundation is grateful for the generosity of Margaret and William Taber for this planned gift.

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— 2012 YWCA Women of Distinction Award