

TRI-C®

TIMES



A VISION
FOR
ATHLETIC
EXCELLENCE

A large, spherical globe is the central focus, covered in a mosaic of various national flags from around the world. It is set in front of a modern, multi-story building with large glass windows. The globe is surrounded by some greenery and flowers at its base. The text 'A WORLD-CLASS COLLEGE' is overlaid in large white letters on a semi-transparent dark blue background across the globe.

A WORLD-CLASS COLLEGE

**IN THIS ISSUE P6:
TRI-C ATTRACTS STUDENTS FROM
AROUND THE WORLD**

**P12:
REDUCING BARRIERS
OF FOOD INSECURITY**

**P18:
EXPLORING CAREERS AND
DISCOVERING A PASSION**



Keep Moving Forward

Better skills. Better job. **Better life.**

Ready to take your ambition to the next level?

A College that won't slow you down, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) will propel you forward with in-demand skills to make you stand out in the job market.

We can even help you launch and grow your own business.

Tri-C's short-term credentials, transfer degrees and job-ready programs will skill you up with the knowledge to make your next move.

So keep moving forward. Keep leveling up. Keep your eye on the prize. Keep after that dream.

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PRESIDENT'S Message

TO OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) is a local college that remains very focused on serving the city of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and Northeast Ohio. But that doesn't mean our impact is limited to this region.

Though we may be a community college, our arms reach around the entire country and world.

In the Fall 2024 issue of *Tri-C Times*, you'll meet students from some of the 49 foreign countries represented at Tri-C this semester. Each one came to the U.S. — and to Tri-C — to pursue a dream. Each one has found here the support and encouragement to pursue that dream.

Many of them will remain in our region after graduating — part of the 85% of Tri-C graduates who stay in Northeast Ohio. They'll work at existing businesses, start their own businesses and bolster the regional economy.

In this issue, you'll find other examples of our institution's tremendous reach. In addition to our geographic reach, our people impact many fields. We welcome influential people to our College to share their stories with our students and community.

You'll read about the 2024 Presidential Scholarship Luncheon, held in September, where I had the opportunity to speak with entrepreneur and TV personality Daymond John, the founder, president and CEO of apparel company FUBU and widely known for his role as an investor on ABC's *Shark Tank*.

You'll meet Tri-C alumnus Martell Jackson, who used his time at Tri-C to explore different careers before ultimately entering the medical research field.

Also on the subject of career exploration, you'll read about Matthew Crowley, an assistant professor of information technology who actively encourages his students to take advantage of Tri-C's many educational opportunities to find their passion.

And you'll learn how our renovated food pantries help address food insecurity within our student population, addressing a major barrier to completion.

Tri-C is a community college with the global reach of many four-year schools. After reading this issue, I hope you will be as proud as I am that such an institution calls Northeast Ohio home.



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

President, Cuyahoga Community College



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

NORTHCOAST 99 AWARD RECIPIENT

The College was recognized as a top workplace in Northeast Ohio, winning its 18th NorthCoast 99 award. Tri-C won first place in the Employee Well-Being category, recognizing its robust Health and Well-Being program.



'CHAIR OF HONOR' DEDICATED AT EASTERN CAMPUS

As a solemn tribute to prisoners of war and service members who are missing in action, Tri-C dedicated a "Chair of Honor" at the Eastern Campus in September. The chair is intended to remain perpetually empty as a reminder that there is still space for the more than 83,000 U.S. military men and women who have been unaccounted for since World War I.

LL 2024

HEED AWARD

Tri-C received the 2024 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award. This is the College's 12th consecutive year receiving the honor, which recognizes U.S. colleges and universities demonstrating an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.





A WORLD-CL

STORY BY Jarrod Zickefoose
PHOTOS BY Noelle Bye



STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE COME TO NORTHEAST OHIO TO STUDY AT TRI-C

Edona Vajushi earned her degree in finance in Albania and had a steady job in her field. However, it was not clicking with her, and she started to wonder what else was out there.

Vajushi began looking around. In addition to the usual Googling, she contacted family in Northeast Ohio. An aunt here told her about Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®).

“Tri-C helped her,” Vajushi said. “She was telling me how affordable it was compared to other colleges and how helpful the staff had been there.”

In Albania, she said, it was difficult to study and work at the same time, so changing careers there is tricky. The more she learned about Tri-C, the more attractive it looked.

Eventually, her heart made up her mind. In 2022, she boarded a plane and landed in Cleveland, where she enrolled at Tri-C and became part of the College’s international student population.

ASS COLLEGE

An International College

International students are not the first thing you think of when you think of Tri-C, but this academic year, 250 students who traveled from 49 countries are enrolled at the College.

It's a sizeable community and one that is outsize in drive and nerve. Tri-C's international student community is engaged on campus and in the classroom, and many of these students plan to continue their education or work in Northeast Ohio after they graduate.

There is nothing casual about being an international student. The challenges, be they financial or cultural, are big, and the persistence required to overcome them usually transfers over to academic success and a clear-eyed vision of what these students want to do and why.

International students must pay more than citizens to attend college in the U.S., and they have to prove they can cover the costs before they can get their student visas. Often, this comes in the form of sponsors who pay for or vouch for them. Student visas also require paperwork and an interview with the U.S. Embassy. International students must be able to speak English at a proficient level, which sometimes requires additional classes.

They also must navigate a new culture alone, far away from their families. They must make new friends, discover new hobbies and find new ways to socialize.

All this while keeping up their grades.



Welcome!

Lori Brindisi is Tri-C's manager for global and international student services. It's her job to make students from around the world feel comfortable at Tri-C while checking all the boxes to get them started in class. Not only does she help

with paperwork, but she is also one of the first people an international student gets to know at the College.

"We try to make it as easy as possible for our international student population because they add value to our student life, and we want them to succeed," she said. "Our international students bring a wealth of unique experiences, perspectives and talent to our classrooms, encouraging all of us to think outside the box and to be curious about other cultures."

Brindisi added that international students make valuable contributions to the Northeast Ohio economy, both as consumers and as workers.

"WE TRY TO MAKE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POPULATION BECAUSE THEY ADD VALUE TO OUR STUDENT LIFE, AND WE WANT THEM TO SUCCEED."

— Lori Brindisi

Many Needs, One College

Rishi Chitte knew he wanted to be a nurse before he finished high school in India. However, room for advancement in the field is limited there, and the postsecondary education system is expensive and extraordinarily competitive.

“I have an aunt who told me that if I wanted to go into nursing, I should leave India, and she told me about the Cleveland Clinic. This is a good place for health care,” he said.

After arriving in the country, he started college at a local four-year school but transferred to Tri-C because it was more affordable and easier to navigate as an international student. He since has become quite involved at Tri-C, holding various positions in student government — including vice president — and Joint Student Council.

“My calendar is saying, ‘Stop! Stop!’” he said.



When he graduates, he will help fill a critical nursing skills gap in Northeast Ohio.

Most international students who graduate from Tri-C go on to earn four-year and advanced degrees. Vajushi, for example, finished her classes at Tri-C this summer, and she is already working on her master’s in urban studies at Cleveland State University. She hopes to work in her field in Northeast Ohio after completing her studies.

“These students are driven to succeed, and they carry that drive with them to their work,” Brindisi said.

Others use the skills they acquire at Tri-C back home.

Rutuja Magar, from India, had wanderlust when she learned about community colleges from her brother, who was studying at another NEO university. The cost and the hands-on approach to learning at Tri-C appealed to her, and she is now earning her associate degree in Hotel, Destination and Event Management. She wants to start a wedding consulting business in India after graduating from Tri-C.

“What I like about Tri-C is it’s social and inclusive,” she said. “I still miss a lot of things about home, like festivals and all the occasions we celebrate in India. But I wanted to learn here because I knew I would get a better education.”



“WHAT I LIKE ABOUT TRI-C IS IT’S SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE. I STILL MISS A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT HOME, LIKE FESTIVALS AND ALL THE OCCASIONS WE CELEBRATE IN INDIA. BUT I WANTED TO LEARN HERE BECAUSE I KNEW I WOULD GET A BETTER EDUCATION.”

— Rutuja Magar

Navigating the College

Brindisi and her staff lend an ear to international students and help them navigate new worries, a new school and a new country.

International students are encouraged to get involved in the College's Multicultural Club, a critical component to success for this population. The club comprises international students who offer each other support and trade valuable tips and resources for navigating college. Magar is the club president.

"At Tri-C, if you need food, there's a pantry. If you need clothes, someone will show you where to go," Magar said. The club helped her make friends and gain confidence. She and her social group like to go bowling and spend time at the zoo and the beach.



Another Level

Vajushi discovered the Mandel Scholars program through the club, and it took her Tri-C experience to "another level."

"It challenged me to think about things in ways I had not before," she said.

Through Mandel, she traveled to Rhouen, France, a "sister city" of Cleveland. She also got involved with Global Cleveland, whose mission is "to grow Northeast Ohio's economy by welcoming and connecting international people to opportunities and fostering a more inviting community for those seeking a place to call home."

She became a fellow with the Telos Leadership Foundation, established by the Telos Institute with a "shared vision and mission to provide transformational development opportunities for the next generation of diverse leaders." She traveled to Utah with the group for an amazing week of networking and stargazing.

These life-changing experiences that Tri-C and the Mandel Scholars program facilitated inspired Vajushi's pursuit of her master's in urban studies and her desire for civic engagement.

"I think one of the goals of Mandel is to create the new leaders of Northeast Ohio," she said. "All these activities, you don't realize at the time, but they change something in you."



Taiwo Kolawole was also accepted to the Mandel Scholars program. An accountant in his home country of Nigeria, he came to the United States and Tri-C to study cybersecurity.

"I needed something more challenging, and the entire business world is going digital," Kolawole said.

His participation in Mandel, as well as in student government and other aspects of student life, enriched his experience at the College and set him on a path to success. (Cont.)

"I THINK ONE OF THE GOALS OF MANDEL IS TO CREATE THE NEW LEADERS OF NORTHEAST OHIO. ALL THESE ACTIVITIES, YOU DON'T REALIZE AT THE TIME, BUT THEY CHANGE SOMETHING IN YOU."

— Edona Vajushi

“Every bit of what I have learned at Tri-C has been useful in my life,” he said.

Students like Vajushi, Kolawole and others find something at Tri-C that they couldn’t at home. Tri-C gives them the space to breathe and the resources to find themselves.



Dhruv Maradia earned his bachelor’s degree in information technology in India and was working for a large company there. He said his choice of profession was limited in India, so his mother encouraged him to go abroad.

He came to NEO and began work on a master’s in information systems when he realized he was missing an opportunity.

“I had always been interested in culinary arts, and I felt like this was my last chance to do it because once I got a job after earning my master’s, I’d be stuck,” he said. “So I put my master’s on hold.”

He enrolled in Tri-C’s Culinary Arts program, where he discovered his passion and finished his coursework this summer.

“Culinary work was totally different from anything else I’d done,” he said. “You are in a kitchen for six, eight hours. It’s a more hands-on approach than just sitting.”

He is securing a work permit and said one day he hoped to open his own restaurant, perhaps in Cleveland’s Tremont neighborhood, where he lives.

Rewards

International students at Tri-C gain not just an education but also an experience that enriches their lives. Whether they stay in Northeast Ohio or travel to their next adventure someplace else, they leave the College changed in some way.

Brindisi said international students add a rich diversity — inspiration even — to the experience of the entire College community and eventually NEO.

“These students provide a positive road map for all of us to follow. The lifelong friendships and bonds that I am lucky enough to witness being built and the academic and professional successes they achieve are some of the greatest rewards of working with our international students.”



OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, 1,293 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN CLASSES AT TRI-C

Algeria
 Albania
 Armenia
 Argentina
 Australia
 Anguilla
 Bangladesh
 Belize
 Brazil
 Canada
 Cambodia
 Sri Lanka
 Republic of the Congo
 Democratic Republic of the Congo
 China
 Chile
 Cameroon
 Columbia
 Costa Rica

Dominican Republic
 Ecuador
 Egypt
 El Salvador
 Ethiopia
 Czech Republic
 Finland
 France
 Ghana
 Germany
 Greece
 Guatemala
 Haiti
 Honduras
 India
 Iran
 Italy
 Cote d'Ivoire
 Iraq
 Japan
 Jamaica

Jordan
 Kenya
 Kuwait
 Lebanon
 Libya
 Mali
 Morocco
 Mexico
 Nigeria
 Netherlands
 Nepal
 Peru
 Pakistan
 Poland
 Panama
 Serbia
 Romania
 Philippines
 Russia
 Saudi Arabia
 South Africa

Senegal
 South Korea
 St Lucia
 Sudan
 Sweden
 Syria
 Thailand
 Tunisia
 Turkey
 Taiwan
 Uganda
 United Kingdom
 Ukraine
 Burkina Faso
 Uzbekistan
 Venezuela
 Vietnam
 West Bank
 Zambia
 Zimbabwe





FUELING SUCCESS

ONE MEAL AT A TIME

STORY BY **Anthony Moujaes**
PHOTOS BY **Tamara London and Cody York**



FOOD INSECURITY FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS HAS BEEN A GROWING CONCERN ACROSS HIGHER EDUCATION OVER THE LAST DECADE. HERE'S HOW TRI-C IS DESTIGMATIZING THE POVERTY CYCLE AND WORKING TO REMOVE BARRIERS.

Academic success starts with nutritional access.

Research has shown that students with reliable access to nutritious foods often experience positive outcomes, including better grades, test scores, behavior, attendance and graduation rates, compared to students without reliable food sources.

But the image of a college student eating ramen — once viewed as a stereotype — has come into focus as a modern reality. Food insecurity has been an increasing trend across higher education for more than a decade.

According to a 2024 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), 3.8 million college students in 2020 reported experiencing food insecurity. That's nearly one in every four students. More than half of these students said they skipped meals because they couldn't afford them.

The impact is far-reaching. When students have limited or uncertain food supplies, they struggle to perform, making them more likely to drop out. Food-insecure students are also more likely to experience depression and anxiety, according to the GAO report.

Food insecurity has also been an unfortunate reality for some Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) students. In a 2019 survey by Tri-C's Institute for Economic Mobility (formerly the Institute on Poverty and Urban Education), 17% of students said they always or sometimes worried about having enough food to eat, while 23% said they had to skip at least one meal a month because they ran out of money.

During the last four years, the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation has worked to address the issue.

After remodeling, the last of Tri-C's four food pantries opened earlier this fall. This completed the Foundation's goal to modernize and expand the food pantries on all campuses for its Skills to Succeed campaign.

“One pillar of the Skills to Succeed campaign was reducing barriers for students, and modernized food pantries were a key part of that strategy,” said Megan O'Bryan, the president of the Tri-C Foundation. “The student surveys from the Institute for Economic Mobility showed the need to provide holistic resources.”

Dubbed “The Pantry: A Tri-C Initiative,” the spaces were designed to look and feel like small neighborhood grocery stores. The first renovation was completed in 2020 when the Metropolitan Campus Pantry reopened. Since then, the College has opened revamped pantries at the Western Campus (2022) and Westshore Campus (2023). The final renovation was completed this fall when the Eastern Campus Pantry was dedicated in late October.

Each space ensures that Tri-C students have access to food, essential resources and financial support in an open, welcoming space.

“ONE PILLAR OF THE SKILLS TO SUCCEED CAMPAIGN WAS REDUCING BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS, AND MODERNIZED FOOD PANTRIES WERE A KEY PART OF THAT STRATEGY.”

— Megan O'Bryan

Making an Impact

To modernize all four campus pantries, the Tri-C Foundation sought charitable support from all corners of the region and has raised \$3 million to date.

Ann and Lou Frangos, whose support helped make the Westshore Campus Pantry renovation possible, are among the donors.

“Throughout the pandemic, we knew that students struggled to find child care, keep up with their classes, and were often worried about their next meal,” said Ann Frangos, who is also a member of the Tri-C Board of Trustees. “We learned that, as a College and community, we needed to do more to help by wrapping our arms around every student. Providing wraparound support for students improves both their health and their chances of persisting in school.”

Support also comes from across the Tri-C community. Faculty and staff have donated through payroll deductions, while Student Government members arrange on-campus activities and events that help raise awareness so students can learn about available resources.

The College works with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to provide fresh and nonperishable food items for the pantries. These items include meat, dairy, produce and dry goods that students can use to prepare nourishing meals.

“WITHOUT QUESTION, A STUDENT’S MIND SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON SOLVING PROBLEMS BEYOND THE SOURCE OF THEIR NEXT MEAL.”

— Andrea Hogben



“Without question, a student’s mind should be focused on solving problems beyond the source of their next meal,” said Andrea Hogben, Medical Mutual’s executive vice president and chief marketing, corporate affairs and people officer. “The Pantry addresses just that. This is a welcoming space that will serve thousands of Tri-C students and their families for years to come.”

Medical Mutual funded the expansion of the Western Campus Pantry.

The numbers speak for themselves.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, 2,655 students made 12,559 campus pantry visits — an 81% increase in the number of students served and a 47% increase in the number of visits from the previous year.



Breaking the Stigma

While a college degree reduces economic inequities, the Institute for Economic Mobility found that under-resourced students were less likely to earn a college degree compared to those from better-resourced families.

The stigma of poverty perpetuates the cycle. Postsecondary education can help lift people out of poverty, but those most in need of help often don't ask for it and, as a result, fail to reach their educational goals.

As part of confronting this stigma, Tri-C's pantries were designed as welcoming spaces where students can receive additional support. Pantry managers can connect students to Tri-C's Project GO!, which offers resources in five areas: housing, food, health care, child care and utilities. Project GO! works with agencies such as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Benefit Bank and United Way to connect students with the help they need.

Every detail was considered, down to the graphic illustration on the walls created by Tri-C student Frida Etchell.

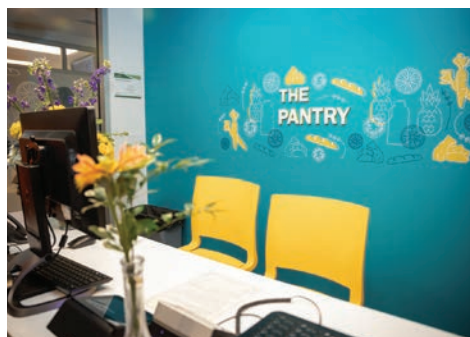
Her artwork reflects designs that appeal to donors and students, fit Tri-C's brand guidelines, and are welcoming and destigmatizing to the issue of food insecurity. Etchell's illustration depicts "healthy, fresh food in a fun yet elevated manner that matched the interior design of the whole space."

Char and Chuck Fowler funded the construction of the Metro Campus Pantry.

"I remember seeing the previous pantry during a tour — a small space that didn't seem easy to find for a student in need of assistance," Fowler said. "We wanted to create a space that lets Tri-C students know where to seek support and to blend in as part of the Tri-C community."

Though the pantry renovations are complete, O'Bryan underscores the continuous work to keep them stocked with fresh foods and raise awareness of the available resources.

"Completing the renovations was a monumental step," she said. "But the work is ongoing because we've got to keep those pantries stocked with nourishing foods and make sure we're always ready to support students in need."



DONORS TO THE PANTRY

Philanthropic support to The Pantry: A Tri-C Initiative comes from a number of donors whose support has made it possible to renovate and stock pantry spaces at all four College campuses. Support from the following donors also ensures that Tri-C can assist students with short-term financial expenses and connect them to the ongoing resources needed to stay in school:

Chuck and Char Fowler
Ann and Lou Frangos
David and Karen Horton
Medical Mutual
Meisel & Pesses Family Foundation
Alan and Barbara Rosskamm
Westfield Insurance Foundation

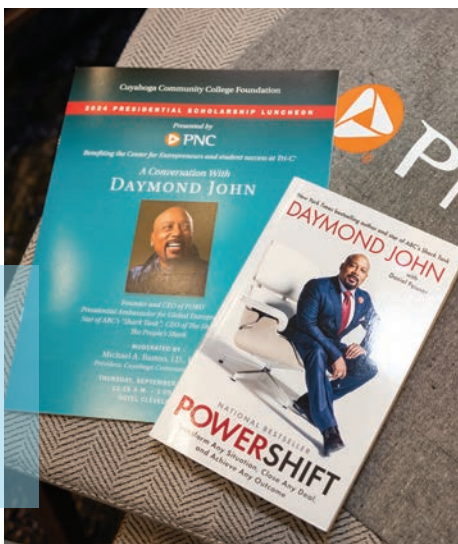


“WE WANTED TO CREATE A SPACE THAT LETS TRI-C STUDENTS KNOW WHERE TO SEEK SUPPORT AND TO BLEND IN AS PART OF THE TRI-C COMMUNITY.”

— Char Fowler

EVERY BITE *of* SUCCESS

ENTREPRENEUR AND INVESTOR DAYMOND JOHN OF 'SHARK TANK' SHARES INSIGHTS ABOUT SUCCESS DURING PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON



Every morning and every night, Daymond John reads over his list of goals. Doing that drives John, one of the most recognized entrepreneurs, authors and CEOs, toward his purpose.

John wowed the crowd as he shared success stories and helped the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) Foundation raise funds for students during its Presidential Scholarship Luncheon.

The Foundation's 2024 Presidential Scholarship Luncheon raised more than \$1 million to help Tri-C students in need achieve their academic goals. The luncheon, presented by PNC Bank, took place in September with Tri-C President Michael A. Baston, J.D., Ed.D., facilitating the dialogue with John.

Baston and John grew up in nearby boroughs in Queens, New York — Baston in Jamaica and John in Hollis. Their conversation quickly gravitated to John's youth and the people who motivated him.

STORY BY **Anthony Moujaes**

PHOTOS BY **Tamara London and McKinley Wiley**



“I had great teachers who believed in me — a little boy who was dyslexic,” John said. “The people I learned from, external from my family, were teachers and a local business owner. I would watch him, and I learned how he dealt with his customers, how he always looked them in the eye, and how he woke up every day asking himself how he could be better for his customers.”

“Daymond is the embodiment of entrepreneurial success, and the lessons he shared from his career connected with our students and supporters,” said Baston.

Since its inception in 1992, the Presidential Scholarship Luncheon has raised \$25 million to help students with financial needs pursue higher education.

Money raised will support scholarships, including new opportunities at the Center for Entrepreneurs at Corporate College®, a division of Tri-C. Launched in the fall of 2023, the Center for Entrepreneurs offers courses, workshops, resources and a podcast studio for small business owners to achieve their goals.

John is the CEO and founder of FUBU, a global apparel company with billions in product sales worldwide. He is also in his 15th season on ABC’s critically acclaimed business reality show *Shark Tank*, which has reinvigorated entrepreneurship and received five Emmy Awards.

He shared insights on his inspiration for FUBU — “For Us, By Us” — which revolutionized the sportswear industry in the 1990s. The clothing line features the FUBU logo on shirts, sweatshirts and hockey jerseys. John explained that the brand went global after the clothing line included international cities such as London, Tokyo and Paris on its apparel.

“FUBU came out of the rise of hip-hop music, and developing that clothing line became my passion,” John said. “Hip-hop was a way to walk, talk and dress.”

Before the event ended, John brought the conversation back around to teachers.

“I can talk about my experiences, but I love how professors can offer explanations,” he said. “They can give you the information five different ways and help you unlock a way to learn it.”

“DAYMOND IS THE EMBODIMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS, AND THE LESSONS HE SHARED FROM HIS CAREER CONNECTED WITH OUR STUDENTS AND SUPPORTERS.”

— Michael A. Baston

DAYMOND JOHN’S THREE PILLARS FOR SUCCESS:

1. Know your “Why”
2. Set short-term and long-term goals to reach your “Why”
3. Do your research to achieve your “Why”



STORY BY Erik Cassano
PHOTOS BY Cody York

EXPANDED HORIZONS

MARTELL JACKSON CAME TO TRI-C IN SEARCH OF A CAREER. THE COLLEGE OFFERED HIM OPTIONS, ALLOWING HIM TO EXPLORE HIS INTERESTS AND BUILD HIS SKILLS WHILE SAVING MONEY.

College is a time of exploration and discovery. Each year, thousands of students enroll at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) without a firm idea of what they want to study. But they have an interest in learning, an open mind and a drive to succeed.

Fifteen years ago, Martell Jackson was one of those students. Today, the 35-year-old Cleveland resident has two associate degrees from Tri-C and a fulfilling career.

“I enrolled at Tri-C in the spring of 2009 while working on obtaining my high school diploma,” Jackson said. “I started taking general classes, but it wasn’t really until I started

taking some health and science-related courses that I began to think about a career.”

Jackson first looked at the College’s nursing program, then switched to Physical Therapy Assisting following a visit to the Cleveland Clinic Sports Medicine Center in Garfield Heights to explore sports medicine.

“I was just trying to learn as much as I could, both in and out of the classroom,” Jackson said. “I knew it would benefit me to just expand my knowledge base and learn as much about the health care field as I could.”



In addition, his academic experience included an internship at Medical Eye Associates in Middleburg Heights. The real-world experience augmented his classroom learning and gave him valuable experience in the health care field.

“My internship helped me understand how to interact with patients, how to pay better attention to detail and work under pressure,” Jackson said. “It showed me how to apply my classroom knowledge in a way that can address the needs of patients, how to have compassion, and how to develop the emotional intelligence necessary to face difficult situations.”

Though it took some time, Jackson persevered. He balanced work and family responsibilities while taking classes, earning an Associate of Arts degree and a certificate in Medical Assisting (focusing on ophthalmology) in 2013.

“Then I met with a counselor who told me that if I take several more classes, I could earn an Associate of Science, which would be helpful trying to enter a health care or medical career,” he said. “So, I stayed on and earned an Associate of Science degree in 2015.”

Support System

Throughout his time at Tri-C, Jackson found instructors and classmates willing to help him learn, study or just share the college experience together.

“That’s one of the biggest things I remember about Tri-C, that feeling of being supported,” he said. “I was never walking alone. My classmates and I developed study groups, we ate lunch together, and we hung out away from school. We helped each other through our collegiate journey.”

In the classroom — and after class — Jackson found professors who went the extra mile to help him learn the material.

“One of my professors in a statistics class took an equation and broke it down entirely so I could see how to solve it,” he said. “He helped me take the equation apart, look at the methods in the textbook, and piece it back together. And I had many professors like that who kind of broke things down to their basic elements so I could better understand them and apply them when we got into more advanced concepts.”



“MY INTERNSHIP HELPED ME UNDERSTAND HOW TO INTERACT WITH PATIENTS, HOW TO PAY BETTER ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND WORK UNDER PRESSURE. IT SHOWED ME HOW TO APPLY MY CLASSROOM KNOWLEDGE IN A WAY THAT CAN ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF PATIENTS, HOW TO HAVE COMPASSION, AND HOW TO DEVELOP THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE NECESSARY TO FACE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.”

— Martell Jackson





After Tri-C

Following his second associate degree at Tri-C, Jackson enrolled at Cleveland State University. Originally wanting a degree in the physical therapy field, he eventually switched to health education.

“My parents both dealt with health issues,” he said. “I always wanted to educate them on how to manage their health, and after some exploring, I decided educating and advocating for public health would be a great career option for me.”

Jackson graduated from Cleveland State with a bachelor’s degree in health education and health promotion in 2017. His career path took him to yet another school — but this time as an employee, when Case Western Reserve University hired him as a research assistant.

“I really found my passion for teaching and research in the health care field,” Jackson said. “In my first job at Case, I was working as a project coordinator doing lead prevention health screenings for pre-K and kindergarten students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. It combined health education, advocacy, and working with kids, which I like to do.”

His performance as a research assistant earned him a promotion. Today, Jackson is the associate director of Case Western’s Institutional Review Board.

“It’s a research compliance position,” he said. “Case students working on biomedical and social behavioral research submit their protocols to me, and I review those

studies to make sure their research is following regulatory guidelines, protecting human subjects, informing participants of their rights, and expressing the importance of their research.”

Jackson has built a productive and fulfilling career at Case, but he has not forgotten that Tri-C is where he laid his foundation. He continues to advocate for Tri-C as a place to start your educational journey, serving on the College’s alumni board and providing input on ways to enroll more students at the College so they can begin their own career exploration — like he did more than a decade ago.

He has also shared his Tri-C experience with others.

“In 2023, I was given the opportunity to speak at the Tri-C Presidential Scholarship Luncheon to relay my Tri-C experience and how my time there helped set me on the path to where I am today,” he said. “It was a great honor to be able to share my Tri-C story at such a high-profile event.”

When he shares his Tri-C story, he tells prospective and incoming students that great opportunities are there for the taking if you’re willing to stay focused and work hard.

“You will get out of Tri-C what you put into it,” Jackson said. “Get acquainted with the faculty and staff, who are very resourceful. Get involved with your fellow students. Organize study groups. And have an open mind, because the area of study you originally wanted to pursue might lead you somewhere else. And that’s where you might find your purpose and your passion.”



NAVIGATING A CAREER IN CYBERSECURITY AND EDUCATION

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR MATTHEW CROWLEY HAS
A DIVERSE BACKGROUND, AND HE ENCOURAGES
STUDENTS TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT PATHS**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY Noelle Bye

Matthew Crowley’s journey epitomizes the multifaceted nature of the tech world and education.

At 38, the Parma native has worked as an engineer for Microsoft, written a book on browser architecture and design, and started a cybersecurity company for aviation. But he found his latest passion as an assistant professor of information technology at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®).

“It’s been kind of a very twisty path toward where I’m at today,” Crowley said. “But I always told myself that I want to try all these things. I wanted to work for a big computer company. I wanted to start a couple of companies. I always wanted to dabble. And it goes back to my philosophy that I want to instill in my students.”

That philosophy involves exploring different paths — which is easy to accomplish at Tri-C.

“I TELL MY STUDENTS, YOU NEED TO TRY A BUNCH OF THINGS. JUST BECAUSE YOU PICK A CAREER PATH NOW DOESN’T MEAN YOU’RE STUCK WITH IT, YOU CAN ALWAYS SWITCH. IT SHOULD BE GUIDED BY YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERTISE, BUT YOU’RE NOT STUCK. TRY THINGS.”

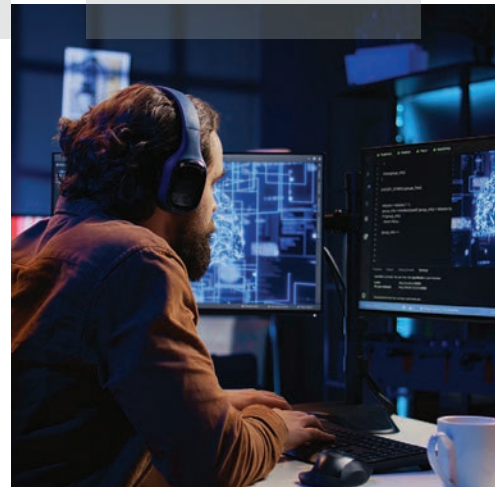
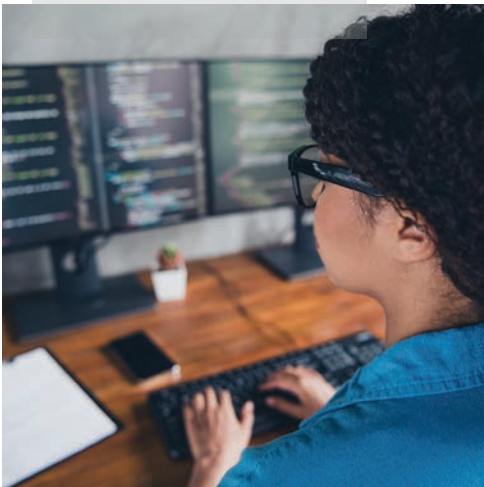
— Matthew Crowley

“I tell my students, you need to try a bunch of things. Just because you pick a career path now doesn’t mean you’re stuck with it,” Crowley said. “You can always switch. It should be guided by your previous expertise, but you’re not stuck. Try things.”

Crowley speaks from experience. Before taking a full-time position at Tri-C in 2023, he moved from coast to coast, learning more and more about the tech landscape.

He got his first teaching experience while working toward his undergraduate degree in computer engineering at Case Western Reserve University, serving as a teaching assistant in the school’s introductory programming courses.

“I loved doing it and always told myself, ‘I want to go do that eventually,’” he said.



But first, he headed to Seattle in 2008 for his stint at Microsoft, where he worked on the Internet Explorer and Windows teams.

After a couple of years, he moved across the country to Washington, D.C., to serve as the chief technology officer at Browsium, a software solution company. In 2014, he moved into the field of aviation — a skill set he has leaned into at Tri-C.

In addition to teaching courses in programming and networking, Crowley has been active in developing a new cybersecurity certificate program specifically for aviation at Tri-C.

He certainly has the background. From 2014 to 2019, he served as the chief information officer for Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport, respectively.

Today, Crowley and Bill Wichert, another assistant professor of information technology, are working with a number of airports to design a program to help address the nationwide shortage of cybersecurity workers at airports, airlines, airport manufacturers and other ancillary companies and industries.

A \$330,000 grant from the National Science Foundation is funding the creation of this infrastructure cybersecurity program.

“It helps the industry because these students can go in and work at Cleveland Hopkins or Boeing, and they’ve been trained up,” Crowley said. “They don’t need six months or a year to prepare.”

Crowley and Wichert are adding modules to the current cybersecurity program so credit and noncredit students already enrolled in the program can earn the certificate. Students can start taking these courses in Spring 2025, with more courses offered in subsequent semesters as the program develops.

“IT HELPS THE INDUSTRY BECAUSE THESE STUDENTS CAN GO IN AND WORK AT CLEVELAND HOPKINS OR BOEING, AND THEY’VE BEEN TRAINED UP, THEY DON’T NEED SIX MONTHS OR A YEAR TO PREPARE.”

— Matthew Crowley





Crowley and his team are also in the very early stages of developing an AI program at Tri-C, which will emphasize the practical applications of AI in technology careers.

“What we’re trying to do is create a program that touches on the applied aspects of all the major areas of artificial intelligence within a very restrictive two-year time frame,” Crowley said. “The students are probably not going to be able to design AI systems. But they can use it as a springboard for a four-year program or to augment whatever field they’re in.”

Crowley hopes the program — which, realistically, will come to fruition for the 2026-2027 academic year — will give students a leg up in their careers.

“We’re at this point where, if you don’t know how to use these tools properly and you don’t understand all the inner workings of artificial intelligence, you’re going to be behind your peers when you go for a job,” he said.

“YOU CAN GO OUT AND START A COMPANY. YOU’RE NOT RESTRICTED TO WHAT JOBS ARE LISTED ON INDEED OR WHAT INTERNSHIPS ARE ON HANDSHAKE. YOU CAN DO THIS ON YOUR OWN. YOU JUST HAVE TO HAVE THE DRIVE TO DO IT.”

— Matthew Crowley

After years of moving about, Crowley has settled with his wife and son in Akron. He received his MBA from Temple University in 2019 and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in business at Liberty University, focusing on how diversity in startup accelerators impacts their success. This new endeavor merges his love of technology with his belief that students should explore various career paths during their time at Tri-C.

“I tell my students you don’t always have to look at a job as your career path,” he said. “You can go out and contract. You can go out and start a company. You’re not restricted to what jobs are listed on Indeed or what internships are on Handshake. You can do this on your own. You just have to have the drive to do it.”



ONE LAST THING

A VISION FOR ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE



BY **Anthony Franklin**

When I became the new director of Athletics, Recreation and Wellness at Tri-C, I inherited a solid foundation with a history of success.

Last year, Tri-C won its first Ohio Community College Athletic Conference All-Sports Award, and 15 student-athletes continued their athletic careers at four-year colleges and universities. Our athletic teams have won 24 conference championships.

To build on that history, my vision for the future is a holistic approach that supports the physical and mental well-being of not only our athletes but also all Tri-C students, faculty, staff and the broader community. I want to create an inclusive environment that encourages active participation in sports and recreational activities.

To enhance our athletic programs, I plan to promote our student-athletes on our campuses and in the community. (Be sure to check out the Athletics website at tri-c.com/athletics.) We also plan to introduce popular activities like pickleball, coed intramurals, youth camps and wellness workshops. By diversifying our offerings, we can engage a wider audience and foster a stronger sense of community.

In tandem with these efforts, I will prioritize wellness initiatives tailored to support students, faculty, staff and the community. These include workshops on stress management, nutrition seminars and accessible fitness classes aimed at promoting overall well-being. Partnering with counseling services, we will also create a supportive network that encourages students to seek help and prioritize self-care.

Moreover, I intend to strengthen partnerships with regional organizations and health professionals to offer resources and events that promote active lifestyles and health awareness.

Ultimately, by integrating recreation and athletics into the College experience, we can foster resilience, teamwork and personal growth. By prioritizing inclusivity and wellness, we can cultivate a vibrant culture that empowers the Tri-C family to lead healthier, more active lives.



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