

# Horizons

THE COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND MAGAZINE

## FREE TUITION & FEES AT COM!

The Opening Doors  
Promise Scholarship

Spend a Penny  
Save \$3 Million

THE ART OF  
Success

COM in the  
COMMUNITY

THE SECOND

**100**  
stories

SEE BACK COVER



In a League  
of its Own  
A NEW COM LOCATION  
FALL 2020

Dual Credit &  
COLLEGIATE  
HIGH SCHOOL

THE ECONOMIC  
IMPACT OF COM

**APPLY NOW**  
REGISTER BY AUGUST 22

[WWW.COM.EDU/START](http://WWW.COM.EDU/START)

**COM**  
College of the Mainland®

College of the Mainland is a learning-centered, comprehensive community college dedicated to student success and the intellectual and economic prosperity of the diverse communities we serve.

The college district includes Texas City, Dickinson, Hitchcock, La Marque, and Santa Fe. The service area includes League City, Friendswood, Kemah, Bacliff and San Leon.



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Enroll today at COM using the Navigate Student Planning Tool. Download "Navigate Student" in the app store or Google Play to get started.



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## CONTENTS

- 4 LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
- 6 FREE TUITION AND FEES AT COM!**
- 8 THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COM
- 9 FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: THE ART OF SUCCESS
- 10 SPEND A PENNY NOW, SAVE 3 MILLION LATER
- 12 PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS
- 14 IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN: A NEW COM LOCATION**
- 16 DUAL CREDIT AND COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL
- 18 CREATING A PIPELINE FOR STUDENT TRANSFERS
- 20 MAKING ROOM FOR THE FUTURE: IT'S FULL STEAM AHEAD
- 22 STUDENT LEADER FINDS HOME AT COM
- 23 FOR THE LOVE OF SCIENCE: GIRLS EXPLORE STEM CAREERS
- 24 COM IN THE COMMUNITY
- 26 DONORS MAKING A DIFFERENCE
- 27 COM ALUMNI NEWS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
- BACK COVER**  
THE SECOND SET OF 100 STORIES



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

# A

As we round out another school year, now is a fitting time to reflect on the historic strides we've made at College of the Mainland. This past year has been nothing short of extraordinary. From extraordinary growth in our programs and facilities to extraordinary student successes, this is truly an exciting time at COM!

Kicking off the school year in August, we broke ground on our new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) and Administration buildings. The event marked an inspiring opportunity for us to witness the start of the priceless investment that our community has committed

towards the continued growth and innovation at COM. With our new facilities, we plan to welcome many new and expanded programs to better serve the needs of our students.

In addition to expanding our presence on our main campus, we also recognize the growing importance to increase capacity throughout our service area. With a steady increase in the enrollment of our dual credit program, particularly within the Clear Creek and Friendswood ISD communities, we look forward to the opening of our new League City facility in fall 2020.

**RIGHT:**  
Dr. Warren Nichols





While these milestones are quite remarkable, the growth at COM goes far beyond our physical footprint. This past December, College of the Mainland hosted its inaugural fall commencement ceremony in response to the overwhelming surge of graduates participating in our May ceremony. I see this as a testament to the dedication of our students to stay on track with their academic goals, from day one through graduation.

Though these are indeed exciting times at College of the Mainland, it goes without saying that this is also a very unique time for our entire college community. As we learn to adapt to our many new realities during these unprecedented times, I am proud of the resolve of our students who have adjusted seamlessly to online learning and remain committed to moving forward to achieving their goals.

To support students in reaching these goals, we are finding new ways to make the journey towards higher education affordable and accessible. In addition to offering an array of financial supports in the form of scholarships, grants and work programs, we are thrilled to launch the Opening Doors Promise Scholarship for graduating high school seniors in Texas City and La Marque.



The scholarship will allow every qualifying student in those communities to attend COM full time, tuition free and earn an associate degree or complete a workforce training certificate program. As we work to continue expanding this scholarship program to neighboring cities, I am confident that this opportunity will greatly enrich the growth and prosperity of our community now and in the years to come.

To say the least, this has been quite an eventful year. I hope you will read on for some truly inspiring stories and to learn more about the big changes we have underway at College of the Mainland. Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to connecting with each of you as we embark on this incredible journey ahead.

Sincerely,

Dr. Warren Nichols  
President, College of the Mainland

## The New Opening Doors Promise Scholarship

# FREE TUITION & FEES AT COM!

## NOW AVAILABLE TO TEXAS CITY AND LA MARQUE STUDENTS

While traditionally the prospect of a college education has often been financially out of reach for many students, College of the Mainland is breaking through those financial barriers in a major way through its Opening Doors Promise Scholarship. Through the new scholarship program, COM is partnering with local government, private donors and surrounding educational entities to ease the financial burdens for graduating high school seniors in Texas City and La Marque.

Funded by the Texas City Economic Development Corporation and individual private donors, the scholarship allows every qualifying high school student to attend COM full time, tuition free and earn an associate degree or complete a workforce training certificate program.

“To be able to go to college at College of the Mainland and get a quality education without the financing side of it being a barrier is just unheard of,” said Texas City Mayor Matthew Doyle. “What this means to the business environment and the economic development of our community cannot even begin to be measured. Of all the things I’ve been a part of as mayor for the last 16 years at this great city, this will go down as the best one ever.”

Working with community partners, the scholarship will address the growing need for accessible education in the COM community. The program will provide funding for any Class of 2020 graduating high school student living in Texas City or La Marque, or students attending La Marque High School pursuing full-time studies at COM.

Data shows that 77 percent of the population ages 25 and above in COM’s taxing district received no further degree beyond high school. Despite COM having one of the lowest tuition and fees rate in the state of Texas, many students see cost and debt as obstacles to attending a higher education



**A college education is a fundamental investment that will guide students on to a path to education and future employment in high-demand jobs.**

institution. Through the Opening Doors Promise Scholarship program, students can now access a high-quality and affordable college education with no tuition or fees that will help open doors to a rewarding career and fulfilling lifestyle.

“A college education is a fundamental investment that will guide students on to a path to education and future employment in high-demand jobs,” said COM President Warren Nichols. “As one of the primary sources of higher education in the community, COM is committed to responding to the needs of our community by expanding financial resources across our student landscape.”

Want to take the next step to a promising future? Here’s what you need to know:

## Eligibility

All Texas City and La Marque residing high school seniors (GED, public, private, home or charter schools) graduating in the Class of 2020 are eligible for the Opening Doors Promise Scholarship. Any Class of 2020 graduating senior at La Marque High School is also eligible for the scholarship, regardless of residence. GED students must be between the ages of 16-18. There is no income or high school GPA requirement.

To maintain eligibility once the scholarship is awarded, students must be enrolled full time and maintain at least 12 credit hours. After completing the first year at COM, students must have a 2.0 cumulative GPA.

# How to apply

Apply today by completing these two simple steps by the designated deadline dates below:

- **STEP 1 – May 15, 2020:** Apply for admission through [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org).
- **STEP 2 – June 1, 2020:** Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) and list “College of the Mainland” or enter code 007096.

Community leaders are encouraged to join in support of the program as COM works to expand the scholarship to surrounding areas.

To learn more about the Opening Doors Promise Scholarship at College of the Mainland, call 409-933-8147, email [promise@com.edu](mailto:promise@com.edu) or visit [www.com.edu/promise](http://www.com.edu/promise).

College of the Mainland les promete matrícula gratuita a los estudiantes de Texas City y La Marque que se graduarán de bachillerato o que recientemente obtuvieron un GED. Para obtener más información, vaya a [www.com.edu/promesa](http://www.com.edu/promesa).



# THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND

## ALUMNI IMPACT



Impact of the increased earnings of COM's alumni and the businesses they work for

**\$218.9 million**  
ANNUAL ADDED INCOME

An economic boost similar to hosting the World Series

36 times.



or **2,413**  
Jobs supported



Each person = 100

## OPERATIONS SPENDING IMPACT

Impact of COM's payroll and day-to-day spending

**\$31.4 million**  
ADDED INCOME

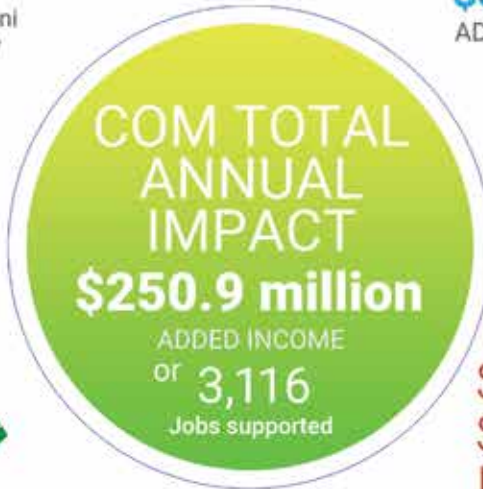
enough to buy  
**925**  
new cars



or **689** Jobs supported



Each person = 100



## STUDENT SPENDING IMPACT

Impact of the daily spending of COM students retained and attracted to the region.

**\$646.3 thousand**  
ADDED INCOME

enough to buy  
**45**  
families' a year's worth of groceries



or **13** Jobs supported

## Average Earnings in the COM Service Area

The average associate degree graduate earns \$9,100 more than a high school graduate at their career midpoint.



### For every \$1 invested by...



INFORMATION REFLECTS FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016. DATA PROVIDED BY EMSI.



# THE Art of Success

by Holly Walrath

Twenty-seven-year instructor Coleena Jackson would be the first to admit she's a bit of a COM fanatic. "I can't sleep the night before a new semester starts. I mean, my mind is so wound up and I'm ready to go. I think that's the coolest thing that every semester I'm so excited," she says. But her passion makes sense when you see how much this instructor, who is the coordinator for the College of the Mainland Graphic Arts program, has invested in the college over the years.

Jackson's connection to the community began before she was born. Her father worked as a pipefitter who constructed the very building in which she now works. "When I was a little girl, we would bring lunch out to him," she remembers fondly. "I was born and raised in this community, went to high school and raised my family here." Her children later went on to attend COM. And that's why for Jackson, COM means family, across three generations.

Jackson uses that community mindset to apply passionate networking to COM's Graphic Arts program, which consists of a Graphic Design Certificate or Web Design Certificate that can be rolled into a two-year Associate of Applied Science. The certificate gives students a chance to try out the career and get a taste for what it's like. The two-year program includes an internship every semester with a local business where students gain hands-on experience. Students in the program gain real-world experience through a graphic arts advisory board led by Jackson.

RIGHT:  
Coleena Jackson

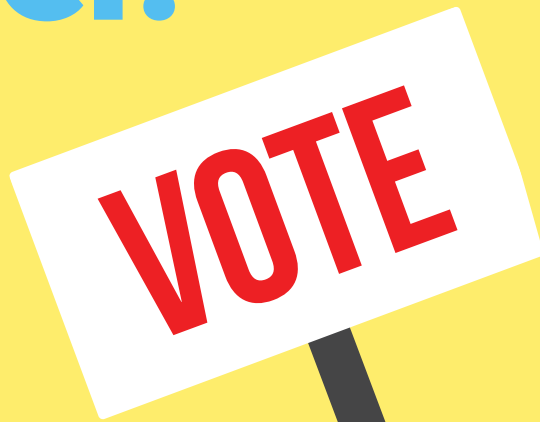
The board is comprised of designers from local businesses like Moody Gardens, Galveston's Grand 1984 Opera House and AMOCO Federal Credit Union. At the end of the program, students undergo a mock interview where they showcase the professional portfolio they've built over their time at COM. They receive critical feedback to help them prepare for the job market.

Those who are new to the Graphic Arts program will learn very quickly that Jackson's enthusiasm for the program is unmatched.

"I feel like every time one of the students has a deadline for classes, those are my deadlines," she explains. "I'm trying to help prepare them for what industry is going to be like, and I feel for them when they know a design didn't come out quite the way they wanted."

Jackson says it's important for students to stay focused because it's a competitive field. "With technology, it's always changing and you have to continually keep learning. So even though they exit COM and they've got a degree, they will be life-long learners," she explains. Although students are just making a start in the Graphic Arts program and often go on to four-year degrees, Jackson says they often return to her years later, whether it's to share good news about their life or to help the next cohort of students find a job.

# SPEND A PENNY NOW, Save \$3,000,000 later.




The College of the Mainland Board of Trustees has approved a November 3 election for the purpose of refinancing the college's maintenance tax notes. With voter approval, this would serve as a significant cost savings opportunity to help tax dollars go further.

The proposal allows COM to take advantage of the market's historically low interest rates by refinancing its existing maintenance tax debt at a reduced rate. While a slight tax increase of approximately one cent, if approved, the refinancing will keep the interest and sinking (I&S) tax rate below the 11.7 cents promised during the 2018 bond election.



# THE REFINANCING:

- Allows the college to refund and convert existing bonds to lower interest cost bonds.
- Will save the college approximately \$3,000,000 over the life of maintenance tax notes.
- Saves the college nearly \$200,000 per year in interest.
- Will free roughly \$1,200,000 from COM's maintenance and operations budget.
- Could decrease COM's interest rate from 5 to as low as 2 percent.
- Does not provide for new bonds for new construction.

 Will not raise student tuition prices.

The existing bonds, without this proposition, would remain in the existing form at the existing interest rate.

Registered voters within the Dickinson, Hitchcock, Santa Fe and Texas City schools can vote on the proposed refinancing because they are within the COM taxing district. La Marque residents can vote on the refinancing since they are part of the Texas City school district. Voters that live in League City but are part of the Dickinson school district also can vote on the refinancing.

## The proposal would appear on the voting ballot as:

[ ] FOR  
[ ] AGAINST

**THE ISSUANCE OF \$13,950,000 BONDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF REFUNDING COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND MAINTENANCE TAX NOTES, SERIES 2017 AND LEVYING AND IMPOSITION OF TAXES SUFFICIENT TO PAY THE PRINCIPAL OF AND INTEREST ON THE BONDS AND THE COSTS OF ANY CREDIT AGREEMENTS. REQUIRED STATEMENT FOR ALL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOND PROPOSITIONS PURSUANT TO SECTION 45.003, TEXAS EDUCATION CODE: THIS IS A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.**

The general election will be held on **Tuesday, November 3, 2020**. More information will be available soon at [www.com.edu/bond](http://www.com.edu/bond) with early voting dates and voting locations.

*Vote*  
**NOV. 3**  
2020

## Did you know?

- Early voting for the November election is scheduled from October 19-30.
- Taxes will not go up for any senior citizens age 65 or older who have filed the appropriate tax exemption for their home.
- The refinancing of an existing tax note (also known as a debt or bond) at a lower interest rate is done routinely when a college reacts to changing market conditions and interest rates.
- The maintenance tax note debt is a cost that residents are currently paying as a part of their property taxes.



# Planting the Seeds for Financial Success

The complex world of financial literacy can be a whirlwind for most college students. From FAFSA deadlines to credit management, balancing new financial independence is no easy feat, even for the most seasoned financier. That's where the Money Awareness Program (MAP) steps in.

**BELOW:**  
Joel Philistin



A division of the Financial Aid Office, MAP offers COM students a full range of financial literacy workshops and resources throughout the school year. The program's purpose is to help students understand the financial resources that are available to them while they are at College of the Mainland. With topics focused on financial aid, money management, scholarship applications and credit management, these resources equip students with the foundation needed to make healthy financial decisions.

Led by COM financial literacy educator, Joel Philistin, MAP provides students with an experienced team of peer financial coaches who are committed to supporting student financial success.

Philistin encourages all students to start off their financial aid journey by filling out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Last school year, COM awarded more than \$6.2 million to students through scholarships, grants, work programs and student loans, but less than one half of all COM students complete the FAFSA, which means that many COM students could be missing out on financial aid.

Whether a student is self-supporting or supported by their parents, they should complete a FAFSA for each academic year they attend COM to see if they

qualify for scholarships, grants, work-study or other financial aid opportunities.

**The FAFSA can be completed online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).**

Beyond supporting students with their FAFSA application, MAP differs from traditional financial aid services in that the group promotes ongoing financial management skills that students can use in both their school and personal life.

“We want parents to know that there are financial resources available to help their students pay for college,” Philistin said. “And beyond that, we also want to help those students learn how to manage financial resources, even after they leave COM.”

Some of the services offered through MAP include:

- In-class presentations on financial aid or financial literacy
- Free financial literacy workshops on budgeting, financial aid, loans, saving and debt management
- A website for accessing online financial literacy curriculum
- Free, personalized, one-on-one financial coaching sessions for scholarship searches, budgeting, saving, debt, and accessing community resources

“Our goal is that when students go on to get that higher paying job, they can take that knowledge and create higher economic opportunities by understanding concepts like budgeting, savings and credit so they can then build stronger financial futures for themselves,” Philistin said.

To learn more about the Money Awareness Program, visit [www.com.edu/money](http://www.com.edu/money) or call 409-933-8533.

## Did you know?

- Due, in part, to the Money Awareness Program’s initiatives, College of the Mainland has had a six percent increase in the number of students who applied for financial aid since the fall of 2017 and a three percent increase in the number of students who received Pell grant funds.
- Non-citizens can apply for state financial aid through the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA). Visit the COM Financial Aid Office to learn more.
- Students should complete the FAFSA every year. To learn more about the application process and deadlines, visit [www.com.edu/financial-aid](http://www.com.edu/financial-aid).

## STRETCH YOUR TUITION DOLLARS by enrolling in a monthly payment plan

Summer and Fall 2020 payment plans now available!

COM partners with Nelnet Campus Commerce to let students pay tuition and fees over time, making college more affordable. Tuition payment plans break down students’ tuition balance into affordable monthly payments. There’s no interest, transactions are secure, payment options are flexible, setup fees are affordable, and it’s easy to enroll online!

### Fall 2020

Payment plan available on April 14, 2020. Full payments may be made through October 26, 2020.

#### Enroll Online By **June 30**

Down Payment	Number of Payments	4
0	Months of Payments	Jul-Oct

#### Enroll Online By **July 25**

Down Payment	Number of Payments	3
25%	Months of Payments	Aug-Oct

#### Enroll Online By **August 11**

Down Payment	Number of Payments	2
50%	Months of Payments	Sept-Oct

## Payment Methods

- Automatic bank payment (ACH)
- Credit card/debit card

Payments are processed on the 5th of each month.

# In a League

COM WELCOMES NEW NORTH GALVESTON COUNTY SITE

**BELOW:**

College of the Mainland League City Facility Coming Fall 2020.



# of its Own.

All expenses for the new facility, including lease, utilities and personnel, will be funded through tuition and fees brought in at the League City site.

No bond monies or property taxes will be used to pay for the new facility.

The facility will be an income generator for the college.

COM's North County Learning Center will have a new home this fall, thanks to a new 27,570-square-foot educational facility that will replace the existing site. The new facility, located at 1411 West Main Street in League City, is the former site of the League City United Methodist Church, and will house dual credit and general education classes for students in League City, Friendswood, Dickinson, Kemah and other north Galveston County cities.

The move marks an exciting time for the college to further its student reach across its service area as the League City region maintains an increasingly strong presence at COM. With nearly 41 percent of the overall student population and 63 percent of the dual credit enrollment residing in north Galveston County, the new facility will offer an accessible and convenient option for students residing in that region and along Interstate 45 while also addressing the steady growth in enrollment at the current North County Learning Center site.

"College of the Mainland is committed to providing quality educational opportunities to all areas throughout our service district," said Dr. Warren Nichols, president of College of the Mainland. "As our dual credit program continues to grow, it is important that we are diligent in supporting this growth to reach every segment of our college community."

In addition to dual credit, students at the new site can also look forward to enhanced facilities for general education classes when doors open in the fall. The site will include eight classrooms, a wet lab for biology instruction, and a testing and advising center.

# Dual Credit and Collegiate High School

College of the Mainland's dual credit and Collegiate High School programs are popular learning options for high school students looking to jump start their higher education journey, and it's easy to see why. While in the programs, high school students are able to take collegiate-level coursework taught by college faculty at reduced tuition costs. Additionally, the programs provide students with a College Connections advisor who helps students bridge their high school and college experience. These advisors are available for students and parents to ask questions, and to help navigate the application process. To identify your College Connections advisor, visit [www.com.edu/college-connections](http://www.com.edu/college-connections), and read below to learn more about these exciting opportunities!

## Dual Credit

The COM dual credit program enables students to earn high school and college credit simultaneously. Offering a wide range of courses including math, English, government, history, welding, and cosmetology, dual

credit students can make substantial progress toward a college degree before finishing high school.

Students who start taking courses in the summer following their sophomore year can earn thirty or more college credits by high school graduation, giving them the potential to begin college as a sophomore.

Dual credit students can attend classes at the COM campus in Texas City or League City, online or at their high school, depending on arrangements with their school district.

Students interested in taking part in the program should contact their high school counselor or the assigned College Connections advisor for their school system. Home-schooled students and those attending local private schools can contact the dual credit office at 409-933-8679.

For more information about COM's dual credit program, visit [www.com.edu/dual-credit](http://www.com.edu/dual-credit).





# Collegiate High School

Helping students reach their goals by connecting their career aspirations to their educational experience, Collegiate High School (CHS) allows students to earn an associate degree while simultaneously completing a high school diploma. Students can enroll in the program beginning in the ninth grade and COM waives 40 percent of tuition and fees for CHS students. While in the program, CHS students develop a comprehensive graduation plan that covers the four years of high school while simultaneously completing two years of college at COM.

Enjoying the best of both worlds, CHS students are fully immersed in the college experience and attend all classes on the COM Texas City campus while still participating in extracurricular activities at their current high school. Plus, CHS students have access to senior mentoring and all COM student resources, events and activities.

Students who are interested in applying for CHS should contact their high school counselors, assigned College Connections advisor or contact the Collegiate High School office at 409-933-8169 to learn more about the application process. For more information about the Collegiate High School program, visit [www.com.edu/chs](http://www.com.edu/chs).



ABOVE:  
COM Collegiate High School students.

# CREATING A PIPELINE

## FOR STUDENT TRANSFERS

Many students can feel overwhelmed at the prospect of transferring from a community college to a university. It's a popular choice though – more than 70 percent of all Texas bachelor's degree graduates take at least one college course at a two-year college, according to the Texas Public Higher Education Almanac.

To facilitate the ease of transfer for students wanting to pursue a bachelor's degree, College of the Mainland has established a robust network of academic partnerships to build seamless academic pipelines for students transitioning to a four-year institution.

Learn more about some of College of the Mainland's academic transfer partnerships with:

### Sam Houston State University

Students enrolled at COM can simultaneously enroll at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) through a new joint admissions agreement. Joint admissions means that a student is admitted to both institutions while attending COM.

Through the agreement, students applying to College of the Mainland while also meeting the admissions requirements for Sam Houston State University, may then apply for and be accepted into the joint admission program. The agreement simplifies the transition process between the two institutions and provides several exclusive benefits for COM students including:

- The ability to attend both schools simultaneously or alternately
- The ability to receive cooperative advising from the university
- Reduced application fee to SHSU
- Access to school facilities and sporting events



The agreement outlines a time-compressed degree program framework consistent with the college's Guided Pathways initiative. This framework provides the potential for students to simultaneously complete a high school diploma and associate degree in four years at College of the Mainland, a baccalaureate degree in two additional years at Sam Houston State University and a master's degree in one additional year for a total of seven years.

Students accepted under joint admission must continually meet all admission requirements for both institutions to retain their eligibility in the program. While in the program, students have the option to transfer, alternate enrollment between institutions or co-enroll at their discretion.

## Texas Tech University

College of the Mainland and Texas Tech University have established an articulation agreement for COM students to seamlessly transfer to Texas Tech after completing an associate degree. An articulation agreement is a type of agreement formed between a community college and a four-year institution to help students facilitate a dedicated pathway to graduation.

The agreement is part of the State of Texas' and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX Strategic Plan to promote access, affordability, quality, success and cost efficiency in the state's

institutions of higher education. Through the partnership, students will have an increase in transfer pathways from which students can pursue a baccalaureate degree and reduce the overall cost of obtaining the degree.

The agreement between the two schools shortens the time it takes for students to earn an associate degree and reduce the number of credit hours a student takes when earning their associate degree. Other benefits include:

- Increased awareness of educational and student support opportunities available
- Encourages current COM students to complete their associate degree before transferring to Texas Tech
- Provides pre-TTU academic advising to increase degree applicability of transfer credits
- Provides a more seamless transfer experience to Texas Tech

To learn more about College of the Mainland joint admission agreements, visit [www.com.edu/student-services/transfer-corner](http://www.com.edu/student-services/transfer-corner).



BIG CHANGES ARE ON THE HORIZON FOR GALVESTON COUNTY AS THE REGION CONTINUES TO GROW AT A RAPID PACE. WITH NEW BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES MOVING IN, THE NEED FOR SKILLED WORKERS IS ON A STEADY RISE. COM IS RESPONDING TO THAT DEMAND IN A MAJOR WAY THROUGH ITS NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS AND MATHEMATICS (STEAM) BUILDING.



# Making room for the future:

## It's full STEAM ahead

Since construction began for the STEAM building in August of 2019, more than 270,000 cubic feet of dirt has been moved, 5,000 cubic yards of concrete placed and 1,000 tons of structural steel erected. The building is roughly 70 feet tall and 160,000 square feet. Outside, the exterior framing, sheathing, waterproofing, masonry, metal panels, glazing, and roofing are in progress. Inside, the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire sprinkler systems are being installed and interior partitions are ongoing.

The four-story facility will contain 24 classrooms, 28 labs and 9 student areas. Made possible through the \$162.5 million bond referendum approved by voters in COM's taxing district back in November 2018, the new building will allow the college to expand its popular nursing program and the cyber security networking lab, as well as add many new programs to its Texas City campus.



The STEAM building in progress (April 2020).



Allied health programs – pharmacy technician, nursing assistant, medical assistant and medical coding – will be moved and taught in the STEAM building after its completion. New programs being developed for the STEAM building include engineering tech programs as well as surgical tech, imaging tech, dental hygienist and physical therapy assistant.

Here's a closer look at some of the exciting programs planned for the STEAM building:

- **Expanded Nursing Program** – COM's current highly competitive nursing program will have an advanced simulation and classroom labs that simulate hospital and psychiatric treatment units. This additional space will allow the nursing program to increase enrollment in both the vocational and registered nursing program.
- **Pharmacy Tech** – For the last three years, COM's pharmacy technician program has been No. 1 on the Top 28 Pharmacy Technician Schools in Texas published by the Pharmacy

Technician Guide. When this program relocates to the STEAM building, it will have an expanded space that includes both a model retail and hospital pharmacy.

- **Medical Assisting** – COM's medical assisting program prepares students to work in the offices of physicians, hospitals, and other health care facilities to provide both direct and indirect patient care. Medical assistants record patient history and personal information, measure vital signs, help with patient examinations, schedule patient appointments, and enter patient information into medical records.
- **Health Information Management** – COM's health information management program prepares students to work in a variety of health care settings to organize and manage health information data.
- **Non-Credit Allied Health Programs** – The non-credit allied health programs currently offered at the North County Learning Center will be relocated to the new STEAM building. These include certified nurse aide, dental assistant, EKG technician, medical office/insurance specialist, medication aide, phlebotomy, and sterile processing. Each of these programs lead to a state or nationally recognized credential.

The STEAM building is projected to be complete in January 2021.

## [ ANTHONY “AJ” TAYLOR ]

# STUDENT LEADER FINDS HOME AT COM

For many students, college is a time of discovery, not only in the classroom, but also in life. Anthony “AJ” Taylor is one such student.

Upon enrolling at College of the Mainland in Fall 2017, Taylor had no idea of the road ahead. But after connecting with a special network of resources available at the college, he transformed his college experience into a remarkable journey of growth and discovery to unlock his true potential.

That journey recently concluded when Taylor received his Associate of Arts degree in general studies at COM’s inaugural fall commencement ceremony. The Texas City native was among 424 students participating in the historic celebration.

But before the pomp and circumstance, Taylor was a fresh-faced student learning to navigate college life. For him, balancing his academic responsibilities alongside personal commitments proved to be challenging after the passing of several close loved ones.

“With things like that, you get down,” Taylor recalls. “But you just have to push and persevere. I had to find solace within myself, and I knew that they wouldn’t want me to give up.”

After a tough start, Taylor was soon introduced to a welcoming network of support at COM through the Office of Student Life. Here, Taylor not only found his voice and purpose as a student leader, but also a foundation of support where staff works hand in hand with students for the common goal of cultivating a positive student experience. He greatly credits those relationships for shaping his own success.

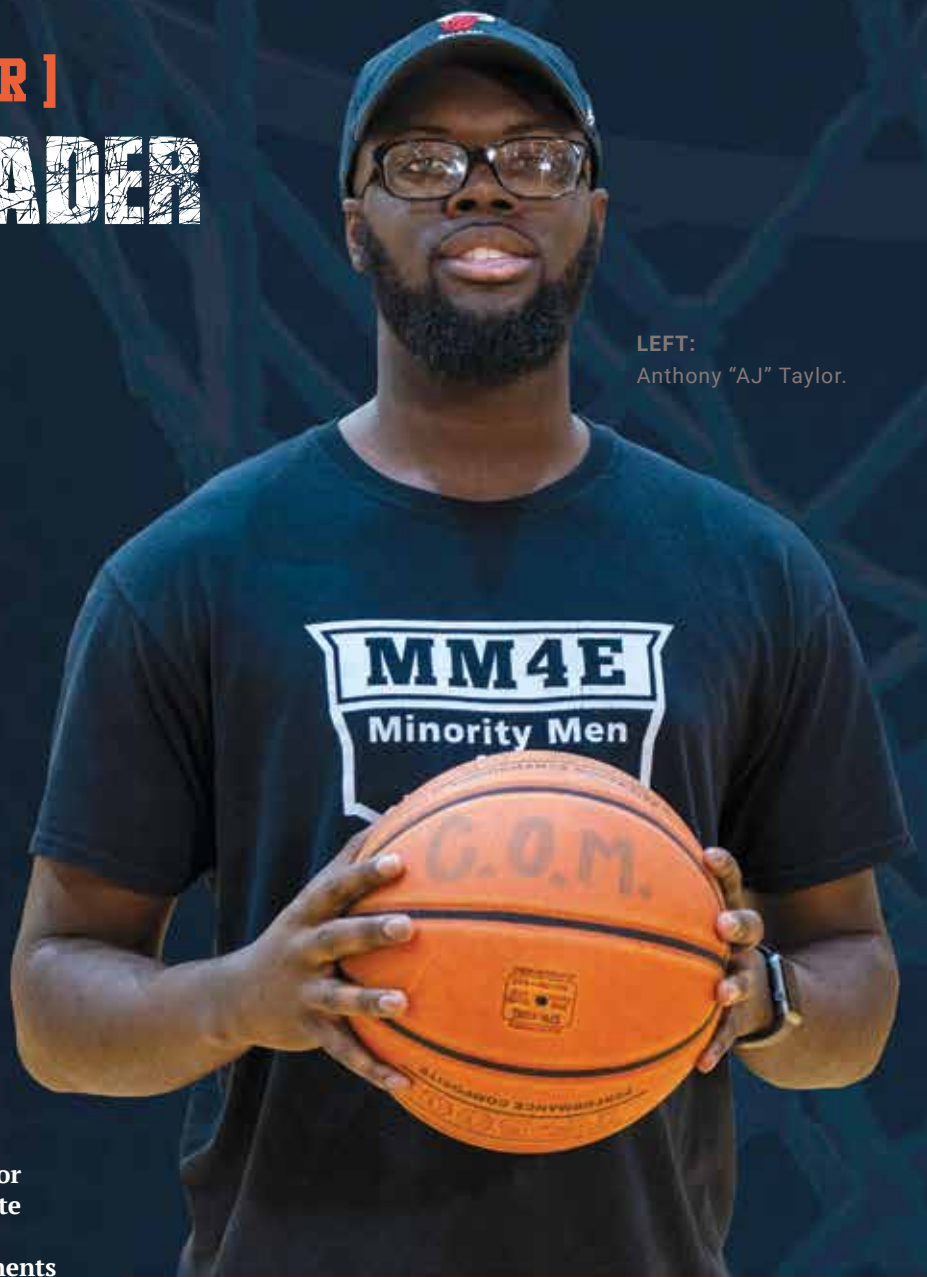
“Those connections are important,” Taylor said. “I feel like if I didn’t know these people, I’d be

struggling. They really help you stay level-headed, and they truly do care. It’s really important to me to have people who really care about me in my corner.”

After joining several student organizations including the Minority Men for Excellence (MM4E) and club basketball, Taylor soon found his place at COM. He served as president of MM4E, a student group that provides academic support as well as character and leadership development through programs, mentoring and community engagement. Through the program, Taylor had the opportunity to visit several university campuses and consider his next steps after COM.

“I’ve gotten to meet a lot of people, get insight and see new perspectives,” Taylor said. “It’s an eye-opening experience.”

LEFT:  
Anthony “AJ” Taylor.



# FOR THE LOVE OF SCIENCE:

## Girls Explore STEM Careers at I-Heart STEM Conference

From building motorized ducks and unearthing geodes to searching for microorganisms and designing computer programs, it was a day filled with fascinating adventure for the nearly 300 local eighth-grade girls participating in the fourth annual I-Heart STEM Conference at College of the Mainland.

During the interactive day of learning, students of McAdams Junior High School, Odyssey Academy, Santa Fe Junior High School, La Marque Junior High School, Blocker Middle School and Crosby Middle School explored the captivating world of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as part of an ongoing effort to encourage underrepresented female students to pursue STEM fields as a potential educational and career path.

“It’s getting you ready for high school or college so you can see what you want to do,” said Camryn Kirchner of Santa Fe Junior High School.

Working alongside COM faculty for a variety of hands-on activities, students learned about the various STEM programs offered at COM and were also introduced to the college’s Dual Credit and Collegiate High School programs to encourage them to get an early start on their college journey.

Jason Abshire, associate professor of physical education at COM, kicked off the “Muscle Memory” session with a stimulating presentation focused on sports medicine and the muscle function involved with exercise.



“We explained the field of sports medicine to students and some of the options that are out there,” Abshire explained. “The need is there, and it’s going to be a field that is viable for them if they’re interested in it.”

Many students left with a better idea of the career path they wanted to pursue after exploring a variety of conference sessions. One well-received session was “Put a Band-Aid on it!” where students practiced basic nursing skills.

“After high school, I really want to be a NICU nurse because I like helping other people, and I like helping babies,” said Alanna Brown of McAdams Junior High School.

To learn more about the I-Heart STEM Conference, email [thodye@com.edu](mailto:thodye@com.edu).

# COM

## in the Community

*Finding time to give back can be challenging, but COM students, staff and faculty always manage to rise to the occasion.*

And that spirit of volunteerism and community service highlights the very essence of the College of the Mainland experience – neighbors helping neighbors. COM has no shortage of clubs and organizations working hard to make a difference, on campus and beyond. Here’s a snapshot of how COM employees and students have been serving the community this school year.

### Amigos

Amigos strives to increase the interest and awareness of all students to the Latino culture through fellowship and volunteer opportunities. During the 2019-2020 school year, Amigos sponsored the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in September and volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House. In addition to sponsoring the Hispanic Heritage Month and Cinco de Mayo celebrations, students also have many opportunities throughout the school year to participate in volunteer activities on and off campus.

### COMPeers

Since the College of the Mainland Positive Engagement for Excellence and Real Success (COMPeers) was formed in 2013, the employee volunteer organization has donated more than \$13,400 to the COM Foundation for student scholarships. These scholarships are made possible through a series of fundraising efforts coordinated by COMPeers members throughout the school year including a Fantasy Football and Golden Ladle Chili Cookoff event.

The group also heads an initiative called Acts of COMPassion to help individual students with emergency needs through a referral process. “We believe very strongly in removing as many barriers for students as we can to help them succeed,” said COMPeers member Michelle Gerami.

Outside of providing essential resources for students, COMPeers regularly volunteers with community agencies such as the Ronald





McDonald House, MI Lewis Social Service Center, the Galveston County Food Bank and Independence Village. The group also served as a critical resource in a time of crisis when members spent many hours volunteering at the Relief Distribution Center in League City during Hurricane Harvey.

COMPeers meets on the second Thursday of each month and welcomes new members to join.

## Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society – Sigma Theta Chapter

The Sigma Delta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society strives to enrich the college and community by giving students opportunities to develop professional and leadership skills, earn scholarships, explore career paths – and make their worlds a lot bigger.

This year, the Sigma Delta Chapter hosted a Safety and Wellness Fair for students which focused on CPR procedures and other emergency safety techniques. During the event, topics were presented on overall body wellness including the benefits of leading an active lifestyle through exercise and a healthy diet.

Members also supported two beach cleanups on Galveston Bay and a workshop focused on oceanic pollution. “Our team gained personal awareness of our individual effects on our environment and a sense of a community through volunteer work tied to improvement in the shared environment,” said Phi Theta Kappa faculty advisor Carl Taylor.

The Chapter also participated in the Senior Share of Galveston County in December at the Nessler Center in Texas City. Here, students helped to serve and clean up for local senior citizens.



*Want to make a difference?*

Learn how you can get involved at [www.com.edu/student-life](http://www.com.edu/student-life)

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Level \$50,000 to 99,999

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## MUSTANG (continued)

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- Texas First Bank
- Texas New Mexico Power
- Texas Pioneer Foundation
- Trevino Group, Inc.
- Twilight & Marc Freedman Foundation

# COM Alumni News

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Fidencio Leija

My work is devoted to honoring my brother David that attended College of the Mainland with me when I returned from the military. He was an amazing person. My family and I continue his legacy and commitment to serving others.

We both graduated from COM and David went off to Texas State University while I received a scholarship to St. Thomas University in Houston. David passed away in a fatal car accident on February 24, 2008 and I made the decision to attend Texas State shortly after. I picked up where he left off with his involvement on and off campus, and made sure we both received our degrees once again from the same institution.

Today, I am a Santa Fe City Councilman, and College of the Mainland played a vital role in my continued leadership development.



Rebecca Wright

For almost four decades, COM Alumni Rebecca Wright has held jobs in newspaper media, corporate documentation, grant funding, and for 20 years, leading projects for the NASA Johnson Space Center focused on the history of human spaceflight.

Her success was made possible through a Moody Foundation scholarship that paid for classes, books, and fees to cover two years at COM and two years at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City (now University of Houston-Clear Lake). Rebecca later graduated in May 1983 and went on to full-time employment until May 2016.

"Plainly stated, the professional opportunities I received stemmed from the college education provided by a scholarship from the Moody Foundation," Rebecca said. "The income and professional advancement I earned throughout my career became a reality because of the opportunity offered by this Foundation."

\*Rebecca's photo courtesy of Precision Photography.

*Did you attend COM?*

**Let us know what's happening in your life for a chance to be featured. Email us at: [horizons@com.edu](mailto:horizons@com.edu)**



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Nursing Student  
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Langford Scholarship



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**Amanda Fuentes**  
Education Major  
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and Jack McConnell  
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**Devan Coffey**  
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Major  
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