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Triton College

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Triton College Maximizes on Growth of U.S. Hospitality Industry

RIVER GROVE, Ill. – As the largest industry in the world, hospitality is witnessing one of the largest growths in the need for skilled workers. According to Chef Denise Smith-Gaborit, chair of Triton College's [Hospitality Industry Administration](#) (HIA) Program, "there are jobs galore" – everything from hotel management and culinary arts to menu writing and bartending. The hospitality industry is the second major employer in the United States, with its workforce continuing to expand. For Chef Smith-Gaborit, this surge in job opportunities is "very good news" for students with a passion for hospitality and culinary arts, and a willingness to embrace change.

"As hospitality businesses are welcoming new technologies, enhancing health and safety protocols, and re-envisioning guest services and experiences, Triton offers every degree, certification and license demanded in the hospitality industry today," said Chef Smith-Gaborit. This includes a restaurant management, hotel management, culinary arts, and baking and pastry degree/certificate. Students over the age of 21 can receive their beverage management certificate.

Unlike other culinary schools, Triton has invested in "state-of-the-art classrooms and lab facilities" to prepare students for meeting the growing requirements of the industry, she said, adding that Triton's kitchens and bakeries mirror what is available in the industry now. The college is also modifying its academic offerings and scheduling to better accommodate student needs. "Our program offers flexible scheduling, job assistance and hands-on training. We are making it easier for the student to succeed and ensure they are well prepared for their careers. Triton offers core programming and, from there, students can branch out according to their interests," said Chef Smith-Gaborit. Triton welcomes students who are new to the industry, as well as students who are looking to maximize their work portfolios and/or advance in their careers.

"As the oldest culinary school in the west suburbs of Chicago, Triton College has been producing quality, skilled people to work all over the world since 1972," said Chef Smith-Gaborit who, in her culinary career, cooked for U.S. presidents, musicians and actors during her tenure in Chicago's elite hoteling industry.

Now as a department chair and instructor at Triton, Chef Smith-Gaborit said she "loves" witnessing the creativity of her students. "Students are the joy of my day." Chef Smith-Gaborit

has taught at Triton for 27 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in general studies and a degree in restaurant management.

Triton Students in Demand

“After earning a degree and/or certification from Triton College, anyone can walk out the door and find a job in hospitality,” said Chef Smith-Gaborit. “Students can also obtain an internship while they’re a student so they can gain experience.”

For years, Triton has fostered industry relationships with some of Chicago’s most prestigious hotels and restaurants, making it possible for students to successfully launch their careers. “We also have former students employed in the industry calling our department to offer our students jobs,” she said.

Triton’s HIA Program is also utilized with high school students involved in the Dual Credit Program, especially those from Oak Park and River Forest High School, Riverside Brookfield High School, Leyden high schools and Proviso high schools.

“Our students learn everything here at Triton,” said Chef Smith-Gaborit. “They really learn how to cook, from pasta to cakes, and they learn how to do it from scratch.”

The program stands out with not only the outstanding quality, but operates three businesses available to the public – Café 64, the Bistro and the Bakery. All are student-operated and are open to the public.

Triton student Tulip Pham, Berwyn, Illinois, chose to attend Triton over her local community college for the high-value culinary program. She likes that all the instructors are very passionate about the students.

“I wanted to go into culinary arts, because I could use my creativity while making people happy,” she said. “I like to bake and decorate cakes.”

Triton student Vanessa Guardiola, Chicago, said she felt particularly inspired after she took Triton College instructor Chef Christopher Clem’s chocolate class.

“It hooked me,” Guardiola said. “One day I’d like to run my own business. Triton offers all the tools for me to receive the licenses and certifications needed to do that.”

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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.