

CONNECTED

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NEW GRAD FULFILLING CALLING ON THE FRONTLINES

Summer 2020
Volume 8
Issue 3

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Photo: University of Cincinnati



A Message from Chancellor Randy Gardner

These are difficult times. That was my message to you three months ago. Since then, Ohio has embarked on a path of reopening while colleges and universities across the state have begun making plans for a fall semester where meeting the needs of students and communities must be balanced with knowing that the pandemic is still a reality.

There are still challenging times ahead. Tough decisions are being made, difficult but necessary conversations are taking place, and much remains unknown. But as I noted last issue, Ohio’s postsecondary institutions are rising to the challenge. In fact, I believe higher education will be a critical part of our recovery. From health care delivery and education, to scientific and medical research, and workforce and training, postsecondary education is vital to strengthening Ohio’s post-pandemic economy.

Stories in this issue highlight some of this important work, including: the Respiratory Therapy Program at Washington State Community College, which is training much-needed health care workers for the frontlines; Edison State Community College's new career-ready degree options, designed to meet the changing needs of its regional workforce; Youngstown State University's new certificate programs in data analytics to expand graduates’ job prospects; and Terra State Community College's U.S. Department of Labor grant that provides at-risk youth with job skills instruction, educational opportunities, and individualized employment counseling.

Yes, these are challenging times. But Ohio’s campuses are here to ensure our students stay ConnectED to a bright future and a strong state.

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New Grad Fulfilling Career



The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust our healthcare workers into the spotlight. As a society, we have become acutely aware of their vital role. While attention typically focuses on doctors and nurses, there are hosts of essential workers within a hospital who stand on the frontlines to guard patients from sickness.

With a novel disease that primarily affects the lungs, respiratory therapists and technicians are among the most crucial workers in the COVID-19 battle. Yet due to the nature of the current pandemic, they can be exposed to some of the sickest patients.

It has been only two months since Ashley Lawson began working as a respiratory technician at Fairfield Medical Center in Lancaster, and already she has been quarantined twice. Lawson, however, wouldn't change a thing about her

career path. "It feels like my mission to help others," she said.

Lawson began working as a respiratory technician before graduating from Washington State Community College's respiratory therapy program last month. As a technician, she performs a wide variety of diagnostic testing and treatments under supervision. After passing the state board licensure exam, Lawson will be promoted to a respiratory therapist. Respiratory therapists help diagnose and treat a wide variety of respiratory difficulties. Their expertise lies in assessing blood gases, assisting with intubations and bronchoscopies, and specializing in ventilator management.

Despite the two close calls, Lawson was spared a positive coronavirus diagnosis, yet her first quarantine will forever be etched in her mind. The experience brought home the reality of dangers

Calling on the Frontlines [\[LINK\]](#)

faced by frontline workers and led to her first-ever separation from her family. Though on paper her quarantine lasted only a week, the days stretched by seemingly endlessly as the longest and loneliest of her life. “It was awful,” Lawson said. She spent her days alone, praying she would show no symptoms.

Lawson said surviving the ordeal was possible only because she has such a strong support system, and she was especially grateful for the meals left outside the basement door by her mother and mother-in-law. However, it was the interruption of her children’s bedtime routine that she found the hardest to take. That is when even the door’s thickness, which separated her from her family, seemed unfathomably large. While she understood it served to guard her loved ones from potential harm, her arms physically ached with her desire to hug her babies – nine-year-old Nate and seven-year-old Ava. It was especially difficult for her children to understand.

Each evening, the doorway that was so loathed during the day served as the spot where everyone gathered to say “Goodnight” and “I love you.” They leaned in tight, trying to get as close as possible to the wooden barrier, and listened intently as Mommy read them a bedtime story. Though Lawson poured love into every word she read, it did nothing to hasten the week’s end. “It was heartbreaking,” Lawson said.

Despite the strife that isolation brought, Lawson said she believes a career in respiratory therapy is her calling.

“I have zero regrets,” she said. “When I entered the field, I was scared about COVID-19, but truth be told, I feel God has put me where I belong at the time I am supposed to be.”

Dr. Rob Kinker, WSCC’s director of the Respiratory Therapy Technology program, said that as the current pandemic persists, he expects to hear stories similar to Lawson’s repeated by many graduates of his program. However, he pointed out that students learn early on in the classroom, as well as during orientations from hospitals, that these types of risks exist. Kinker said he doesn’t believe the threat of disease will ever curtail a respiratory therapist because, like Lawson, they pursue the career for a greater purpose.



“Most of them want to help others,” Kinker said, “usually because a friend or family member suffers from a pulmonary disease.” The respiratory therapy field has had higher-than-average employment rates for several years, and Kinker said he doesn’t anticipate that to slow down any time soon. In fact, he reported that all of his new graduates had multiple offers, some of which included significant hiring bonuses. He also highlighted the success of his program, which has a 100% first-time pass rate and success rate on the state licensure exam.

Admission to the Respiratory Therapy Technology program at WSCC is completed on a selective basis. The program is full for this coming academic year and is currently accepting applications for fall 2021.

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CHOOSE OHIO FIRST ARE IN-DEMAND EMPLOYERS

We may be driving less during COVID-19 social distancing, but it is still important to keep our vehicles in top condition. Thanks to Choose Ohio First (COF) and Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®), Ohioans can count on service from expert technicians, trained to meet high General Motors and Ford standards. Despite the pandemic, another cohort of technicians are on the job after earning their credential through Tri-C this spring.

Choose Ohio First

The Tri-C Automotive Technology “learn and earn” program certifies students through the General Motors Automotive Service Educational Program (GM ASEP) or the Ford Motor Company Automotive Student Service Education Training (ASSET). An accelerated five-semester schedule graduates credentialed, experienced technicians.

During paid apprenticeships at local dealerships, mentors coach students to apply skills learned in classroom sessions. Dealership placements usually result in permanent employment. This spring, 18 Choose Ohio First recipients graduated from Tri-C. Fifteen of them, including Kyle Martin, were from the Ford or General Motors program, and 100 percent of them are employed today.

“Tri-C was a great opportunity for me. The program matches my abilities, with great employment potential. Plus, I enjoy cars and recreational vehicles as a hobby, so I couldn’t ask for a better career option,” Martin said. “Thanks to Choose Ohio First, I did not have to worry about how to pay for my education.”

In the fall, the Parma Heights resident will pursue a four-year engineering technology degree at Cleveland State University while working at a Ford dealership. The COF scholarship that covered his Tri-C tuition will continue to cover Cleveland State tuition.

Martin’s class adapted to the sudden move to online learning in March during the coronavirus pandemic. While auto dealers stayed open to provide essential services, classrooms at Tri-C closed.

“We jumped into action and contacted the dealerships,” said Kathleen Y. McCarthy, program director for Automotive Technology at Tri-C. “The dealership mentors adapted the hands-on work so training in the field ensured there were no learning gaps.”

T SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS EMPLOYEES WITH GM AND FORD

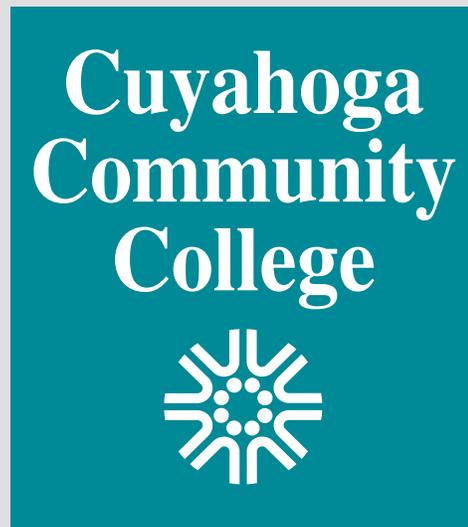
“My mentor made our work feel ‘normal,’ and that was reassuring during this atmosphere,” Martin said. The flexibility of completing assignments online allowed Martin and some other students to pick up more work hours at times when they would normally be in class.

The online coursework delivers the same high standards GM and Ford count on from Tri-C and its students. Faculty worked closely with manufacturers to maintain program integrity in the transition. Students without home computers could receive one at no charge through the Tri-C Foundation, and the college boosted student supports.

“We’re doing everything we can to help students adjust,” McCarthy said. “Tutoring, coaching, and technical support are all available to prevent barriers to their success.”

Although only one student was briefly furloughed, the entire cohort graduated on time.

“We know that 85 percent of Tri-C graduates stay in Ohio,” McCarthy said. “This program attracts people who want to stay. An automotive credential will guarantee employment, with competitive pay. The COF scholarship helps students to start saving while they work, so it’s common for our graduates to buy their first home within 18 months after graduation. The training program and COF scholarships pay great economic dividends back to Ohio, Ford, GM – and the people who choose to live here.”



EDISON STATE RESPONDS TO WORKFORCE NEEDS WITH NEW PROGRAMS [\[LINK\]](#)

Edison State Community College is working to meet the needs of the regional workforce, offering various new career-ready degree options in agricultural maintenance, graphic design, and web design. Additionally, the college has developed equipment service, interactive media, and paramedic one-year certificates, along with several short-term technical certificate programs that give students the skills needed to enter a new career field or advance in their current role.

“WE ARE ENGAGING WITH OUR EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS TO HELP FILL THE EMPLOYMENT GAP THROUGH DEGREE PATHWAYS AND STACKABLE CREDENTIALS. THESE PARTNERSHIPS ARE CRITICAL IN HELPING STUDENTS ENTER THE WORKFORCE PREPARED AND QUALIFIED TO PERFORM THEIR JOBS FROM DAY ONE.”

**- DR. TONY HUMAN
DEAN OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL PROGRAMS
EDISON STATE**

- The new [Agricultural Maintenance Associate of Applied Science degree](#) integrates the agricultural sciences and business with training in industrial maintenance and systems integration. This blended program prepares students to install, repair, program, and maintain the vast array of systems and components used across the industries of agriculture. This degree option can lead graduates to numerous career opportunities within the agriculture field.
- The [Graphic Design Associate of Applied Business degree](#) utilizes students' abilities to design, create, and edit digital content using various software. This program features a comprehensive study of all graphic design aspects, from editing graphics, creating page layouts, producing videos, and developing animations to designing for the web. Students will develop a portfolio and compile it with work from courses within the program.
- The [Web Design Associate of Applied Business degree](#) applies students' abilities to design, create, and edit content in various formats. Students will learn to design and build websites

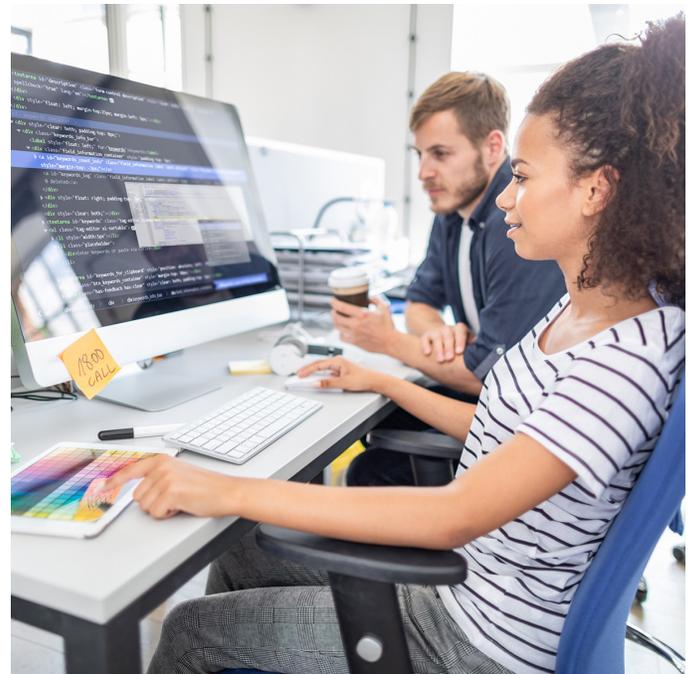
using multiple approaches from different perspectives to ensure that they understand web development. Included are the latest standards of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, as well as various graphic design concepts and techniques for the web. Students will develop a portfolio and compile it with work from their courses within the program.

- An **Interactive Media Certificate** serves as a gateway for students that are undecided on which interactive media degree they want to complete: graphic design, web design, or web development. Students completing these core courses can get started in the program and identify which degree option interests them the most.

Four additional short-term technical certificates are now available in the area of interactive media. The college will now offer a Graphic Design Short-Term Technical Certificate that utilizes students' creative abilities to design, create, and edit digital content using various graphic design software, primarily for the web. The Social Media Management Short-Term Technical Certificate helps students to develop social media strategies to ensure a positive return on investment for an organization. A Short-Term Technical Certificate in Web Design prepares students to develop, test, and maintain websites from the client side and server side to ensure that they understand all aspects of the web development process. The Web Development Short-Term Technical Certificate teaches students to develop, test, and maintain websites.

The new Equipment Service Certificate develops technicians with the skills and knowledge to service, repair, and maintain various equipment and machinery. Students with interest and aptitude in troubleshooting and problem solving will find a broad range of career possibilities awaiting them. These careers build on a prepared background in basic mechanical and electrical systems, safety, customer service, written and oral communications, and working in teams. Students also get substantial hands-on experiential training on real equipment and develop troubleshooting and preventative maintenance methodologies.

A Basic Mechanical Short-Term Technical Certificate provides education on such mechanical topics as hydraulics, pneumatics, bearings, gears, belts and pulleys, chains and sprockets, couplings, clutches and brakes are examined.



Preventive maintenance, predictive maintenance, lubrication, and safe rigging practices are also discussed.

Filling a regional healthcare need, the Paramedic Certificate trains and educates allied health professionals whose primary focus is to provide advanced emergency medical care for critical and emergent patients. Paramedic students will gain the complex knowledge and skills necessary to provide patient care and transportation.

To view a complete list of program offerings, visit www.edisonohio.edu/programs.

YSU Launches New Programs in Big Data [\[LINK\]](#)



Youngstown State University is introducing new certificate programs in data analytics aimed at helping graduates improve and broaden their job prospects.

“Data analytics has become an integral element in all business decision-making and public policy-making decision processes,” said Ou Hu, chair of economics at YSU. “Students across many disciplines, including economics, English, history, psychology, sociology and many others who also have skills in data analytics will have a significant step-up in the job market.”

The new certificates on both the undergraduate and graduate levels are composed of three courses – data management, data visualization, and predictive modeling – and will be available for the first time this fall. The courses were designed based on an analysis of job postings for data analysts on indeed.com.

“It is important to understand that data analytics

entails more than its technical aspects like collecting, processing, analyzing data, and evaluating results,” Hu said. “The ‘last mile’ skill is to effectively communicate ‘actionable insights’ from data analysis to the target audience.

Students with training in soft skills, like critical and analytical thinking and problem solving, could be even better suited for a program in data analytics.”



He said business juggernauts such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Alphabet build their business models on analyzing big data.

“Those companies have either recovered most of their losses or even gained from recent market fallout,” he said. “Data analytics will be an integral component of decision making in virtually all businesses.”

The certificate programs in data analytics is a collaboration of the economics, business, computer science, and mathematics programs at YSU.

Terra State Receives \$1 Million Grant [\[LINK\]](#)

As part of the Job Corps Scholars Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Terra State Community College received \$1,186,700 that will go toward providing at-risk youth with job skills instruction, educational opportunities, and individualized employment counseling.

According to a press release from the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly \$24 million was awarded as part of this program. Terra State is one of two higher education institutions in Ohio and one of 20 in the nation to receive this grant.

“As we look toward defeating coronavirus and reopening our economy, the Job Corps Scholars Program provides an innovative way to prepare at-risk youth for participation in the job market,” U.S. Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia said in the release. “Combining job training, classroom education, and employment counseling will give participating young adults an opportunity to excel.”

Terra State plans to partner with the Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP) to provide free tuition for career-technical training. Career coaches will provide intensive personal and career counseling services to support and facilitate completion of the program. In addition, employment counseling services will be provided, including a 12-month follow-up period of employment services that incorporates assistance in enrolling into an apprenticeship program and/or job placement.

“Employment is critical in building economic stability,” GLCAP President/CEO Ruthann House said. “The at-risk young adults who complete this program will gain the skills they need to earn a living, as well as become important contributors to a community and economy that will benefit from their talents and abilities.”

Students in the program will have 12 months in career-technical training followed by 12 months of employment counseling services upon completion of the program. It will begin this fall.



TERRA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE





The Ohio University Innovation Center helps entrepreneurs turn their promising ideas into flow.

OHIO Innovation Center Increased Job Growth, Economic Impact in Last Calendar Year [\[LINK\]](#)

Ohio University's Innovation Center supported 335 jobs that generated an estimated \$22 million in employee compensation in Athens County in 2019, according to a new economic impact report.



Innovation Center has been helping entrepreneurs flourish businesses since 1983.

Over the last six years, the business incubator’s job creation numbers have increased 139 percent, and employee compensation generated from its client companies is up 273 percent.

“Ohio University is proud of the award-winning Innovation Center’s year-over-year success in supporting the growth and development of new businesses in southeastern Ohio,” said Ohio University President M. Duane Nellis. “We are committed to stimulating economic growth and development in the vibrant communities in our region, and the Innovation Center plays an integral role in our work.”

The Innovation Center’s economic impact figures represent the number of jobs created directly, indirectly or induced by the Innovation Center businesses, which also generated an estimated \$11 million in economic output.

Stacy Strauss, director of the Innovation Center, attributes the increase in numbers to the rapid growth experienced by several companies

currently housed at the Innovation Center, as well as rising sales and new hiring by recent incubator graduates.

“In times such as these, it is even more apparent that the work we do results in economic development. We are fortunate to work in support of resilient entrepreneurs who are driven to succeed. They are building companies and creating jobs with wages that are significantly higher than the average rate for our area,” Strauss

said. “This report is tangible evidence that our support and services are building successful scalable ventures in southeastern Ohio.”



The release of the economic impact report follows a major graduation of local company, RXQ Compounding, from the Innovation Center in April. In 2019, the

InBIA named the Innovation Center the Rural-Based Entrepreneurship Center of the Year and bestowed it with the Randall M. Whaley Incubator of the Year Award, the association’s highest honor.

The Innovation Center, part of Ohio University’s technology commercialization and entrepreneurial ecosystem, has supported entrepreneurs in southeastern Ohio since 1983 by providing business coaching and space, including laboratories, for startups at its facility in Athens. It also provides virtual business support and networking services to university and regional entrepreneurs.

The 2019 economic impact analysis was developed by Athens County Economic Development Council utilizing JobsEQ, a software for computing economic impact. The full report is available online on the Innovation Center website, www.ohio.edu/innovation.

Job Skills Training Leads to Long-Term Reduction in Drug Abuse [\[LINK\]](#)

Offering basic job services doesn't help, study finds

Job skills training for low-income youth does more than just help them get better jobs – it makes them significantly less likely than others to use some illicit drugs, even 16 years later, a new study found.

These positive effects on drug use were seen in those who received job-specific skills training, but not in youth who received only basic job services, such as help with job search or a General Education Development (GED) program.

Results showed that the use of illicit drugs such as cocaine and heroin (not including marijuana) declined for youth who received job-skills training, down to 2.8 percent after 16 years. However, illicit drug use increased for those who received only basic services, up to 5.2 percent in the same time.

“We have to look at what kind of job services we provide low-income youth, because they don't all provide the same level of benefits,” said Sehun Oh, lead author of the study and assistant professor of social work at The Ohio State University. “There were positive spillover effects from job training on drug misuse, which we did not see in youth who were provided only more basic services.”

The study appears in the June 2020 issue of the American Journal of Public Health. The results are important because the federal and state governments emphasize a “job-first” approach that focuses on helping adults in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program obtain immediate employment, Oh said.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY





Photo: Belmont College

A special thank you to all of those who contributed stories and articles:

New Grad Fulfilling Calling on the Frontlines

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Choose Ohio First Scholarship Recipients are In-Demand Employees with GM and Ford

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Edison State Responds to Workforce Needs with New Programs

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YSU Launches New Programs in Big Data

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Terra State Receives \$1 Million Grant

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OHIO Innovation Center Increased Job Growth, Economic Impact in Last Calendar Year

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Job Skills Training Leads to Long-Term Reduction in Drug Abuse

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Thanks for reading *ConnectED*. If you have any story suggestions, links to articles of interest, or news releases to share, feel free to send them to Jeff Robinson at jrobinson@highered.ohio.gov.



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