Student Spotlight

In 1988 President Ronald Reagan called to congratulate COM student Richard “Monte” Harris on his accomplishments, despite having lost both legs to diabetes complications. Reagan asked Harris, state president of the community college honor society, Phi Theta Kappa, to read a personal message at the national PTK convention in Washington, D.C. Harris came to COM in 1984 after his operation. He explained, “My self-confidence was at its lowest when I came here. I had to use a wheelchair to get around campus, and this was the fifth or sixth campus I had attended.” Harris graduated with an associate's degree in applied science in computer data processing and re-enrolled for a degree in accounting. He added, “I fell in love with learning at COM.”

“No one becomes anything of much value or significance without the help of others.”

—Dr. Herbert F. Stallworth, COM’s first president

1. President Herbert Stallworth, board of trustees president H.K. “Griz” Eckert, unknown man, and Texas City mayor Emmett Lowry, late 1960s
2. Board of Trustees checking out the site of new campus
Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS

Freshman Student Senate—from left: Kelly Ann Blass, Bobby Griffin, Sonny Kline, Margaret Landry, John Smith, and Donald Williams.

1935
Residents vote 500 to 144 to create a junior college district within what is now the Galveston Independent School District. Six months later, they vote down a tax levy of 10 cents per $100 valuation to support the college.

1954
The education committee of the Galveston Chamber of Commerce rekindles the junior college project with a feasibility study on establishing a countywide college.

1958
The countywide junior college proposition goes to voters and loses. Galveston voters defeat both the creation of a county junior college district and the tax levy to support it, while both propositions carry on the mainland.

1964
Plans for a junior college are revived through the Galveston Junior College Action Team of the Galveston Chamber of Commerce.

1965
The Galveston County Union Junior College District is created.

1966
- The College District is split into Galveston Island and mainland Galveston County, leading to the creation of Galveston College and College of the Mainland.
- On December 10, voters approve a $2.85 million bond issue.

1967
"Starting classes only four months after the president arrives will be a first in Texas and the United States, College of the Mainland trustees believe."

— article in the Daily Sun, May 5, 1967

- Temporary offices for College of the Mainland (COM) open at the Bank of the Mainland Building in La Marque in January.
- In March the board of trustees selects Dr. Herbert F. Stallworth, an educator with experience in establishing new colleges, to serve as the first president of the college.
- A permanent site for the college is selected; 122 acres are purchased for approximately $296,000.
- The doors open to 414 students in the rented facility at the Booker T. Washington School (a Texas City ISD elementary school).
A groundbreaking ceremony is held on the COM campus September 12. The first phase of the campus consists of four buildings: the Administration Building, Learning Resources Center, Technical-Vocational Building, and Math and Science Building.
1. Birth of Lake Eckert during the first phase of construction, late 1960s
2. Sign marking future campus site
3. First phase of construction
4. First phase of construction
5. Learning Resources Center (Library) in progress
6. The campus after the second phase of construction
1970

The COM campus is dedicated with Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes as guest speaker. Helen Foster, charter employee and secretary to President Herbert Stallworth, reminisces about COM's opening days on COM's twentieth anniversary in 1987:

"We moved on Memorial Day weekend, and I remember the mosquitoes were really bad. There was no air-conditioning, but I think President Stallworth went out and bought a couple of window units. It was so hot that he went outside the building to interview an applicant for a maintenance position. We took the boys' locker room and made teachers' offices out of it.

"We started out in 1967 with only a mimeograph machine and an electric typewriter. We put together the first college handbook with a hand-cranked mimeograph and then distributed it to all the high schools out of the trunk of my car. Now I have a memory typewriter, and it's like having an extra person to help with the work.

"We moved to our present campus in 1970. It was quite a change.

"The commitment from the beginning was to make this college the best, to be innovative, and to be experimental. Dr. Stallworth referred to us as a wagon train because we were pioneers in education."

1970

Voters approve a second bond issue of $4.75 million for the next phase of construction—adding the Fine Arts Building and the Gym and Student Center and expanding the Technical-Vocational Building and the Math and Science Building.

The COM lake is named Lake Eckert in honor of H. K. "Griz" Eckert, who had served as president of the COM Board of Trustees since its formation in 1966. Eckert, who served in the US Army in World War I, was active in the community with the Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, and Texas City Chamber of Commerce. He worked for Monsanto Chemical Corporation for forty-two years, including serving as plant manager of the Texas City and Chocolate Bayou plants. When he died in 1987, his ashes were scattered on Lake Eckert.

1972

The second phase of construction is completed.

1. Librarian Mary Drew McGraw on moving day, 1970
2. Flag raising on campus, 1970
3. Move to new campus
4. New equipment for campus
5. Letter from State Representative Andrew Z. Baker, February 22, 1973
6. College catalog, 1973–74
7. Program for the dedication service for the second phase of construction, March 4, 1973
Why the name “College of the Mainland”?

A 1966 resolution changed the official name of the school to College of the Mainland. Galveston College would serve the island, and College of the Mainland would serve mainland Galveston County.

First COM Board of Trustees (1967–1969)
Richard L. Alexander
J. W. Arrington
George Delany
H. K. “Griz” Eckert
Bill W. Flaniken
James P. Simpson

Other Early Supporters
Johnny Henderson
Paul “Tiny” Teague
John Wayne Cox

These and many other early advocates for COM walked door-to-door to increase support and ensure the passage of the bond issue to create the college.

Charter Employees
Herbert Stallworth, EdD, founding president
Helen Foster, president’s secretary
Fred Taylor, EdD, dean of instruction
Inez Gremlinson, secretary to dean of instruction
June McConnell, coordinator of admissions, registration, and records
Gladys Boswell, Admissions Office clerk
Jack Eslom, dean of student personnel services
Kathryn Faulk, secretary to dean of student personnel services
Roy Walker, counselor
Edward Brown, director of administrative services
Winnona Schroll, secretary to director of administrative services
Mildred Bedford Williams, bookkeeper
Robert Shinn, director of learning resources center
Cecil Couch Jr., head librarian
Mary Drew McGraw, head librarian
Barbara Carol, assistant librarian
Doreen Davis, secretary to director
Sybil Wade, chairman of division of humanities
Donald Bass, EdD, English instructor
Ann Sherrill, English instructor
Anna Marie Thames, English instructor

2. Reception honoring retirees, some of them charter employees
3. Annual employee picnic
Jean Harper, English instructor
Carolyn Hartnett, EdD, English instructor
Lester Burks, director of technical and vocational education
Dorothy McNutt, EdD, chairperson of division of business
Karen Tantillo Tumbleson, secretary of division of business
Nellie Carr Thorogood, EdD, business instructor
James Leon Smith, accounting and business mathematics instructor
Michael Bordelon, chairperson of mathematics and science
George Thomas, mathematics instructor
Terry Lynn Foster, biology instructor
Mack Gary Jr., biology instructor
Charles Self, biology instructor
William Tise, chairperson of division of social sciences
Dorothy Cathcart, secretary of social sciences
Larry Smith, history instructor
Manuel Urbina, PhD, history instructor
Frank Vitale, chairperson of division of physical education
Jane Meredith, physical education instructor
Benjamin Wingate, building and grounds maintenance supervisor
Augustine Ayala, maintenance

1. CCDI charter employees Kathy Faulk, Mille Benford, President Stallworth, Helen Foster, and June Simpson
2. President Herbert Stallworth, left, and board of trustees president H.K. “Got” Estes, Jan 1969
3. Instructor Michael Bordelon

4. Instructor Carolyn Hartnett
5. President Herbert Stallworth, Nellie Carr, and Vice President Fred Taylor, late 1960s
6. June McConnell, President Herbert Stallworth, and Dan Doyle, Late 1960s
7. Recognition of June McConnell as the first employee hired by College of the Mainland
Presidents

1967–1971 President Herbert Stallworth

1971–1981 President Fred Taylor

1981 Interim President Donald Mortvedt

1981–1983 President Justin Sunderman

1983–2000 President Larry Stanley

2000–2008 President Homer Hayes

2008-2009; 2012 Interim President Larry Durrence

2009–2011 President Michael Elam

1967–1971 President Herbert Stallworth

1971–1981 President Fred Taylor

1981 Interim President Donald Mortvedt

1981–1983 President Justin Sunderman

1983–2000 President Larry Stanley

2000–2008 President Homer Hayes

2008-2009; 2012 Interim President Larry Durrence

2009–2011 President Michael Elam

1. President Herbert Stallworth, right, late 1960s

2. President Fred Taylor congratulating graduating student

3. President Larry Stanley and staff during a donation drive

4. Board of trustees member Carmen Anderson introduces President Justin Sunderman

5. A game of golf with President Larry Stanley and staff

6. President Stanley honoring Congressman Nick Lampson at 30th anniversary, 1997

6. President Homer Hayes and COM Mascot (Roger Stallings)

7. President Homer Hayes and Tillie Henson at COM Foundation Mainland Heroes Gala, 2007

8. President Homer Hayes with Texas City Mayor Matthew Doyle

9. Interim President Dr. Larry Durrence and Child Development Lab School students, 2008

10. President Michael Elam congratulates Larry Purswell, then-COM’s oldest graduate, 2010

11. President Michael Elam speaking at Martin Luther King Jr. Day, 2010
18

1. President Beth Lewis, 2012
2. President Beth Lewis at Galveston Walk to End Alzheimer’s, 2014
3. President Beth Lewis during employee holiday food drive
4. President Beth Lewis with child lab students, Halloween, 2013

First Graduates—May 1968
Jan Llewellyn
Karen Watson

First Class Graduation—May 29, 1969

First graduation ceremony program, May 29, 1969

1. COM’s first graduates—Jan Llewellyn (left) and Karen Watson (right), 1968
3. Some of the students in the first graduating class, May 1969
4. Tillie Phillips, student in the first graduating class, and President Herbert Stallworth, 1969
5. First graduation ceremony program, May 29, 1969
Associate of Arts
Judith Elaine Faulk
William Michael Land
Frieda Goetzmann Marshall
Morris T. Meadows
Pauline Hoggard Mitchell
Claudia M. New
Louis Parker Jr.
Linda Gayle Platt
Carole Delaine Sage
Jean Cooper Schalk
Patricia J. Smith
Gloria Villarreal
Edward Carroll Wesley

Associate in Applied Science
Diane Neely Bellamy
Paige Gilman
Willie H. Holmes III
Tillie M. Phillips

Diploma
Hazel J. Parker
Carol Elizabeth Thomas

1. Alum Janice Crowder
2. Community Citizen Advisory Committee
3. Kevin Hayes, COM concurrent enrollment student, 1986 Rice University graduate
4. The Social and Behavioral Sciences Department was housed in the Greater Redbird's Church Baptist Church facilities, 801 1st Avenue South in Texas City, from September 1967 to February 1970 until the new campus was built.