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**Triton College**

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### **Triton College Students Lobby in State Capitol for Community College Bachelor's Degrees**



*(Left to right) TCSA President Mark Kouria, Gabriella White, State Rep. Brad Stephens, Paul Talia and Deana Andrejko*

**RIVER GROVE, Ill.** – Triton College students traveled to Springfield, Illinois, to advocate for legislation allowing four-year bachelor's degree programs at community colleges—hoping to make a meaningful difference.

Students Mark Kouria, president of the Triton College Student Association (TCSA); Deana Andrejko; Paul Talia; and Gabriella White, accompanied by Johnny Urbina, Triton Director of Student Services, visited the state capitol last month to meet with state senators and representatives.

Their goal was to speak with Senate President Don Harmon, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Emanuel "Chris" Welch and State Representatives Norma Hernandez and Bradley Stephens to make the case for expanding degree opportunities at community colleges.

"Community colleges are convenient and have a great student life," said student Paul Talia. "There's a great sense of closeness at community colleges. They're easy to access, enroll and are affordable. Imagine being able to have that college experience for four years?"

Student Deana Andrejko, a self-described "non-traditional student" spoke to Rep. Brad Stephens about how a bachelor's degree at a community college would benefit students like her. She expressed her desire to finish her degree at Triton rather than having to apply and transfer to a four-

year university. According to Andrejko, Stephens was receptive and warm toward the Triton College students.

The students also had a sit-down meeting with Senate President Don Harmon, who listened intently to their reasoning.

"We explained to Sen. Harmon that offering four-year bachelor's degree programs at community colleges could bring significant benefits," said Mark Kouria. "These programs could help expand campuses, introduce new majors and create opportunities for additional sports like football. This wouldn't just enhance student life—it would also strengthen our local economy and build a greater sense of community."

Kouria shared his personal story with Harmon, explaining that his family immigrated to the United States. The ability to obtain a bachelor's degree from community colleges could help other immigrant families, as well as families with different economic backgrounds.

"We're hoping the bill will be passed by 2028, with a potential rollout by 2030," said Kouria. "This will benefit future Triton College students. I'd also like to personally thank Muhammad Abdur Rehman, another student and member of Triton College's Program Board, who played a big part in helping us research and practice. He deserves a big thank you."

"We worked really, really hard to make our case," added Andrejko. "We feel like we made an impact."

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## **ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE**

Triton College is an institution of higher education dedicated to student success. Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs designed for students to realize their career aspirations and effectively compete in a global economy. The college campus spans 110 acres in River Grove, Illinois, holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's exemplary faculty and staff work to provide high-quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 10,000 students each year. Triton College is a member of The Community Colleges of Illinois and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at [triton.edu/](http://triton.edu/).