

TRI-C®

TIMES



A LASTING LEGACY

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A LOOK BACK AT JOHNSON'S TIME AT METRO**

**P20:
THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW
ABOUT ALEX JOHNSON**

**P21:
JOHNSON'S PARTING
ADVICE FOR THE COLLEGE**



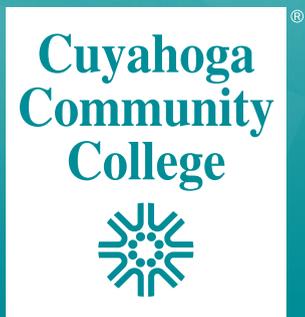
CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE (TRI-C®)

THANKS DR. ALEX JOHNSON

CONGRATULATIONS

on your retirement, and
thank you for your exemplary service
to the College and community.

tri-c.edu
216-987-6000



BOARD OF TRUSTEES Message

TO OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

I have had the privilege of working with Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) President Alex Johnson since 2015 — first as a trustee, and now as Board chair. During this time, I have seen his vision and compassionate leadership impact the lives of countless Northeast Ohio residents. Graduation rates, scholarships and wraparound support services have increased dramatically during his tenure. As a result, Tri-C is considered a vanguard institution among community colleges nationwide.

Through more than four decades in higher education, Dr. Johnson has focused on improving access, equity, success and completion for all students and training them for in-demand careers. To accomplish these goals, he built collaboration among internal and external stakeholders and fostered a culture of continuous improvement that both encourages innovation and adapts to changing circumstances.

The prevailing theme of Dr. Johnson's tenure at Tri-C has been the promotion of educational, personal and social well-being through community engagement. He emphasizes listening, learning and collaborating as foundational principles of leadership, challenging himself and others to continually develop these skills in order to find new ways of thinking and doing.

In his nine years as president, Dr. Johnson has helped the College develop business, industry and community partnerships, infrastructure and programs to prepare students for family-sustaining careers and establish Tri-C as a powerful driver of economic success in the region.

In this special issue of *Tri-C Times*, you'll read about the many programs and initiatives Dr. Johnson spearheaded during his time at the College — from signature access initiatives like *One Door, Many Options for Success* and the First-Year Experience to interventions that help maintain student achievement and address social issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.



THOUGH WE ARE, OF COURSE, SAD TO SEE DR. JOHNSON LEAVE THE COLLEGE, WE KNOW THAT THE IMPACT OF HIS LEADERSHIP AND VISION WILL BE FELT THROUGHOUT GREATER CLEVELAND FOR YEARS TO COME.

With all of this in mind, I invite you to join me in thanking him for his service, celebrating him for his accomplishments and congratulating him for adding a new and exciting chapter to his story.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Forbes Fields".

Helen Forbes Fields
Chair, Board of Trustees

IN THIS ISSUE:

11



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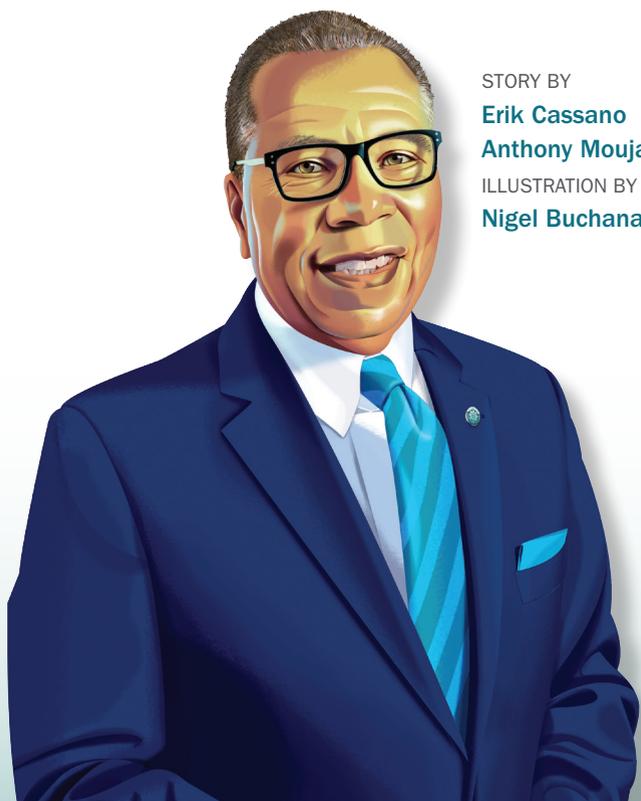
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A LASTING LEGACY

IN NEARLY A DECADE AS CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT, ALEX JOHNSON HAS SPEARHEADED PROJECTS AND CHAMPIONED INITIATIVES AFFECTING ALL AREAS OF THE COLLEGE WITH ONE END GOAL IN MIND: IMPROVING ACCESS, EQUITY AND SUCCESS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS WHO ATTEND TRI-C EACH YEAR.



STORY BY
Erik Cassano
Anthony Moujaes
ILLUSTRATION BY
Nigel Buchanan

Alex Johnson is the fourth president to lead Cuyahoga Community College since its inception. He took over in 2013 — the College’s 50th anniversary year — and will step down at the end of June after nearly a decade at the helm.

In that time, Johnson has had a wide-ranging impact on Tri-C and the Greater Cleveland community.

He took over an institution entrusted to help fuel the momentum of a rebounding region, as Northeast Ohio continued to reinvent itself as a hub for health care, advanced manufacturing and other evolving industries.

Tri-C needed to find new ways to make higher education accessible to all residents, regardless of background or financial ability. It needed to continue developing and adapting its partnerships with area businesses to address training needs and ensure an influx of highly trained workers for a multitude of industries. And, above all, it needed to advance its ongoing efforts attract students and provide pathways to keep them in school and on track to graduation.

Johnson faced those challenges head on, spearheading and championing a wide range of projects, initiatives and collaborative efforts addressing the unique needs of students, employers and the community.

This is a look back at some of the most notable achievements that form the pillars of Johnson’s lasting legacy at Tri-C.

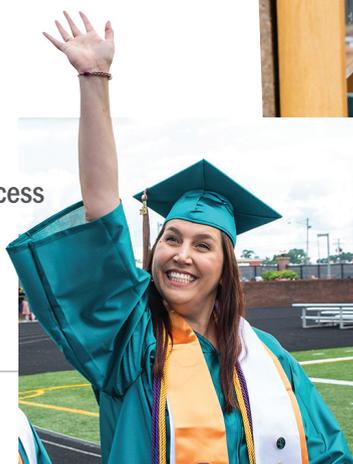
“JOHNSON CONTINUOUSLY CREATED INITIATIVES AIMED AT ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING THEIR TIME AT TRI-C AND PROVIDING CLEARLY DEFINED PATHWAYS TO COMPLETION.”

PATHWAYS TO COMPLETION

During his tenure, Johnson continuously created initiatives aimed at engaging and supporting students during their time at Tri-C and providing clearly defined pathways to completion.

In 2013 — with Tri-C graduating fewer than 2,500 students per year — the College launched *One Door, Many Options for Success*. The initiative transformed the student experience by providing structured educational pathways designed to reduce the time to completion and increase the number of students obtaining degrees, certificates and credentials.

Whether students came to Tri-C planning to transfer, prepare for a new career or enroll in personal enrichment courses, *One Door, Many Options for Success* was the foundation of a rich college experience and future preparedness.



TRI-C CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Recognizing that a skilled workforce is critical to the economic development and competitive vitality of Northeast Ohio — and to ensure students were prepared for future job opportunities — Johnson led the creation of six Tri-C Centers of Excellence in 2014. Designed to meet the educational, cultural and economic needs of local communities, the centers align College programs with regional industry needs.

Blending credit and noncredit programming within Tri-C's Nursing, Creative Arts, Public Safety, Hospitality Management, Information Technology and Manufacturing programs, the

“It began as a way to promote broader involvement to ensure student success, but it has since evolved into a transformative model for advancing the College in every conceivable way,” Johnson said.

Through the First-Year Experience program, the College redefined the ways in which new students connect with resources and support staff and engage with the campus community. Students learn essential skills like time management, goal-setting, and creating and following an academic plan to reduce time to completion.

centers offer high-quality, industry-relevant courses that provide the comprehensive, hands-on training students need to gain a competitive edge in today's job market.

The centers — each of which aligns with a major industry sector — give Tri-C students access to extraordinary faculty, innovative teaching methods and experiential learning.

“The Centers of Excellence represent a monumental paradigm shift by integrating credit and workforce meta-majors together,” Johnson said. “It's provided our students with the competencies, credentials, certificates and degrees to contribute to our region's workforce.”



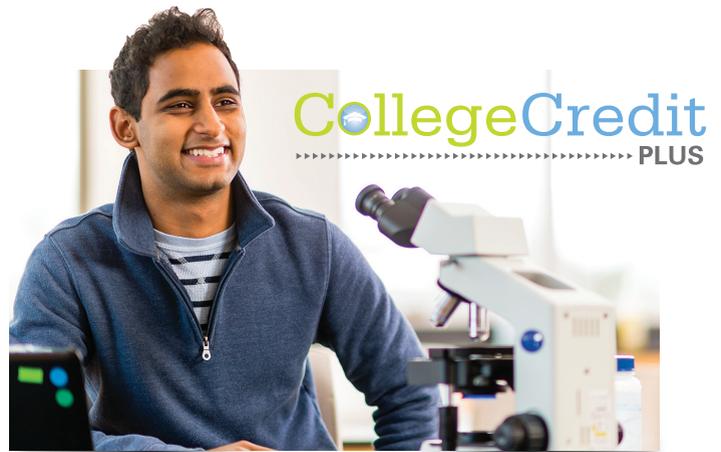
COLLEGE CREDIT PLUS

College Credit Plus (CCP) is one of the many programs to embody and advance the Tri-C mission under Johnson's direction.

Operated by the Ohio Department of Education at partner institutions throughout the state, CCP allows eligible students in grades 7-12 to simultaneously earn college and high school credits, accelerating their progress toward a college degree while receiving benefits that include free or reduced-cost tuition and course materials.

Initiatives led by Johnson have spurred CCP enrollment, increasing it by 33% since 2015. Under his leadership, Tri-C applied for an innovation waiver, allowing the creation of additional opportunities for students — especially those in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District — to participate in career-focused CCP programming through the College's Youth Technology Academy.

Johnson has also been instrumental in building partnerships with area high schools, allowing Tri-C faculty to teach courses on-site.



Approximately 4,300 students take college classes through Tri-C's CCP program each year, making it one of the largest in the state. Some earn a college degree alongside their high school diploma.

"I am proud of our programs that connect our mission to the region's high school students," Johnson said. "Programs like College Credit Plus, High Tech Academy and the Youth Technology Academy provide tremendous opportunities for Cleveland high school students to experience college."

THE JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL HUMANITIES CENTER

Tri-C's role in preparing high-achieving students to become 21st-century leaders was solidified with the opening of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center in 2015. Located at the Eastern Campus, the center provides a unique learning environment designed to develop civic-minded leaders who think broadly and deeply about the human experience.



The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation and the Mandel Supporting Foundations awarded \$10M to the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation to establish the center. The gift — the largest in the history of the College —

established a permanent endowment to support the center and its initiatives, including a scholars academy for high-performing students that cultivates leadership skills and provides pathways to four-year institutions.

Today, the Mandel Humanities Center proudly sponsors events that address questions of history, literature, society and philosophy from diverse perspectives aimed at enhancing the region's economic and cultural vitality.

"The Mandel Humanities Center cemented the College's role as a leader in community engagement and a pathway for scholars to become involved in civic affairs as early as high school," Johnson said. "One of the most important aspects of student development is attaining an educational goal that can lead to worthwhile service."

"ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IS ATTAINING AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL THAT CAN LEAD TO WORTHWHILE SERVICE."

— Alex Johnson, President, Cuyahoga Community College

THE STOKES PROJECT

In 2017, Johnson spearheaded a project that honored the history of Carl and Louis Stokes while examining how their legacy could be carried forward through continued social and economic development in Greater Cleveland.

The Stokes Project observed the 50th anniversary of Carl Stokes winning the Cleveland mayoral race in 1967, becoming the first Black mayor of a major U.S. city. He and his brother, longtime U.S. Rep. Louis Stokes, made a lasting impact on Cleveland and the nation as a whole, initiating programs to revitalize neighborhoods, playing a pivotal role in the cleanup of the Cuyahoga River following the 1969 fire, bringing federal revenue to the city and advancing the national civil rights movement.

The yearlong Stokes project, co-hosted by Tri-C's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center, involved thousands of people from more than 60 organizations. Participants collaborated on projects including a youth summit, music and theater performances, panel discussions, an oral history project, academic and entrepreneurial conferences and the opening of a permanent exhibit at the Western Reserve Historical Society's Cleveland History Center.

"The Stokes Project elevated the status of the College, within the context of the Mandel Humanities Center, as a convener of individuals and groups interested in solving pressing problems and hosting events that explore Cleveland's past, present and future," Johnson said.



2017 CAPITAL BOND ISSUE

On Election Day 2017, Tri-C passed the first capital bond issue in its history. The culmination of a yearlong campaign, the bond issue passage represented a crucial victory for Tri-C's future, giving the College the ability to construct, expand and upgrade educational facilities at every campus in order to continue providing the most up-to-date training for students.

The bond issue passed with 68% of the vote, raised \$227.5M and financed projects that include:

- Western Campus STEM Center construction
- Western Campus Advanced Automotive Technology Center expansion
- Westshore Campus Liberal Arts and Technology building construction

- KeyBank Public Safety Training Center Simulated Scenario Village construction
- Transportation Innovation Center construction
- Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center classroom renovations
- Corporate College® East Master Kitchen Lab construction
- Collegewide lab renovations
- Collegewide academic, media and television equipment purchases

"The 68% pass rate — the highest of any levy — meant the voters trusted us with a significant investment to transform the physical layout of the College in anticipation of future educational programs, most notably in the area of workforce development," Johnson said.



INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Spearheaded by Johnson, Tri-C's Institute for Community Engagement and Development provides pathways out of poverty and improves economic equity and growth throughout Northeast Ohio. The institute's three main components — Access Centers, Central Community Partners, and Community Training and Job Hubs — connect communities and businesses to education, training and in-demand jobs with family-sustaining wages.

In 2019, the College partnered with Esperanza Inc., The MetroHealth System, Olivet Housing and Community Development Corp. (an arm of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church) and Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority to support individuals and families by providing affordable, community-based educational and workforce programming at three Tri-C Access Centers. The College will open a fourth center in 2023 in Slavic Village, with plans to begin training this summer at a temporary location.

“IT IS AN IMPORTANT VEHICLE, BRINGING TOGETHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CREATE PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION AND JOBS WITHIN CORE COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT CLEVELAND.”

— Alex Johnson

METROPOLITAN CAMPUS RENOVATIONS

Opened in 1969, Tri-C's Metropolitan Campus in downtown Cleveland was designed as a brutalist fortress. Its dark brick, harsh angles and walled perimeter made the campus seem stark and closed-off from the surrounding community.

That began to change in 2017, as a multi-phase construction project put a new face on the campus: open, modern, inviting and integrated into its neighborhood.

Over the course of several years, the side of the campus facing E. 30th Street completely transformed. From the corner of E. 30th and Community College Avenue, students and visitors now see an open series of paths with abundant space for sitting and gathering, leading to a redesigned upper plaza between the Business Administration and Health Careers buildings.

The courtyard below — renamed for former Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson in 2021 — was remodeled in a similar

Central Community Partners brings resources, college preparation, training and education into community-based settings, while Community Training and Job Hubs bring Tri-C education and training to workplaces. The College is currently helping the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority recruit employees, upskill workers and develop leadership teams.

“It is an important vehicle, bringing together key stakeholders to create pathways to education and jobs within core communities throughout Cleveland,” Johnson said.



fashion, with an emphasis on promoting congregation and discourse.

The crown jewel of the redesigned Metro Campus is its Campus Center. Constructed around the framework of the previous building, the new Campus Center houses the campus bookstore; classroom and event space used by numerous programs; The Pantry, which provides food and essentials to underserved students; and the campus food court.

“I have been both amazed and humbled by the transformation of Metro Campus and the surrounding community,” Johnson said. “When I compare it to the physical layout of the campus upon my arrival as Metro Campus president in 1993, the difference is remarkable.”



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The COVID-19 outbreak shattered the world’s sense of normalcy in March 2020 — but under Johnson’s direction, Tri-C employees worked tirelessly to keep the College open and continue classes throughout 2020 and 2021.

Within two weeks, the College expanded its infrastructure in order to move 2,500 courses online. In addition to making it possible for students to complete their certificates and degrees remotely, this technological investment positioned Tri-C to redefine flexible learning options well into the future.

The College continues to provide students from low-income backgrounds with laptops, Wi-Fi access and other equipment



required to learn from home. Two major enrollment initiatives — the Full Tuition Assistance Program and Level Up — help bridge digital divides, connect the most vulnerable to needed assistance and keep students on track to reach their educational goals.

“The steps we took allowed us to test the institution’s ability to respond to a crisis while seeking opportunities to strengthen our commitment to student success, exemplified by historic graduation rates and numbers during the pandemic,” Johnson said.

Against all odds, Tri-C conferred 4,600 degrees in academic year 2020-2021 — the highest single-year number in the history of the institution.

Full Tuition Assistance

Better days are ahead. Be ready. Get the education you need to focus on your future. Classes are available in a variety of formats including in-person, hybrid and 100% online.

What are you waiting for? Register now for fall and summer classes

Available to residents of Cuyahoga County. Possible through federal grants and the generous support of donors to the Tri-C Foundation

Online Learning Program at Tri-C ranked among nation's best

tri-c.edu/startnow
216-987-6000

50 BEST COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Cuyahoga Community College

DON'T SETTLE ...

LEVEL UP

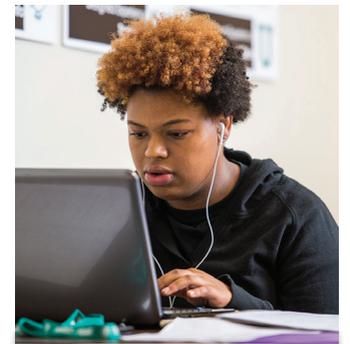
BETTER SKILLS
BETTER JOB
BETTER LIFE

Don't settle for less. Level up to the kind of job that a college education can unlock for you! Cuyahoga Community College (tri-c) and Cleveland State University are teaming up to provide the funding and support to take you to the next level.

Find out more at: tri-c.edu/LevelUp or csuohio.edu/LevelUp

Cuyahoga Community College

LEVEL UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

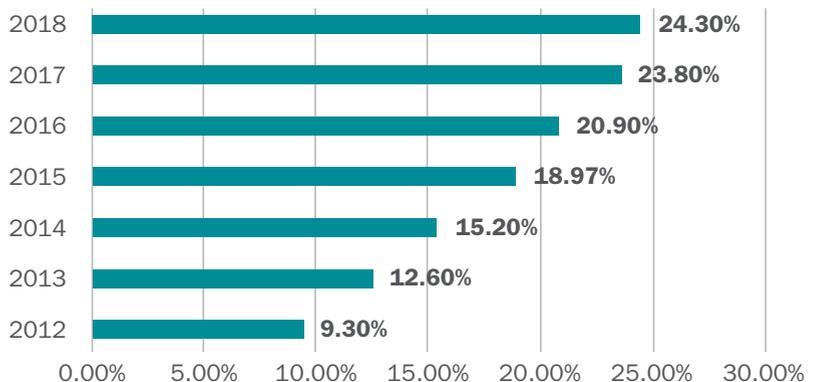


GETTING RESULTS

The above-mentioned initiatives have yielded tremendous results. Since Johnson became president in 2013, Tri-C’s IPEDS graduation rate has increased to 24%, and the number of workforce degrees and certificates earned has grown from 900 to 19,500.

The federal government measures success rates in higher education through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The system tracks how many first-time, full-time community college students earn an associate degree within three years of enrollment. After years of growth, Tri-C’s IPEDS rate now exceeds the national average for community colleges in urban settings.

IPEDS GRADUATION RATE BY COHORT



Drs. Sunil Chand, Jerry Sue Thornton and Johnson celebrate the opening of the Technology Learning Center at the Metropolitan Campus in 1999.



METRO MEMORIES

STORY BY
Jarrod Zickefoose

AT METROPOLITAN CAMPUS, ALEX JOHNSON DISPLAYED THE SAME TRAITS THAT WOULD CHARACTERIZE HIS LEADERSHIP AS COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Alex Johnson served as president of Tri-C's Metropolitan Campus from 1993 to 2003. Many who worked there at the time said they recognized something special even then — a capacity for bringing out the greatness in others and a gracious manner that won hearts and minds.

Barbara Bell worked as a clerical assistant at Metro from 1991 to 2013. “He was so engaging,” she said. “He had the gift of making everyone feel important.”

The whole campus would get together for potlucks, she said. The culture felt like family.

Shannon Brown is an administrative assistant in the Metro Campus President's Office, where she also worked during Johnson's tenure. “I worked part-time covering the front desk, and I remember Dr. Johnson being so pleasant and welcoming to everyone who came into the office.”

Johnson initiated Campus Beautification Day, a tradition still carried on each May. He started a campus newsletter and a memorial garden. He was also instrumental in getting

signs installed around campus that highlighted faculty who were recognized by local programs or national organizations.

Lindsay English, Ph.D., assistant provost and vice president of Learning and Engagement, worked at the Metro Campus as district director of faculty professional development from 2002 to 2003.

“He would often walk around the campus and talk with students and faculty alike,” English said.

Johnson left Metro to serve as chancellor of Delgado Community College in New Orleans from 2004 to 2008. He then served as president of the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh from 2008 to 2013 before returning to Tri-C. When he did, he called on Bell to join him by bringing her administrative talents to the District office on Carnegie Avenue.

“When he came back, he asked how my children were and mentioned them by name,” she said. “There isn't one specific moment I remember; it was the entire time working with him. I worked right outside of his office, and every day he'd walk in and say, ‘It's so good to see you.’”

“HE HAD THE GIFT OF MAKING EVERYONE FEEL IMPORTANT.”

— Barbara Bell, Executive Administrative Associate



UP CLOSE

STORY BY
Jarrod Zickefoose





AND PERSONAL

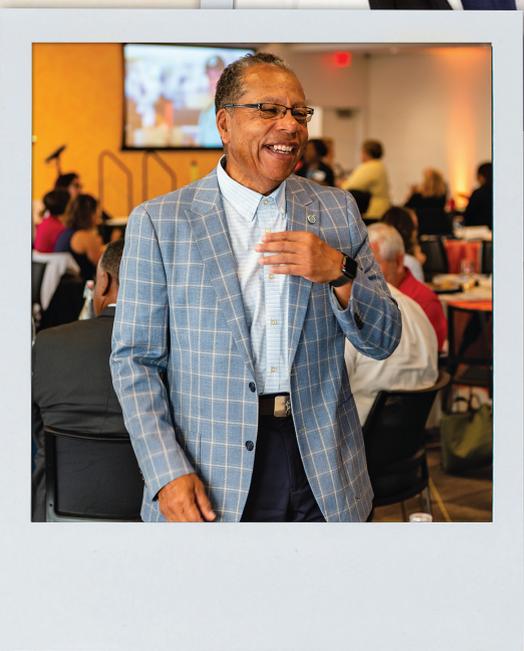
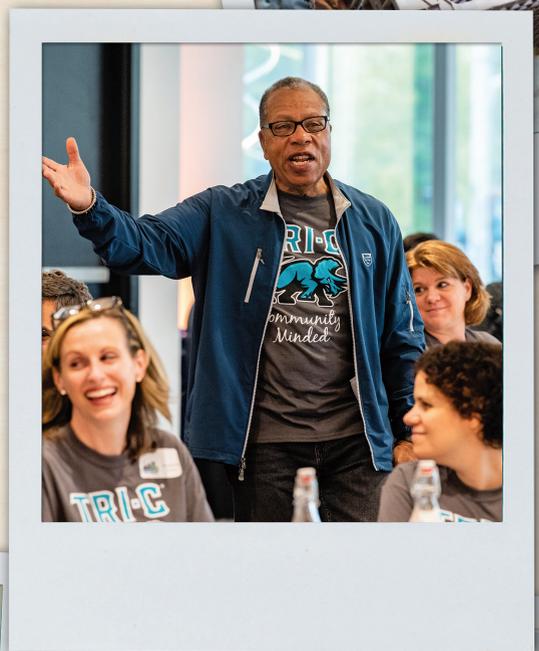
AS THE FACE OF CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ALEX JOHNSON EXUDED DIGNITY, STYLE, WIT AND WARMTH

Alex Johnson was not one to hide away in his office. He was a regular presence on campus and at events, talking with students and sharing stories with faculty, administration and staff — always eager to shake a hand, listen and offer words of encouragement. He welcomed all at the opening of the renovated Metropolitan Campus food pantry, donned regalia for Commencement, laced up his sneakers for the occasional 5K and was instrumental at JazzFest.

His enthusiasm for Tri-C was constant, whether cutting the ribbon on a new building or testing a new piece of technology. Johnson exuded leadership and passion, representing the College to civic and institutional leaders and forging partnerships that drove student success and economic growth in Northeast Ohio.







TROPHY CASE

COLLEGE AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Great Colleges to Work For®, ModernThink LLC (2021)
Honor Roll Designation

Aspen Prize Top 150, Aspen Institute (2020 and 2021)

Excellence and Equity in Community College STEM Award, Aspen Institute (2020)

Leader College of Distinction, Achieving the Dream (2019)

Governor's Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan Award, Ohio Latino Affairs Commission (2018)

Bellwether Award for Workforce Development, Community College Futures Assembly (2017)

Best in Class Award for Board Diversity, Commission on Economic Inclusion (2017)

Kohlberg Prize, Kisco Foundation (2016)

Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award, INSIGHT Into Diversity (2013-2021)

NorthCoast 99 Award, ERC (2013-2021)

- Special Category Award for Employee Engagement and Talent Development (2021)
- Special Category Award for Recruitment, Selection and Onboarding (2019)

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Awards (2013-2021)

- Best Practices in Community College Budgeting
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Distinguished Budget Presentation
- Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting

LEED® Certifications, U.S. Green Building Council (2013-2021)

- Gold, Advanced Technology Training Center
- Gold, Metropolitan Campus Center
- Gold, Western Campus STEM Center
- Silver, Westshore Campus Liberal Arts and Technology
- Public Safety Simulated Scenario Village
- Administrative Center

PERSONAL AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2022

Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Leadership Excellence in Higher Education, TIAA Institute

Michael Bennett Lifetime Achievement Award, Phi Theta Kappa

2021

Cleveland Business Hall of Fame Inductee, Cleveland Magazine

2020

Richard H. Adler Community Leadership Award, AJC Cleveland

2019

Humanitarian Award, Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio

Power 100: Leaders of Northeast Ohio, Cleveland Magazine

Youth Champion of the Year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland

2018

Chief Executive Officer Award, ACCT Central Region

Pink Tie Guys Honoree, Susan G. Komen

2017

Stokes Leadership Award

Army of Believers Award, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

2016

Black Professional of the Year, Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation

John Hill Award, PRSA Greater Cleveland Chapter

Power 100: Top 30 Leaders in Business, Cleveland Magazine

2015

100 Most Connected, Crain's Cleveland Business

Malden Mills Corporate Kindness Award, Project Love

Person of Vision Award, Prevent Blindness

Star Award, Ohio Cancer Research

2014

Black Heritage Celebration Recognition, Cleveland Cavaliers

Excellence in Education Award, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Cleveland Chapter

Power 150, Crain's Cleveland Business

Simon Green Atkins Distinguished Alumni Award, Winston-Salem State University

2013

Person of the Year, Black Political Empowerment Project



Alex Johnson becomes Tri-C's fourth full-time president.



Tri-C launches *One Door, Many Options for Success*.

Tri-C designates six Centers of Excellence: Creative Arts, Hospitality Management, IT, Manufacturing, Nursing and Public Safety.

2013



Voters pass a capital bond issue generating \$227.5 million for Tri-C. Issue passes with 68% of the vote.

2013

Stokes Project marks 50th anniversary of Carl Stokes winning the Cleveland mayoral race, celebrating Carl and Louis Stokes' lasting contributions to Cleveland and the nation.

2014

JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL HUMANITIES CENTER

A \$10M gift — the largest in the College's history — from The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation establishes the center.

2017



Metropolitan Campus renovations begin.

2017



Tri-C earns its first Bellwether Award.

2015



Johnson publishes his first book, *Change the Lapel Pin*.

2017



Renovated Metropolitan Campus Center opens.

2017

Tri-C launches Access Centers, leading to the creation of the Institute for Community Engagement and Development. The Institute will later include Central Community Partners and Community Training and Job Hubs.

2018



Tri-C rebrands athletics teams as the Triceratops; adopts new mascot, Stomp.

2019



Tri-C recognized as an Aspen Prize Top 150 Community College. Recognized again in 2022.

2019



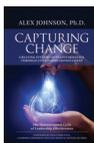
intelligent.com recognizes Tri-C as one of the nation's best online colleges.

2018



Achieving the Dream names Tri-C a Leader College of Distinction.

2020



Johnson publishes his second book, *Capturing Change*.

2020

Made possible by a \$1,020,000 gift from Char and Chuck Fowler, The Pantry, an expanded student food bank, opens on Metro Campus.

2020



Tri-C creates Stand for Racial Justice alliance.

2021

2021

2020

GRIT *and* GRACE

COLLEGE LEADERS LOOK BACK ON THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT DEFINE ALEX JOHNSON



Alex Johnson makes a strong impression. As leaders from across the College look back on his tenure as Tri-C's fourth president, a picture emerges of a strong and gracious leader who brings out the best in those around him, inspires pride and always shows grace under pressure.

Ronna McNair, Johnson's chief of staff and executive assistant, remembers how he commanded the room during a town hall session when he was still a candidate for the position.

She and others who remembered his time as president of Tri-C's Metropolitan Campus could hardly contain their excitement. "He was like a rock star," she said. "I knew then he would make a great College president."

During his inauguration ceremony in 2013, Johnson spoke about Tri-C's mission to meet students where they are and help them get to a place where their futures could begin.

STORY BY
Michael von Glahn



“I was moved and changed by that moment,” said Robert Johnson, counselor and chair of the Joint Faculty Senate. “Dr. Johnson reminded me of the importance of being with our students as they navigate difficult times to reach a more positive outcome. He was clear it was going to take each one of us to become more understanding of the student experience and that we could improve their experience together.”

Many have been moved by Johnson’s graciousness, empathy and passion — strengths that characterize him as a leader who helps those around him grow professionally and personally.

“He sets the bar very high, helps you understand why and makes you believe you can hit — or exceed — the mark,” said Jenny Febbo, vice president of Integrated Communications. “He places his confidence in you and makes you believe you can do it. And because he’s such an incredible leader, you *want* to succeed for him.”

“He never compromises who he is as a person or as a president,” said Karen Miller, provost and executive vice president of Access, Learning and Success. “He absolutely exudes what Tri-C is all about: people, students, family. He sets the tone for the culture of the College.”

Mike Boyko, criminal justice professor and president of the Tri-C chapter of the American Association of University Professors, recalled a teambuilding retreat at Polaris Career Center 20 years ago, when he was an assistant dean and Johnson was Metro Campus president.

“Part of our day was spent on the ropes course,” Boyko said. “I remember Dr. Johnson fully dressed in his professional business attire, 30 feet in the air, moving along the suspended-ropes course. His positive attitude reverberated throughout the entire team.”

After almost a decade as College president, Johnson can also look back with pride on a bevy of significant achievements, including bringing Tri-C’s first capital bond issue to voters in 2017.

“HE ABSOLUTELY EXUDES WHAT TRI-C IS ALL ABOUT: PEOPLE, STUDENTS, FAMILY. HE SETS THE TONE FOR THE CULTURE OF THE COLLEGE.”

— Karen Miller,
Provost and EVP, Access, Learning and Success

“The campaign was such a success that the issue passed by 68% and raised \$227.5 million, providing a significant upgrade of technology, facilities and programs that will benefit the community for years to come,” said Claire Rosacco, vice president of Government Relations and Community Outreach. “Dr. Johnson’s vision and strength allowed for this transformational project.”

Others cite his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“He saw what was going to happen before the first case was diagnosed in the United States,” said Febbo. “He organized us and prepared us mentally for what was to come. When it hit, we were ready and able to move everything online or remote in a matter of weeks.”

David Kuntz, treasurer and executive vice president of Administration and Finance, pointed to the complete and symbolic transformation that occurred at Tri-C’s Metro Campus.

“Once surrounded by high walls, the campus was originally very much secluded from the community in which it sits. The opening of the Metropolitan Campus Center literally transformed the entrance to Cleveland’s Campus District, providing a welcoming and inviting space for students, faculty, staff and the community we serve.”

William H. Gary Sr., executive vice president of the College’s Workforce, Community and Economic Development division, called out record graduation rates year after year and Tri-C’s position as a top community college in the nation under Johnson’s leadership.

“Dr. Johnson also changed the interaction and collaboration with faculty and administration through shared governance,” he added. “Together, we were able to make significant changes quickly, which made the difference for all stakeholders.”

Robert Johnson perhaps summed up the past nine years best: “When you have a dynamic and truly innovative leader like Alex Johnson, it’s impossible to single out just one great thing.”

12 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW

ABOUT DR. JOHNSON

STORY BY

Michael von Glahn



1. What he'll miss most about Cleveland: "In each city, I miss the people I've met. That's what I like most about Cleveland: the people."



2. Favorite local event: "Every JazzFest since becoming president." The performance that ranks highest in Johnson's memory is the 2016 celebration of pop and jazz producer (and Cleveland native) Tommy LiPuma's 80th birthday, headlined by Al Jarreau, Dr. John and Diana Krall.



3. Favorite local dining spot: The Shoreby Club in Bratenahl

Favorite dessert: Key lime pie



5. Favorite movies and music: *Forrest Gump* and *The Green Mile* tie for his top movie. His favorite music is Motown, and the Stylistics are his favorite group.



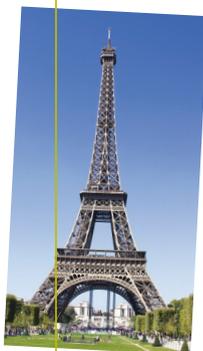
6. His ideal day off: Breakfast at Yours Truly, stocking up on Starbucks K-cups at Costco and taking in a movie.



7. Where he'll hang his hat after retirement: Johnson plans to divide his time between Northeast Ohio and High Point, N.C.: "[It's] close to my hometown of Concord and Winston-Salem, where I did my undergraduate work. But I will remain close and connected to Cleveland."



8. No slowing down: "It would be hard to describe myself as a 'gentleman of leisure,' even in retirement," Johnson said. "I'm energized about work. I love working to ensure that individuals throughout our community reach their full potential. My hope is that I can continue to do that."

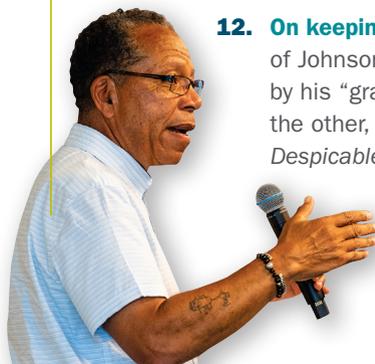


9. How he'll do it: Johnson said he wanted to spend the next chapter of his life helping philanthropic and economic development organizations become more efficient in how they fulfill their missions.

10. Bucket list: He's already crossed off a few items, including visiting the Panama Canal and attending a UNC-Duke game. A trip to Paris is tentatively slated for this fall.

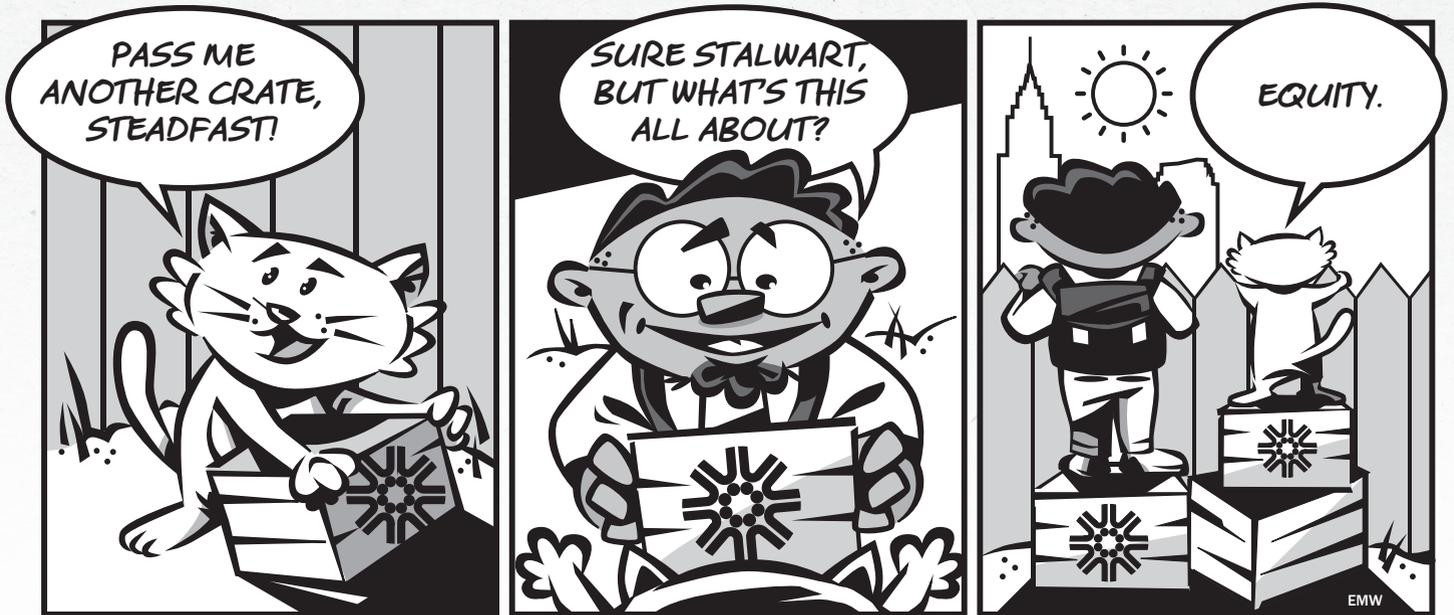


11. Any more books in him? As Tri-C president, Johnson wrote two books: *Change the Lapel Pin* and *Capturing Change*. He already has another in progress. *Acts of September* will chronicle his experiences growing up in the segregated South and its impact on his life, both personally and professionally. "It's a little different than what I'm accustomed to writing," he said. "It's required me to dig a little bit more deeply into my personal experience."



12. On keeping family close: Tattoos on each of Johnson's forearms depict art drawn by his "grandbabies." One is a bumblebee; the other, a Minion from the *Despicable Me* movies.

THE ADVENTURES OF **STEADFAST & STALWART**



STEADFAST AND STALWART.

Those close to Alex Johnson — as well as regular attendees of his town halls — are familiar with these words. It's his signature phrase, spoken in his calm baritone to deliver encouragement and acknowledge success. (Some reading this can probably hear it now.)

"As we adapt to new challenges, it has been your steadfast and stalwart efforts that have allowed this institution to fulfill its mission, to serve our students' academic and professional needs, and to remain a vital part of the Northeast Ohio community."

The phrase is as quintessentially Dr. Johnson as a perfectly knotted tie, a pair of polished shoes and a well-tailored suit; as natural as the way his face would light up at Commencement.

These words have been brought to life as dutiful student Steadfast and his loyal feline companion, Stalwart, whose adventures will keep them in our hearts and vernacular for years to come.

STORY BY
Jarrold Zickefoose
ILLUSTRATION BY
Eric Wheeler

ONE LAST THING



AS MY TENURE AS PRESIDENT OF CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENDS, I AM OVERWHELMED WITH GRATITUDE — FOR THE HARDWORKING STUDENTS, COLLEAGUES AND TRUSTEES I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING WITH AND LEARNING FROM; TO HAVE BEEN PART OF A TRANSFORMATIVE, NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED INSTITUTION; AND FOR THE COUNTLESS EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE BLESSED AND ENRICHED MY LIFE OVER THE PAST NINE YEARS.



BY **Alex Johnson**

It has been an amazing journey.

I am so proud of all that we have accomplished. Together, we have strengthened and expanded an institution that, since its inception, has provided hope and opportunity for so many. Together, we have solidified Tri-C's place as a powerful engine that helps drive Northeast Ohio's economic success. Together, we have steadfastly embodied the mission to provide high-quality, accessible and affordable education. Together, we have fulfilled the promise that Tri-C is a place where dreams take root and flourish — and where futures begin.

The culmination of that promise is seen on the stalwart faces of Tri-C students as they receive their degrees and certificates, ready to contribute to the region's workforce or to scale even greater academic heights. It has been my honor to contribute to these bright and purposeful futures.

As the people's college, the concept of community is at the center of everything we do. Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "No house should ever be on a hill or on anything. It should be of the hill. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together, each the happier for the other."

In the same sense, Tri-C must continue to be "of the community." We have made great strides in opening up our campuses and becoming more deeply integrated into neighborhoods we serve. However, the work is not finished. You, in concert with our community partners, will have the privilege of building upon this solid foundation.

Tri-C holds boundless potential and has smart, talented and passionate people to continue moving it forward. I will watch with great joy as it continues to grow.

I am forever grateful to have been a part of the Tri-C community.



Building Equity and Success

To honor and celebrate Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) President Alex Johnson's leadership, legacy and lifelong commitment to education, the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation has established the Dr. Alex Johnson Access, Equity and Success Fund.

This fund is critical to ensure Tri-C can offer students a short-term solution to a sudden problem while training them for good jobs in key industries, reducing equity gaps and responding to emerging workforce needs.

The fund will:

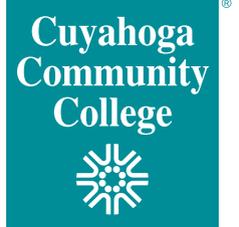
- Ease burdens that may overwhelm a student
- Supplement traditional tuition-focused scholarship support
- Cover expenses like books, technology, Wi-Fi and other basic needs
- Connect students to available resources to help eliminate barriers

We invite you to be a part of Dr. Johnson's legacy. Your gift in his honor will help students overcome obstacles, complete their education and achieve their career goals.

Join us in making a gift today!

tri-c.edu/give

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