



Triton College NEWS

Triton Helps Students Build Skills for Academic and Career Success

Sometimes, we all need a little bit of help — a little assistance here and there to get our ducks in a row, catch up on our work, and prepare for the next task. But asking for help and getting the guidance you need is often easier said than done, according to Danielle Flores, coordinator of the Center for Access and Accommodative Services (CAAS) at Triton College.

That's why Flores is working to break down barriers and improve access for students, helping them foster and strengthen the skills needed to achieve their academic goals and set themselves up for success when they enter the workforce.

Flores specializes in executive function coaching, which helps individuals develop and strengthen the cognitive skills needed for organization, planning and task completion. Coaching focuses on improving everyday skills like time management, organization, planning, working memory and emotional regulation.

"Executive function coaching isn't a novel concept," Flores said. "But it's something that frequently flies under the radar. And asking for help is something that has become highly stigmatized," she added.

"We're supposed to be people who can do everything and anything, but that's just not how it is," she said. "I think we learn from our mistakes and I think it's always important to ask for help because there's always someone else who can do something better than you — and that's OK."

"You can't always be the best. I think it's important that we normalize asking for help."

Flores has provided executive function coaching at Triton College since the spring of 2024. Since then, she's helped roughly 30 students. Most students who seek her assistance need help with time management, turning in assignments on time, focusing, studying and improving their grades.

Flores said the coaching process involves identifying specific challenges, setting goals and implementing strategies to attain better outcomes. Because no two people are the same, each case is individualized and the frequency with which she meets with students varies. Students work with her to identify where they need help and make a plan to reach their objectives.

First-year student William Malinowski has been attending coaching sessions with Flores since starting at Triton. Malinowski, who's pursuing an associate degree in business, said he was falling behind in his classes and struggling to keep his grades up, prompting him to seek guidance from Flores.

"When I had an issue with a class and my grades, I always talked to Danielle about them and she would help me understand what I should do," he said.

After meeting with Flores, Malinowski began using Otter.ai, a speech-to-text software that allows users to record conversations and lectures, and convert them into written text for later reference.

"By using Otter, it really helped me study for my exams, tests and also my assignments," said Malinowski, who urged other students to seek academic coaching if they think they might need it.

Flores, who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, previously worked in special education for 15 years and later in the private sector, coaching stu-

dents and working adults from across the country and beyond in executive functioning.

"These aren't just students that need a helping hand," she said. "These are doctors and lawyers, and they just couldn't quite manage their schedules or they didn't have the best planning resources. These are everyday people."

Flores emphasizes that her work at Triton College is about much more than helping students improve their grades. It's about working with them to build skills that will allow them to excel in their future careers.

"The cool part is that in finding the tools that work for you now, when you go into the workplace, you can be successful. You can complete your tasks efficiently, and then you can have time for a balanced life, a family and friends."

Students interested in coaching sessions can contact academiccoaching@triton.edu.

Triton College's Ava Connerty Named USTFCCCA Scholar Athlete of the Year

Mere months after making school history at Triton College, recent graduate Ava Connerty was selected the 2025 NJCAA Division III Women's Outdoor Track & Field National Scholar Track Athlete of the Year by the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA).

The USTFCCCA recognized top scholar athletes from all collegiate levels, including Connerty, for standing out in all areas of the student-athlete experience.

Connerty, a two-time NJCAA All-American who wrapped up her monumental athletic career as a Trojan in May, has been a trailblazer for Triton's Track & Field Program. Her recent accolade marks the first time in program history that an athlete from Triton has been named National Track Scholar Athlete of the Year in outdoor track & field.

"It's an honor to be recognized (by the USTFCCCA) for both my work on the track and in the classroom," said Connerty, of North Riverside. "This award is a reminder that my dedication in all areas paid off."

Connerty won the 100-meter hurdles and was a member of the third-place 4x400 relay team at the 2025 NJCAA DIII Outdoor Track & Field Championships in Utica, New York, on May 10.

Her championship run made her the first women's track athlete representing Triton to win an individual national title. In a thrilling finish, Connerty captured the national title by two-tenths of a second.

"I honestly never thought that I would be a national champion," Connerty said in May about her win. "It's so amazing seeing all of my training pay off in the best way possible. Knowing that I'm the first female track national champion in Triton history is unbelievable."

Connerty's drive on the track was matched by her zeal in the classroom, enabling her to achieve a cumulative 3.9 grade-point average during the 2024-2025 academic year. Two weeks after winning her national title, Connerty walked the stage of the Rosemont Theatre as a Triton graduate, leaving with an associate degree in psychology.

In June, Connerty committed to attend Nova Southeastern University, an NCAA Division II institution in Davie, Florida, on an athletic scholarship where she'll continue to run track and pursue her four-year degree.

"Having Ava run for Triton College has been a great experience," said Trojans head track & field coach Jason Guevarra. "Not only is she a tremendous athlete, but she values education and success. I am so proud of Ava and what she has accomplished on and off the track. She will be a great addition to her new team when she transfers to Nova Southeastern in Florida."