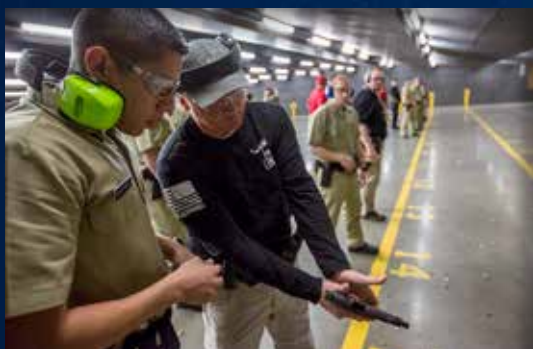




# BECOMING ESSENTIAL





# REACH MAGAZINE

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## Editor-In-Chief

Suzanne Groves  
*Executive Director of  
Communications, PR & Marketing*

## Editorial Staff

Gina Brasseur  
Reginald Lewis  
Rita Parson  
Kendra Prince  
Jody Wasson

## Photographer

DeeDra Parrish

## Contributors

James Gills  
Caitlin Graves  
Bill Lace  
Alma Martinez-Egger  
Brian Melton  
Alexis Patterson  
Lisa Self  
Paul Sturiale

# CHANCELLOR'S CORNER



As we are now halfway through our Fall 2020 term and already preparing for Spring 2021, which also will be offered predominantly online, it's hard to remember life before COVID-19. Despite the fact that TCC had realized some truly impressive accomplishments before the pandemic struck, COVID was our defining moment as an institution. TCC's efforts to pivot quickly, methodically and efficiently to teaching and working in a virtual environment certainly were not perfect, yet they were effective. This Fall, we have nearly 47,000 students enrolled and making use of the tools and resources we offer, including approximately 2,600 loaner tablets and other devices, to help them continue their academic journeys. We worked to ensure the consistent availability of online advisors and counselors to support our students through the enrollment process, and we were able to get our faculty – some 2,386 individuals – trained on Blackboard Essentials so they could effectively connect with, teach and guide their students in a modality new to most of them.

With the help of our TCCD Foundation, we were able to manage a 555 percent increase, in just a few months, of one-time Emergency Assistance grants to more than 270 students for whom financial hardship may otherwise have forced them to stop out for the term. We couldn't have provided this level of real-time support without our community partners and friends. To learn more, visit: <https://foundation.tccd.edu>.

Thanks to the ingenuity of our Community Education and Engagement (CEE) teams, we were able to move our longstanding College For Kids summer programs completely online, meaning that approximately 160 children were able to enjoy educational enrichment and a little bit of fun despite having to stay at home. We will be expanding our Youth Enrichment Programs in November to include "Toro Time: College for Pre-K," created to keep the youngest in our community engaged in active, age-appropriate learning. And in collaboration with several community partners, we were able to host drive-up food pantries that kept food on the table for tens of thousands of area families hardest hit financially by the effects of COVID.

Area businesses also have been hurt by COVID, but we were there to help, too. From hosting several webinars to help business owners navigate emergency assistance funding and remain open or re-open safely amidst the pandemic, to increasing exponentially the number of clients we are helping to survive, our Tarrant County Small Business Development Center teams have guided nearly 35,000 small business owners through uncharted territory.

As I said, COVID-19 represents a defining moment for this institution. We have no way of knowing how the future will unfold but based on how the TCC community pulled together, I am confident that whatever comes, we can handle it. That's because we have a track record for excellence, and this year is no exception.

First, and perhaps most noteworthy as we had to quickly move to a fully online modality, Tarrant County College was ranked at the beginning of the year as the nation's Number One Online Community College by Intelligent.com. This designation was based on a comprehensive assessment of 127 accredited colleges and universities nationwide, evaluated on curriculum quality, graduation rate and post-graduate employment. Clearly, we already were excelling in the online space so moving to a fully online environment really was a natural – if not sudden – extension of this expertise.

Further, four of our early college high schools were rated among the 2020 Best High Schools in the nation by *U.S. News and World Reports*, which ranked 18,000 schools across the country. This is quite an accomplishment, especially since we didn't open our first early college high school until 2013.

One of the ways we put Success Within Reach is through our transfer agreements with four-year institutions, and this year, we added four: a dual admission transfer pathway with Texas Wesleyan University; a co-curricular concurrent enrollment program with Tarleton State University for nursing students to move from their RN to BSN programs seamlessly and quickly; a 3 plus 1 agreement with the University of Phoenix to secure a BS in management or an RN to BSN degree; and, a transfer pathway with Excelsior College, allowing TCC students the ability to transfer as many as 90 of their credit hours to a bachelor's degree program. Our transfer agreements help students save valuable time and money in their educational pursuits, meaning they can get the credentials they need to begin their careers with minimal debt.

This recap scratches the surface of all that we have accomplished since 2020 began but hopefully, reinforces your confidence in – and commitment to – the critical role Tarrant County College plays in improving economic conditions for individuals, families, businesses and communities. As we move into the holiday season and prepare for what will (hopefully) be a better year ahead, we wish you and yours continued health and safety.

**TCC** | Tarrant  
County  
College  
**SUCCESS WITHIN REACH.**

Equal Opportunity/Equal Access Institution

**Eugene Giovannini**

Chancellor, Tarrant County College

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# Living Healthy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

## SELF-CARE IS KEY TO MANAGING TRAUMA

By Rita L.B. Parson

Starting as a minor inconvenience, akin to a nagging headache quickly eased by a home remedy, social conditions now have morphed into a full-fledged crisis, demanding more attention than an annoying throb.

Many in the Tarrant County College community have experienced and continue to navigate feelings ranging from uneasiness and unrest to full-fledged anxiety and depression as the COVID-19 pandemic dominates daily life.

The need last March to drop everything and relocate to remote work environments left many people unnerved, which soon intensified to exasperation as days of uncertainty turned into months, with no end in sight. According to health experts, if overlooked or brushed aside, these feelings can impair mental health.

Based on findings from a Kaiser Family Foundation poll, *The Washington Post* reported that nearly half of Americans indicated the COVID-19 crisis is harming their mental health, cited TCC Northeast Counseling Director Condoa Parrent. Additionally, a federal emergency hotline for people in emotional distress registered a more than 1,000 percent increase in April compared with the same time last year. Run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, roughly 20,000 people texted the hotline. Further, Talkspace, an online therapy company, reported a 65 percent jump in clients since mid-February. Text messages and transcribed therapy sessions collected anonymously by the company show Coronavirus-related anxiety dominated patients' concerns.

Mental health challenges such as these trigger trauma.

"For example, not being able to leave your house, having modified school at home, and then, children maybe experiencing, not directly, the frustrations that their parents have of learning how to teach them. All of this is trauma," said TCC South Counselor Valerie Groll.

According to Groll, there are three types of trauma.

"Acute trauma is just single incident (such as) a car accident, or it could be witnessing something. Chronic trauma. . . (is) something that's repeated and prolonged, such as the pandemic and domestic violence or abuse. Or, it could be complex trauma. That's multiple traumatic experiences over an amount of time," Groll said.

While trauma alters behavior, those undergoing the changes may not readily recognize they are experiencing trauma.

"Trauma affects one's ability to cope, can cause feelings of helplessness and diminishes the sense of self and the ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences," said TCC Trinity River Counselor Mandy Melton. "One may get stuck on the event or (events and become) unable to move forward and be in the present." Trauma can manifest physically in the form of "lethargy, loss of appetite, chest pain, headaches, racing heart, muscle tension in any part of the body, stomach issues and compromised immunity."

The effect of trauma may be immediate or delayed, Parrent said.

"Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea," Parrent said. "Living with constant uncertainty, worry or fear can cause trauma."

TCC Southeast Student Development Services Vice President Michael DuPont agreed, saying uncertainty during the current pandemic contributes to feelings of fear that can produce trauma for people generally accustomed to immediate solutions.

"We know COVID-19 is a virus. So now, we want the solution to it, not realizing or not understanding that the solution isn't right there in front of us. It's going to take time



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Many in the Tarrant County College community have experienced and continue to navigate feelings ranging from uneasiness and unrest to full-fledged anxiety and depression as the COVID-19 pandemic dominates daily life.

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to develop that,” DuPont said. “So, I think what’s new and unique about this is the fear of the unknown. A lot of people are walking around, not sure. Do I wear a mask? Do I not wear a mask? Do I go out? Do I not go out?”

“So, the fear of the unknown can have both mental and physical impacts or even – spiritual. People are questioning. ‘Why is this happening?’ Fear can produce anxiety. It can produce a number of reactions, causing some mental health concerns, whether it’s loneliness or isolation. A fear of connecting with other people because you’re fearful for possibly contracting this



virus,” DuPont said.

During this unusual era, being overcome by negative feelings can be prevented by simply changing one’s activities. “I got stressed a little bit, so I took a 15-minute break, and I went out and pulled some weeds just because I needed that physical movement,” DuPont said, adding that one also can offset becoming overwhelmed by “doing the things (needed) to take care of oneself.

“Getting rest, getting sleep, balance your work, talking and engaging in things that we’re passionate about. I’m not telling you anything new – taking care of yourself, balancing your work, connecting with people – these are just reminders,” he said.

Additionally, self-care can include taking walks and making healthy food choices, Parrent said.

“Talking with someone can be a great resource. In my opinion, this is something we are all missing out on. When I was growing up, I used to see my parents and friends all sitting around and talking to one another,” she said. “When we ate meals, we all talked to one another about our days, fears, excitement and problems. Now families rarely eat meals together and even more rarely do they discuss the events of the day.”

Sometimes taking the focus off one’s self can help change one’s outlook.

“Search for meaning and purposeful activities and enjoyments – religious or spiritual activities. Finding ways to give back to those around you or your community. Meditation and mindfulness (as well as) therapy/counseling are some suggestions,” Melton added.



**Not being able to leave your house, having modified school at home, and then, children maybe experiencing, not directly, the frustrations that their parents have of learning how to teach them. All of this is trauma.**

**Valerie Groll**

**TCC South Counselor**

When self-care is not enough, there are resources available to help. For students, counseling is available on each TCC campus as well as online. Faculty and staff also may make referrals to the campus Consultation, Assessment, Resources and Education (CARE) team. TCC faculty and staff this Fall have an additional resource to help them assist students. Groll and fellow counselors at TCC South created a presentation, “Being a Trauma-Informed Campus and Classroom,” scheduled for professional development for Fall 2020 even prior to the current pandemic, she said.

There also is help available for faculty and staff who need help during the current crisis from the Employee Assistance Program. Anyone who becomes overwhelmed and/or experiences feelings of hopelessness should call the National Suicide Prevention hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

The newest statistics from the American Medical Association indicate that depression has tripled since March, and the suicide rate among those age 18 to 24 is the highest it has been in many years. Additionally, the National Alliance on Mental Illness reported that suicide is the second leading cause of death among people 10 to 34 years of age.



“As a therapist, I would always want to start with helping an individual feel like what they’re feeling is normal. We call it ‘normalizing’. Helping them understand what you’re going through or what you’re experiencing is typical for people who are going through this uncertain time,” DuPont said.

After helping the person identify the behavior and “call it what it is,” he said strategies are developed to address their fears and/or feelings. “Even though we’ve normalized behavior, it’s not enough just to say, ‘Oh, what you’re going through is normal.’ Let’s also see what some things are you can do,” DuPont said. “You know when you’re grieving, you still want to be able to talk with someone, or you want to be heard.”

Groll said normalizing helps to validate feelings and experiences.



**One of the things we need to do is to give ourselves permission to exist, be and feel. Additionally, not only grant that permission to yourself, but to your family, friends and colleagues. Again, realize that what it looks like to you — it may not look like to them. One of the greatest things we can do is to be gracious and merciful. Knowing, together, that we can make it.**

**Valerie Groll**  
TCC South Counselor

“So, when we start (to help) somebody understand what happened and the emotional impact, we are empowering people to access their coping skills while helping them to understand current challenges,” she said.

“I think another one of the things that’s important is that we realize we are not victims. We’re survivors. It’s powerful in the words that we use. (If we) consider ourselves victims, then we (are) going to carry ourselves that way. We’re survivors,” Groll said. “If you’re a victim, something has been done to you – this has happened to you – so it’s a whole lot harder to recover from that. When you’re a survivor, you’re a part of something that happened.”

Anyone struggling with challenges as a result of trauma and other mental health issues should not expect an overnight cure.

“Being that we are dealing with emotions and feelings... this will not be a perfect science. It does not mean you touch base one, base two and base three and boom, I’ve gotten that one done. It is often possible to get in a place and stay a while. You could progress to the next one

and then perhaps regress. It’s not going to look the same for everyone,” Groll said. “One of the things we need to do is to give ourselves permission to exist, be and feel. Additionally, not only grant that permission to yourself, but to your family, friends and colleagues. Again, realize that what it looks like to you — it may not look like to them. One of the greatest things we can do is to be gracious and merciful. Knowing, together, that we can make it.”



### **Resources Available**

Counseling for Students:

**<https://www.tccd.edu/services/support-services/counseling/>**

Employee Assistance Program for Faculty and Staff:

**<https://www.tccd.edu/services/support-services/counseling/>**

United Way of Tarrant County 2-1-1 Resource Directory for the Community: **<https://www.unitedwaytarrant.org/2-1-1/>**



# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

## COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEPING SUCCESS WITHIN REACH THROUGH REMOTE DELIVERY OF COURSES

**T**arrant County College (TCC) recognizes that the Spring and Summer 2020 terms did not take place in the way many envisioned. While the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters are and will be much the same, the College expects students to be engaged, albeit, virtually. Friends, classmates and colleagues have not seen one another except through a computer screen; the once bustling campuses lay still and teaching and learning have found a new form as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Spring 2020 semester had its challenges, TCC was able to work collaboratively to ensure that teaching and learning shifted seamlessly to remote delivery. TCC faculty pivoted on a dime from face-to-face instruction to remote delivery of most courses. A key piece of this virtual learning shift involved faculty members honing their skills. Outside of teaching for Connect Campus, many faculty members were not familiar with teaching their courses predominantly online. Faculty spend years perfecting the design of their courses face-to-face, but suddenly found themselves needing to rethink their teaching strategies and adapt to a new teaching and learning modality.

The Center for Teaching and Learning, TCC Connect and Information Technology supported — through the strategic lens of the College's Integrated Instructional Learning Environments (IILE) Advisory Panel — and TCC's faculty worked to bridge knowledge gaps around remote teaching strategies through the curation of a robust faculty resource area. This resource area helped faculty to empower themselves

and their students to be successful in this unprecedented time. Faculty learned very quickly the advantages of utilizing the power of both asynchronous (online interactivity provided in a flexible timeframe to account for the schedule of the learner) and synchronous (real-time, face-to-face interaction online) teaching. Faculty went above and beyond to ensure the quality of teaching would not wane amidst this pandemic.

Many faculty members adapted easily to these remote teaching strategies. They jumped at the opportunity to utilize interactivity with technology, which took the form of virtual polls and discussion boards, to name a few. Faculty maintained many traditional active and engaged classroom strategies such as scaffolding, writing to learn and problem-based learning. TCC faculty also worked exceptionally well at setting classroom norms and expectations from the beginning to ensure participation, engagement and success were not compromised and open communication was maintained to support uncertain students through the remainder of the semester.

In anticipation of the coming academic continuity concerns, training for Blackboard, TCC's online Learning Management System (LMS), was provided College-wide for faculty who needed to learn more about the LMS and its features in the week after Spring Break. Simultaneously, employees learned more about how to virtually meet and collaborate with colleagues via Microsoft Teams, which was named the College's official remote working collaboration tool for all employees on March 19, 2020. Faculty continued





# TO TURN VIRTUAL!

By Caitlin Graves and James Gills  
The Center for Teaching & Learning

to grow their own knowledge base of educational technology to encourage student success beyond the physical classroom.

Additionally, TCC Connect faculty and instructional designers provided expertise and guidance in assisting faculty to move curriculum and course materials into an online environment under the guidance and direction of the IILE Advisory Panel. With a campus dedicated to online learning, TCC was able to provide support and tailored subject matter knowledge to assist more “traditional” faculty during the shift to online learning. TCC Connect faculty collaborated with their faculty peers to develop innovative ways to utilize online tools to maintain the same level of collaboration, rigor and interaction that students experience in a face-to-face classroom.

Focusing on student support also was vital as the College moved to a remote environment. Students were met with the challenge that while previously, they were in face-to-face classes with easily access to resources, they were now isolated from academic support, valuable resources and other lifelines housed on the campuses. TCC’s Learning Commons principle, along with Academic Support Labs and Academic Affairs, made it possible to adapt TCC resources, providing these support labs, tutoring, supplemental instruction and library services remotely to fill this gap. In order to bridge the digital divide, TCC secured and loaned approximately 1,000 LTE tablets to students to finish the Spring semester strong.

Throughout the Summer 2020 term, TCC continued to refine its processes to be even better prepared to support students as it prepared for remote instruction in the Fall and now, Spring

2021. Though the campuses appeared quiet, work continued on many fronts. Academic Advising and support continued online, and triage support was made available in person at each campus that reopened at reduced capacity on July 7, 2020. Teaching Touchstone videos, “Shine a Light,” produced by faculty for faculty and endorsed, by the IILE principle, highlighted those faculty going above and beyond to support their students, as well as provide tips on remote teaching strategies for their colleagues.

Microsoft Teams training continued to promote communication between employees working from home and faculty and students learning remotely. Even the College for Kids summer program moved forward using a new approach to reach future TCC students using Google Classroom and online videos designed to keep students engaged. The Senior Education program also has adapted its strategies for teaching in Fall 2020 and beyond. Courses are being offered in a remote capacity, with senior instructors working diligently to refine their technological skills to provide their courses in this new modality.

Spring 2020 challenged TCC to dig deep and work together to meet the College’s three goals of One College that is Student Ready and able to Serve the Community. While the pandemic required entirely new thinking and the rapid deployment of new strategies and resources in record time, these efforts helped TCC and the community engage in a different way and illustrated that no matter what, TCC always puts “Success Within Reach” for its constituents.



## Succeeding in Online Courses Using Wearable Technology



## EDUCATORS SEE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS THAT PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

By Alma Martinez-Egger, Assistant to the President, TCC Connect

**S**ucceeding in the online environment is a broad topic with tremendous implications. One perspective that college leaders debate is educational technology: how can students leverage technology, and what technology do they need to succeed in online courses?

Just look at students holistically, and it is apparent they are on the move with work, family, friends, financial obligations and college. Educators and administrators must parse this movement to understand where and how online education can be more accessible to students so they can succeed, even while on the move. New technologies can help support students to reach success on their academic journeys.

When TCC implemented the virtual campus — TCC Connect — for the College, it was quick to identify student support services as paramount to the success of its students.

“From online readiness assessment to online student orientation, and from tutoring services to online advising, the people who deliver these services provide our students with the necessary encouragement and ‘scaffolding’ to progress through their degree or certificate programs,” said TCC Connect President Carlos Morales.

So, what are students carrying as they move through their days? Technology is on them and with them — “wearable technology.” The notion that wearable technology is only for fashion is no longer valid. Echoing these thoughts about technology, Emory Craig and Maya Georgieva say it best: “Higher education needs to explore and innovate technological student success strategies. We should encourage educators to use wearable technology like smartwatches, fitness gadgets, biometric electronics, technologically enhanced glasses, smart rings, smart necklaces and, wearable video devices, to create mobile learning environments for their students.”

The benefits of wearable technology are endless. First, these wearable technologies empower students to expand their learning experiences, giving instructors endless possibilities to connect with their students. Fast-paced students have increased access to their online learning higher education by utilizing wearable technology, allowing them to engage in their studies while on the move.

How would the use of one of wearable technology help students navigate support services? Here is an example. While shopping for groceries, a student remembers a

lesson in her Marketing course that she could complete while shopping. The assignment is to find a product with unique marketing, take a picture and upload it to the Blackboard assignment area. She finds a product, takes the picture with her smartwatch and uploads it to the assignment. The second part of the task is to conduct a critical analysis of the product’s marketing effectiveness.

The student uses her smartwatch to record her thoughts and will type the notes later. This student was on the move grocery shopping for her family and used her wearable technology to begin an online course assignment.

Another example of how students wear technology in online class happens in Kinesiology. All students are required to wear a Fitbit-style tracking device so instructors can monitor their students’ physical activity. Each student purchases, then wears the device to record his or her activities; this information then is provided to the course instructor. All the students’ data is fed into a centralized data base so faculty can see all students in one location. Since the student owns the device, they know how to track their own physical activity data to keep them fit and healthy once they have completed the class. Students using wearable technology can create innovative educational experiences that give them the learning edge to succeed in their courses.

One viable way to succeed in an online course is to utilize wearable technology for class assignments. The student moves quickly from one life obligation to another; therefore, leveraging technology that helps them stay on the move can increase their chances of success. This innovative method for completing an online assignment is as easy as a tap, swipe, click, record and upload. All these actions can be completed with wearable technology to engage and succeed in an online college course.

Leveraging teaching and learning through wearable technology can help faculty members align the student learning outcomes with assignments. Innovative instruction can boost student motivation to peel back the layers of curriculum concepts and theories, study them using the wearable technology and develop a deeper understanding of the course material.

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For information regarding TCC Connect, the College’s virtual campus, visit:

**<https://inside.tccd.edu/connect-campus/>**

# Helping Children Manage Through

## VALUABLE TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

Uncertainty, stress and anxiety in children is not limited to a pandemic, a sudden change in their school or negative events in our world. According to Dr. Robert Scaer, author of *The Body Bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, and Disease*, trauma can result from “any negative life event that occurs in a position of relative helplessness.”

When it comes to a child’s development, reaction to stress, anxiety and life’s uncertainty can present in myriad ways and can range from the obvious and consolable to the internal and detrimental. Adults all have dealt with degrees of worry, burden, concern and even trauma during 2020. How do we help children through these difficult times, when we are not sure how to deal with them ourselves?

### GET BACK TO THE BASICS

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs suggests that humans must have air, food, water, rest, health, shelter and safety before our brains will allow us to engage in higher level thinking skills. That doesn’t mean that if we are hungry, we can’t find our keys or solve a problem at work, but our bodies are made to take care of our physical well-being first. Problems become more challenging when we don’t have adequate housing or are in chronic pain.

### PUT YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST

For those who have listened to the airline safety speech given by flight attendants, they always say, “In the unlikely event of a loss in pressure in the cabin, oxygen masks will be released. Be sure to secure your own mask before helping those around you.” What? Shouldn’t I help others, before I help myself? Typically, that is a good rule of thumb, but if you are running out of oxygen, you are no good to anyone and can be more of a problem.

In the midst of a pandemic, while an adult may be managing joblessness, loss of income, food insecurity, constant concern about becoming ill or actually being

ill, children are looking to the adults they respect to see how they should act and react. Be sure to take care of *you*. Regularly, take a moment to breathe deeply. Don’t forget to do things that are fun.

Adults need to model behaviors that not only will show children how to survive during stress and trauma, but become stronger on the back side of it all.

It is most important to engage children in healthy eating, getting plenty of sleep (the younger the child, the more sleep they need) and exercise or purposeful movement every day. Go on walks and play.

What should you play? Ask your child, “What would you like to play?” Get away from screens — yes, all of them — as well as the news and just focus on the children in your life. Do what they want to do and say “yes” as much as possible. Children have so little control over their lives, even on a good day, so giving them real choices and saying “yes” whenever we can will make a lifetime of difference to them. They feel heard, they feel respected, and they feel like they belong — another one of Maslow’s basics.

### TALK ABOUT SITUATIONS WHEN YOU ARE NOT “IN” THE SITUATION

If you and your child witness a customer yelling at a store employee because something is out of stock, analyze that situation later, once you have left the store. Instead of judging the customer or the employee, ask your child, “What did you think happened there?” “How do you think the employee felt by being yelled at?” “How do you think the customer was feeling?” “What could the customer have done differently?” “What could the employee have done differently?” Not being personally involved in the situation, it is easier to analyze it and apply the knowledge. This practice helps strengthen the child’s social, emotional and cognitive skills and helps them to consider another’s perspective.

When we see others’ perspectives, we are more likely to help them.



# Uncertainty, Stress and Anxiety

By Lisa Self, Assistant Professor, Child Development and Education

## TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO VOLUNTEER

Another way to help children is to move the focus from ourselves and our situation. Children can help neighbors or family members. Many non-profits allow children to serve if they are with an adult. Even and especially during the pandemic, non-profits need many hands to help those they serve. Helping and learning from others, and thereby experiencing that intrinsic feeling of satisfaction from giving time and effort, can do much for the soul and help redirect fear and worry.

If children, or adults, reach the point when the worry and anxiety overwhelm everyday activities, help is available through professionals who specialize in helping children and/or adults through mental health issues.

For more information about mental health services for children, visit:

**MHMR of Tarrant County at <https://mhmtarrant.org>**

**The Parenting Center at <https://theparentingcenter.org>**

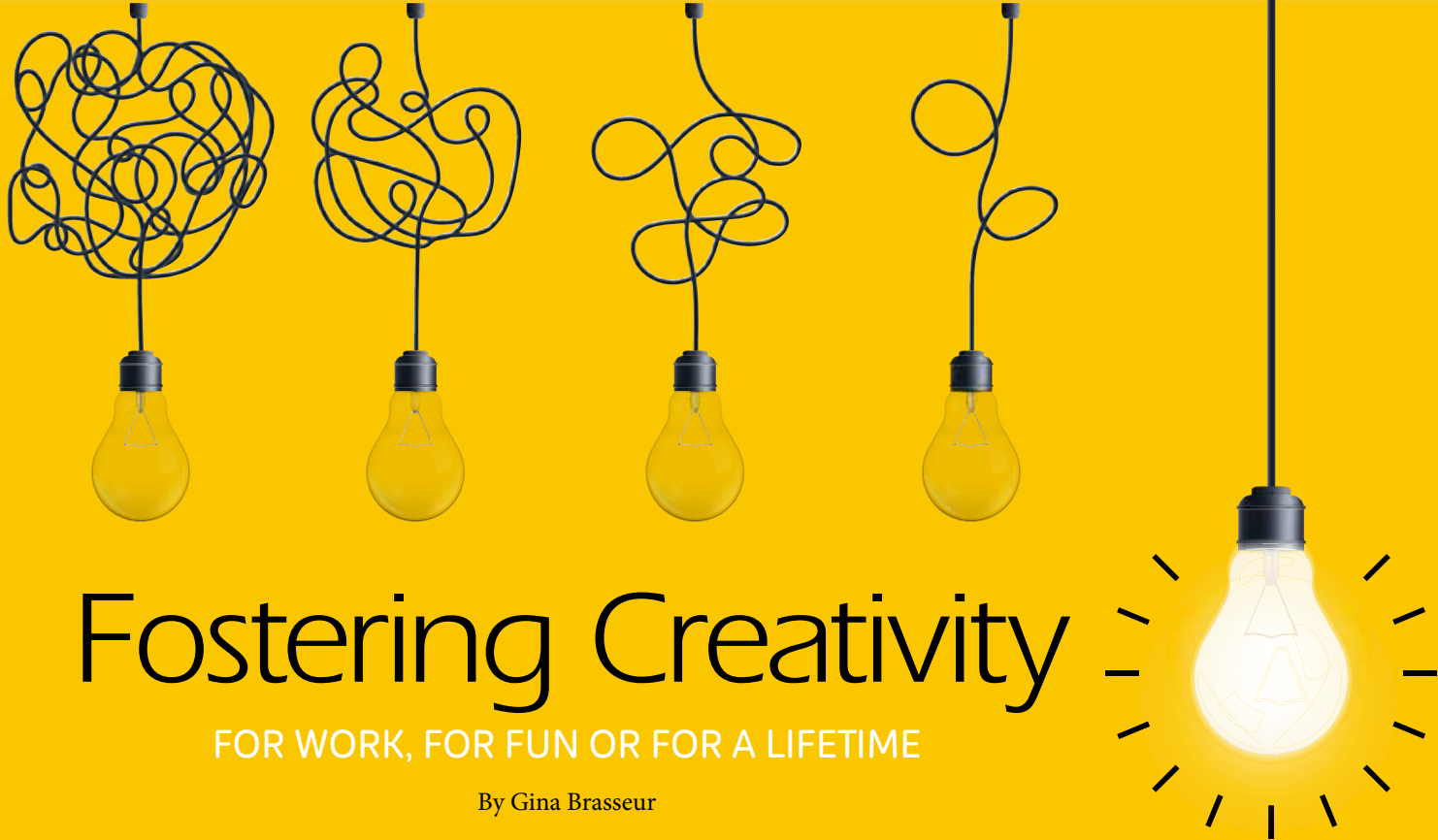
**First 3 Years at <https://first3yearstx.org>**



Adults need to model behaviors that not only will show children how to survive during stress and trauma, but become stronger on the back side, of it all.

Lisa Self  
Assistant Professor,  
Child Development and Education





# Fostering Creativity

FOR WORK, FOR FUN OR FOR A LIFETIME

By Gina Brasseur

Ask 10 people to define the word *creativity* and you'll likely get 10 different answers, most of which would include visual arts, music or design. But creativity encompasses more than just the traditional creative arts. Without it, the world may not have bridges, the gas combustion engine or even personal computers. Creativity is one of the most critical characteristics a person can develop and at TCC, students can find virtually unlimited opportunities to foster this important personal and professional asset.

## IMAGINATION FOUNDATION

Fostering Brain Development

In one way or another, everyone is creative — it is hardwired into the brain. “People are naturally predisposed to logical thinking or creative thinking, but everyone has the ability to learn and grow in all areas of thinking,” said Caroline Hamilton, director of academic technology at TCC. “Your brain is an extremely dynamic structure that’s evolving all the time.”

Watching how children play is a prime example. A pile of blocks becomes an imaginary tower or an empty box becomes a rocket ship. But as children grow, research shows they often lose that spark of imagination. A research project that originated more than 50 years ago gave children a simple problem and asked them to find a creative solution. Ninety-eight percent of five-year-olds scored in the genius level for creativity. Ten years later, only 12 percent of those same children scored at a genius level.

Creativity is very valuable for developing the brain.

“The ability to explore your creative brain is on the spectrum of critical thinking,” said Hamilton. “Creativity is an outward expression of how you create an enriched environment around you to explore, to think, to process. Enrichment and exposure to new and novel environments at the cellular level causes dramatic changes in how cells in the brain connect with one another. It is a change that helps to set the stage for greater potential for learning and processing of information over a lifetime.”

## VOCATION AMBITION

Fostering Success in Work & Life

In 1970, the Apollo 13 mission to the moon suffered a catastrophic accident when an oxygen tank exploded and destroyed part of the ship. Mission control quickly scrapped the mission and turned their focus to getting the astronauts home safely.

Without oxygen in the Service Module section of the ship, the astronauts had to be sealed into the Lunar Module section. The Lunar Module had enough oxygen, but the carbon dioxide filters weren’t designed to support three people for the four-day trip home. Without a creative solution to retrofit CO2 filters from another part of the ship, the astronauts would have died.

Even in a highly technical piece of machinery like a spaceship, life and death literally depended on creativity.

Creativity in problem solving is one of the most important job skills a person can have, according to LinkedIn Learning. TCC Computer Science professor Tyson McMillan says even in a career as seemingly cut and dried as computer





programming, there are many opportunities for creativity. “Thirty students in my class will give me a slightly different path to the same solution,” he said. “As long as they all arrive at the same destination, that is what matters most.”

Skills used in complex projects can apply to almost any area of life. “Programming is an interdisciplinary field. All people can learn from breaking larger projects or problems into smaller, logical pieces. This is how we train programmers to think,” McMillan said.

Hamilton agrees. “You’re thinking critically through the problem that has to be solved and providing a creative solution to that problem.”

## INSPIRATION & RELAXATION

### Fostering a Peaceful Soul

No matter the medium, creativity is an outlet of self.

“People often think they have to be talented or spend a lot of money to create,” said Danelle Toups, assistant director of library services at TCC Trinity River. “That is simply not true! You can grab a piece of paper and watch origami videos online. You can put dirt into a bowl and plant tomato seeds from your salad. You can read eBooks from the library about almost any activity you choose.”

Every March, several of the TCC libraries host a National Craft Month celebration for students, faculty and staff. In past years, they’ve featured hands-on sessions for fiber arts, jewelry making, paper crafts and sewing.

“We love to learn from and collaborate with one another. When makers work together, we create something that is so much better than any of them could have created alone,” according to Toups.

At TCC South, *Script Magazine* — a yearly collection of student writings, art and photography — has been published since 1986. Faculty editor for *Script*, Logen Cure, has spearheaded the project for six years. Each year, upwards of 200 pieces are submitted for inclusion in the magazine.

“Our campus is home to so many talented students, and *Script* is a unique opportunity for those voices to be celebrated,” said Cure. “We use it to connect, to question, to document, to imagine, to resist. The 2020 issue of *Script* is very dark, grappling with grief, desire, death and ever-shifting perceptions of reality. It also documents the profound strength, courage and resilience of our community.”

Cure’s students also edit, create, publish and distribute the magazine. “My student editors are immensely dedicated people who take utmost care in reflecting the TCC South community back to itself,” she said. “Creativity is empowering and, in my experience, students do their best when they feel that their voices and their lives matter.”

Toups agrees. “[Creators] are more self-sufficient,” she said. “We are used to figuring out solutions to problems, which translates to a sense of pride and accomplishment. These traits carry over into all aspects of life. There is nothing better than being able to reply to a compliment by saying, ‘Thanks! I made it!’”

Whether it is organizing a closet, creating an algorithm or taking a mental health vacation, creativity is ingrained in almost every aspect of life.

To foster your creativity at TCC for work, for fun or for a lifetime, explore the more than 1,200 classes that are available. Start your adventure: <https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/>.









# THE ESSENTIALS OF BEING ESSENTIAL

## PREPARING FOR THE NEW NORMAL

By Brian Melton

**T**he economic uncertainty unleashed by the Coronavirus pandemic continues to devastate the work world in ways that were unthinkable at the beginning of the year. American jobless rates have skyrocketed to levels unseen since the Great Depression. Many industries are struggling to regain a sense of normalcy amid confusion about when and how to ensure safe reopenings.

The big question: What does “essential” employment look like, both during COVID-19 and the eventual post-crisis recovery? Will a jobseeker’s current skills be enough, or will new occupations call for additional training?

“Many answers will depend on the progression of the global pandemic and the response of consumers, businesses and governments,” says Judith Gallagher, vice president for academic affairs at TCC Northwest. “And while we don’t know how long this will last, there are opportunities for those willing to adapt current skills or learn new ones. And it doesn’t take years.”

Say “hello” to TCC’s CTE (Career and Technical Education) offerings. More than 40 of TCC’s 100-plus programs take 12 months or fewer to achieve certification and credentialing, both online and in learning environments that conform to CDC and OSHA safety recommendations.

Let’s look at how several CTE programs are helping workers get from under-employed to “essential” in record time.

### HEALTH CARE

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that health care accounts for about 11 percent of the economy and will grow 14 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations. That translates into nearly 1.9

million new jobs, more than any other occupational group.

“Health care is an essential, dynamic and opportunity-rich industry with virtually unlimited opportunity,” says Joseph Cameron, dean of health sciences at TCC Trinity River Campus East. “Demand for improved outcomes, affordability, quality and access will continue to be high. We’re really helping make a powerful difference in people’s lives.”

Making a difference is at the core of TCC’s 34 health care training programs. Specialties include dietician, dental hygiene, anesthesia technology, sonography, nursing, nuclear medicine, tomography and much more.

For those looking for a fast start, the Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) program is the way to go.

“Medical assistants crosstrain in both administrative and clinical duties,” says Miguel Gonzalez, medical assistant program director. “The work includes scheduling appointments, updating and filing patient medical records, coding insurance forms, taking medical histories, explaining treatment procedures, performing basic lab tests, even drawing blood and taking electrocardiograms, among many other functions. It makes for a busy and fulfilling day.”

Admission requirements are simple: a high school diploma or GED, prior CPR training and vaccination records. The program accepts about 30 applicants each year and requires a nine-month commitment, from fall to spring. Training includes both online classroom instruction and face-to-face lab work (done under strict CDC guidelines). Classes are held Friday through Sunday, with two days per week dedicated to clinical internships, over a 20-week period.

Along with providing instruction, Gonzalez coordinates clinical experience internships for students at one of nearly 30 partner organizations, including



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Working as a first responder is one of the most noble career paths a person can follow. They're the modern-day Supermen and Wonder Women because they make a profound difference in people's lives. Seeing the effort and love they put into their work is truly humbling.

**Sonya Brown**  
Divisional Dean for Public Services and  
Social & Behavioral Sciences

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JPS, Clinicas Mi Doctor locations, North Texas Area Community Health Centers and other local facilities. He adds that medical assistant jobs pay around \$16 to \$19 an hour and sometimes more, depending on experience.

"The program helped me get into the medical field quickly," says Krystal Shelton, a CMA at AFC Urgent Care in Southlake. "So quickly, in fact, that I was hired during my clinical rotation! I'm now also performing electrocardiograms and phlebotomy. I'm really thankful to have been part of the program."

"The TCC medical assistant students are well trained, enthusiastic and extremely helpful at our clinic and especially to our patients," says Lori Kennedy, health services director at Fort Worth's Cornerstone Assistance Network. "We're glad and grateful to have them here."

"Employment prospects are outstanding," Gonzalez says. "Ninety-eight percent of our graduates find jobs right away. And it's a great stepping stone to other health care disciplines. The sky's the limit, really."

#### **FIRST RESPONDERS – POLICE, FIREFIGHTERS, EMTS AND PARAMEDICS**

"Working as a first responder is one of the most noble career paths a person can follow," says Sonya Brown, divisional dean for public services and social and behavioral sciences. "They're the modern-day Supermen and Wonder Women because they make a profound difference in people's lives. Seeing the effort and love they put into their work is truly humbling."

And becoming a real-life superhero doesn't take as long as most people might think.

"We conduct six police academies every year, or one every two months, and class sizes range from 10 to 30 students," says Rafael Perea, interim director of the Criminal Justice Training Center at TCC Northwest. Students must pass stringent requirements including a 2,000-meter rowing fitness test, medical exams, written

test components and an extensive background check.

Perea says that de-escalation and multiculturalism, as well as practical applications of the law, are built into the curriculum and include blocks of mandatory scenarios with verbal scale-downs as well as appropriate use of force. "We also bring in retired officers and former military personnel to address cultural sensitivities with compassion," he says.

He's also seeing more diverse applicants. "About a third to a half are women," he says. Minority ethnicities represent about 40 to 60 percent of all applicants.

He adds that most students, between 70 to 90 percent, already have been hired and their tuition is paid from departmental budgets. Potential salaries range from \$45 to \$60K per year.

"Firefighting is a great way to start a new career," says Steve Keller, director of the Fire Services Training Center at TCC Northwest. "A semester of basic firefighting classes, for 24 students, leads to the state firefighter licensing exam and certification. It's a minimal commitment for a lifetime career."

He also notes that live training at TCC's state-of-the-art Fire Academy facility features real-world scenarios and has been retooled for safety during the pandemic.

"Sponsoring agencies are always looking for diversity in the hiring pool, and we're seeing great strides in recruiting females and bilingual people," Keller says. "In fact, our last class graduated four women. And if you're a paramedic, that's the golden ticket -- you're in."

Rewards are impressive. Salaries for rookie firefighters start between \$40 to \$50K and rise to \$70 to \$75K in four or five years. Benefits are uniformly excellent. The State of Texas will waive tuition for many degrees. And, the flexible schedules (24 hours on, 48 hours off) mean firefighters also can run small businesses.

"What a great ride!" says Nathaniel Soroka, class captain for TCC's Fire Academy July 2020. "From our





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With so many things being imported, even the big guys are scrambling to coordinate people, facilities and products to satisfy customer demand, which translates into opportunities for our students.

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**James “Clint” Grant**  
Divisional Dean for Logistics  
at TCC Northwest

initial days, when we learned how to put on our gear, to our final week when we put out real fires, our instructors set us up for success to be the best firefighters we could be. And we had a blast doing it! The Coronavirus changed how we learned, but we adapted and still met the standards demanded of us. As firefighters, that’s what we have to do – take what’s given to us and make the best of it. We wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“The fellowship, camaraderie and excitement aren’t available elsewhere,” says Keller. “Plus, there’s no higher calling than helping people when they need it.”

That higher calling also applies to the fields of EMTs (emergency medical technicians) and paramedics.

“Becoming an EMT is a 16-week process of campus classes and 80 hours of clinical experience at local hospitals,” says Bryan Ericson, associate professor and interim director of TCC Northeast’s Emergency Medical Services Program.

Students then take the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician certification exam and apply to the Texas Department of State Health Services for Texas EMT Certification.

Training to be a paramedic builds on EMT training but requires a full 16-month commitment. “Think of a paramedic as advanced, out-of-hospital emergency care,” says Ericson. “EMT training provides the foundation to learn more advanced techniques, which means that a paramedic can save lives in complicated situations where EMT training might not be enough.”

TCC offers three EMT classes of 36 students each Fall and Spring semester, for a total of 108 students per year. Two classes are offered during Summer. Ericson says veterans are prime candidates and job prospects are excellent: rookie EMTs can expect to earn \$25 to \$26K a year, while paramedics can make \$40 to \$42K. But those numbers can escalate quickly thanks to overtime opportunities.

There’s also plenty of room for advancement. “A lot of EMTs and paramedics branch off into other health professions such as nursing and other specialty areas,” he says. “If you’ve worked as an EMT or a paramedic, providers are definitely interested in you.”

“I spoke with many knowledgeable people before I made my choice about which school to attend,” says paramedic student Kacie Harlan. “Every single person recommended TCC because they’re well respected for going above and beyond. I haven’t looked back once!”

“We really like TCC students,” says Heath Stone, assistant operations manager for Fort Worth-based Medstar Mobile Healthcare. “We’ve had many student internships, and we keep an eye out for them when jobs open up. They’re disciplined, confident, educated and well-prepared for industry challenges.”

## **LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SCM)**

Frustrated by the sudden dearth of paper products, sanitizers and household disinfectants? Who wasn’t?

But there’s opportunity in frustration.

“Mention ‘logistics’ to someone and their eyes just glaze over,” chuckles James “Clint” Grant, divisional dean for Logistics at TCC Northwest. “It’s a big, broad term that encompasses the details that go into coordinating the complex operations behind getting products from point A to point B quickly, correctly and in one piece. And right now, there’s a big spotlight on its importance.”

With many retail outlets shuttered, online shopping has surged, turning home delivery of virtually everything from a nice-to-have convenience into a must-have necessity. And while click-and-buy looks easy, the processes behind delivering your new drapes are anything but.

Giants like Wal-Mart and Amazon are old pros at this game. “But with so many things being imported,



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The pandemic is sweeping away resistance to living and working online. But this unexpected surge of worldwide traffic is taxing the infrastructure to its limits. Companies are desperate to hire well-trained networking people to build capacity.

Carol Merchant

Department CO-Chair for Computer Science &  
Information Technology at TCC Northwest

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even the big guys are scrambling to coordinate people, facilities and products to satisfy customer demand, which translates into opportunities for our students,” Grant says.

“We’re receiving lots of phone calls and emails indicating interest in our courses,” adds Michael Esquivel, department chair of Logistics and Supply Chain Management. “How companies adapt to product shortages and shipping disruptions are suddenly real-world topics, not theoretical.”

As an adaptation example, he points to distilleries adding sanitizer to their production lines. “This means employment opportunities in purchasing, production, quality control, transportation and distribution that didn’t exist just six months ago,” he says. “But switching is easier said than done. It’s a class topic with important ramifications, especially now.”

The rewards of those ramifications can be substantial. After completion of the two-year program (60 hours), students can expect annual starting salaries in the \$40 to \$45K range, with plenty of upward mobility. But even with Level 1 certification (15 hours) in Transportation Management and Warehouse Management, students can expect to earn around \$35K annually, along with fast advancement.

“The program really helped me understand the value of effective work-flow processes in a fast-paced environment,” says Abigail Ransaw, a process assistant for Amazon in Fort Worth. “I’m well-prepared to help provide clarity in my communications with coworkers so that we’re all on the same page, know what the next steps are and why they’re important.”

## COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Stay-at-home orders prompted most offices and schools to adapt their policies so that workers and students could telecommute. As noted above, that led to an upsurge in

online demand for, well, everything.

“The pandemic is sweeping away resistance to living and working online,” says Carol Merchant, department co-chair for Computer Science & Information Technology at TCC Northeast. “But this unexpected surge of worldwide traffic is taxing the infrastructure to its limits. Companies are desperate to hire well-trained networking people to build capacity.”

TCC’s Cisco® Certified Network Associate (CCNA) program provides early-career stepping stones for students. “If you can build a network, they need you now, and that’ll be true next year and the year after and on and on,” she says.

Networking is the bedrock of the IT industry, and Cisco certification is the gold standard for validating networking skills and knowledge. IT professionals who specialize in networking will, more than likely, work in a Cisco environment at some point.

The two-semester CCNA program covers topics including network fundamentals, access protocols, IP connectivity and services, security fundamentals and automation.

“It’s a very rigorous, accelerated curriculum, broken down into four eight-week classes,” Merchant says. “We advise students to only take the Cisco courses during a semester, as it requires in-depth study and hands-on labs to prepare for the exam. Our students don’t just pass the exam; their high scores reflect their commitment to the program and the outstanding faculty who teach it. Employers come to us for new hires and the resumes with CCNA certification jump to the top of the pile.”

Merchant also points out that the CCNA also can lead to more advanced degrees and higher positions such as network administrator and network engineer. Some companies are willing to foot tuition bills in return for retaining and promoting reliable team members. Starting annual salaries can begin in the low to mid-\$50Ks with





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Those who continually upgrade their skills to keep pace with developments in their field will have the best chance of doing well in their career, both with their current employer and when job searching.

Judith Gallagher

Vice president for academic affairs at  
TCC Northwest

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plenty of upward mobility.

“Our own transition to greater online learning demonstrates technology’s powerful impact in our lives,” says Kirsten Cooper, dean of technology, health and business TCC Northeast. “The pandemic is sweeping away resistance to living our lives online. And the world will look much different as a result.”

### CULINARY ARTS

Few fields got slammed harder by the Coronavirus quarantine than food service, which employs an estimated 15 million people, or about 10 percent of the American workforce. According to the National Restaurant Association, the U.S. restaurant business was projected to reach \$899 billion in sales for 2020.

Needless to say, that figure is now likely unattainable. Nevertheless, partial re-openings and online ordering and delivery have helped stem the flow of red ink.

“It might take two years to return to normal,” says Martha Machen, divisional dean for culinary and cybersecurity at TCC Southeast. “But we’re helping students adapt through our online presence. We’re distributing supplies for our labs and doing at-home preparation testing. And while it’s a challenge to find jobs in the field, we haven’t seen any drop in enrollments. After all, people still need to eat.”

Culinary Arts program coordinator Katrina Warner echoes Machen’s sentiments.

“The food service business is resilient,” she says. “Despite restrictions and shutdowns, people are accustomed to not preparing meals at home, so they have to go out to keep families going. In particular, first responders don’t have time to cook. This situation has really opened my eyes as to how vital and essential our industry is.”

Warner says that even one semester (18 hours) in the TCC Culinary Arts program helps students get in the door

faster through certification, which gives students a leg up on pay (typically \$14 to \$17 per hour) over those who may have experience but lack certification.

“The biggest misconception is that if you’re not a chef, you’re not going anywhere,” she says. “Employers want people who can handle multiple duties in different areas: how a dining room works, cost control, operations management. This line of work requires self-starters, people with initiative, drive and the willingness to work long hours. With certification and a solid work ethic, people can go far in good times or bad.”

“The culinary program has been a blessing to me,” says student Britt Culp. “I’ve always had a strong passion as a ‘mom’ cook and know my way around the kitchen pretty well. The classes perfected my skills. And I absolutely adore my professors! They’re always there to encourage me and cheer me on.”

### CONTINUOUS LEARNING – THE MOST IMPORTANT ADAPTATION SKILL

Regardless of how long the economic recovery takes and what the new normal might look like, there’s one constant in good times as well as not-so-good: keeping one’s skills sharp.

“Those who continually upgrade their skills to keep pace with developments in their field will have the best chance of doing well in their career, both with their current employer and when job searching,” concludes Gallagher. “With more than 100 programs, we’re ready to help people enhance their current skills or learn new ones to improve their hireability and job satisfaction. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

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For more information about TCC’s programs that enable students to achieve the credential they need for essential careers in 12 months or fewer, visit: [tccd.edu/42ways](https://tccd.edu/42ways).

# Step Up. Step Out. Step Ahead.

## TCC PREPARES WOMEN TO SHATTER STEREOTYPES IN NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS

By Reginald Lewis and Jody Wasson

Imagine a helicopter pilot. How about an automotive technician or cybersecurity expert? Did you envision a man in those roles? Most people do — and not without reason. These are some of the “hot” jobs featured on the U.S Department of Labor’s list of non-traditional jobs for women. A non-traditional career for women is one in which 25 percent or fewer of those employed in the field are female, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Believe it or not, more than 100 occupations fall into this category.

For the first time since 2010, women outnumber men in the U.S. workforce, yet they still face challenges. Tarrant County College, one of the region’s top economic generators, is doing its part to change the narrative for women in the Dallas-Fort Worth area by empowering them to become difference-makers in several industries. If local businesses don’t understand the importance of women in the workplace, they truly are missing out.

Meet five TCC alumnae who are forging ahead in their respective careers, shattering stereotypes along the way:

### PEDAL TO THE METAL

“I enjoy working in the shop listening to the hustle and bustle of the air tools, lifts going up and down,” said Jennifer Kite, who works closely with Automotive Technology students as the learning lab manager at TCC South. “I like the idea of everyone working toward a common goal, which encourages others to learn and grow.”

When Kite isn’t providing tips to students trying to improve their skills, she’s mentoring students participating in the Automotive Technology Club.

Kite always knew she would work in the automotive





industry. She remembers listening to her mother's colorful stories about working in quality control for Painless Performance, an automotive wiring harness and electrical components producer in Fort Worth. After high school, Kite spent 14 years working at Painless Performance, eventually rising to plant manager.

In 2014, Kite decided to "broaden her horizons in the automotive industry," by joining the Automotive Technology Department at TCC South. After a few months on the job, Kite enrolled in the Automotive Technology program as a student, sparked by a passion for becoming a talented technician.

"Working for TCC during the day and going to classes at night made for very long days. I didn't mind, though," explained Kite. "I truly enjoy all the automotive instructors, students and curriculum, so spending the extra time at TCC made for some great experiences. Working for TCC and taking automotive classes has given me a unique perspective to share with current and future automotive students."

Understanding that women in skilled trades such as automotive technology are in high demand, Kite went on to earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in Automotive Technology in 2019. Although juggling work and school responsibilities may have been challenging, the support of her male co-workers made the road a lot smoother to navigate.

"My male colleagues always have treated me with respect. I am very fortunate to work with a great bunch of guys," Kite added. "I do know that is not always the case for women working in the automotive field. So, I try not to take my co-workers for granted."

With fewer than three percent of all automotive technicians being women, there are great opportunities for

women to enter the industry and flourish.

"More women are needed in this field because they would be great at it," she said enthusiastically. "The automotive field is continuously expanding and needs talented technicians. Although it's not a traditional career path for women, times are changing, and it is a rewarding career to pursue. It is great to be a part of this positive change."

Kite's future plans include working part-time at an automotive dealership while studying to become an ASE Master Technician, an automotive professional who has earned all eight industry certifications offered through the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). Once she achieves this designation, Kite plans to become an adjunct automotive instructor at TCC.

"When it comes to Automotive Technology, there is a common misconception that we are just mechanics," Kite explained. "We are more than that. We utilize technology to diagnose and fix automotive related issues."

In addition to enjoying troubleshooting and solving problems, women interested in automotive technology should have an analytical mind and must be inquisitive, according to Kite. "They also should enjoy working with their hands, and not be afraid to get dirty."

### RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Alma Jauregui enjoys creating works of art in the kitchen. "My favorite thing about working in the culinary industry is the fact that food brings people together," said Jauregui, a 2018 graduate of the Culinary Arts program at TCC Southeast. Growing up, Jauregui learned how to put her heart and soul into cooking while helping her mother cook traditional Mexican cuisine at home.





**Women generally possess strong interpersonal skills, which can be combined with HVAC skills to position them for success in the industry. The rise in female talent is paving the way for women-owned businesses in the U.S.**

**Melissa Chaparro Santillan**  
Associate of Applied Science  
in HVAC Graduate

Jauregui initially planned to attend a San Antonio culinary school, yet her sister suggested attending a community college to save money. What she found at TCC was an accredited program with an award-winning faculty, state-of-the-art facilities and relationships with area employers. A talented cook, Jauregui took advantage of those connections by working part-time for Delaware North at Globe Life Park's Jack Daniels Club for two seasons. Delaware North has a comprehensive partnership with TCC's Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management programs, providing students with a chance to gain real-world experience.

After graduating with honors, she was promoted to full-time corporate pastry chef, responsible for making desserts for fans at the new Rangers ballpark. Although the COVID-19 pandemic delayed her progress for a "season," Jauregui was on track to become the new pastry kitchen supervisor at Globe Life Field. After being sidelined for several months due to the pandemic, she started working in the kitchen at Tiff's Treats in Arlington. "It's no ballpark, but I still get to work around desserts," said Jauregui.

Women typically are associated with being pastry chefs, not executive chefs, according to Helen Sidoti, head chef and head of recipe development for HelloFresh. This makes it hard for some women to break the mold. While professional kitchens are still male-dominated spaces, Jauregui hopes to change that. "More women are needed in this field because we can offer different ideas and perspectives that a man may not have," said Jauregui.

As women's roles in the food industry continue to change, a growing number of women are becoming employed and self-employed in cooking. "For the most part, I've worked with decent male colleagues," Jauregui said. "There have been occasions, though, where I feel like I was treated 'lesser than' because I am a woman. But once I proved that I knew what I was doing, the men treated me more like an equal."

An accomplished cook, Jauregui has dreams of becoming a sous chef and beyond. The median average salary for chefs and head cooks was \$51,530 in 2019, with employment projected to grow 11 percent from 2018 to 2028. However, for women looking to advance in the food industry, it can be difficult to find opportunities. In 2019, only seven percent of head chefs and restaurant owners were women.

"I would like to get rid of the stereotype that women can only work as line cooks and prep cooks," she said. "Women can be sous chefs and executive chefs just like any man. Women just need to be given the chance to excel."





As she ascends, Jauregui is looking forward to working with more women, especially talented graduates from her alma mater. “I have not had a chance to work with any fellow TCC graduates, but I would welcome the opportunity with open arms.”

### COOL OPERATOR

Fixing things has always been in Melissa Chaparro Santillan’s blood. Growing up with two parents working in Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC/R), she was fortunate to ride along and assist on service calls. These confidence-building moments helped Santillan make a smooth transition from Texas Christian University to TCC in 2015 to pursue her passion. It was the right move.

Two years later, Santillan earned her Associate of Applied Science in HVAC from TCC, learning from skilled instructors in the state-of-the-art Center of Excellence for Energy Technology at TCC South. Months before graduation, Santillan joined AC Supply, one of the area’s top wholesale air conditioning suppliers, as a sales rep. Today, she is enjoying her expanded role at the company.

“I work both on the sales side at a wholesale distribution warehouse and in the field doing install and service,” said Santillan. “I really enjoy knowing more about the ins and outs of the industry as a whole going down the supply chain from the manufacturer to the end user. There’s always something new to learn about in both settings. I’ve always been very curious so I’m always up to learning something new, and I get to do that in this field.”

Santillan is doing her best to try to change the face of the industry. Female installers and techs are not very common in the HVAC/R industry, with only 1.4 percent of the 367,900 Americans employed in 2018 as HVAC/R technicians and

installers being women, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average annual salary of most female HVAC technicians is \$45,110.

“I would love to see more women in the industry and more young women going into training and trade programs for this field,” she said. “It will take a long time to see numbers increase and I wish there were a way to fast forward to that point. Personally, I would love to change the general mentality that HVAC has to stay a male dominant field because it certainly doesn’t have to be that way.”

She describes an HVAC/R industry that’s facing a huge personnel deficit, with many contractors aging out and not enough younger people being available to fill those positions. “I think it’s an excellent opportunity not only for younger people, but for women to get into the industry. There are jobs in many different areas from the very beginning of the supply chain, in manufacturing, to the very end of it with homeowners and end users.”

Women generally possess strong interpersonal skills, which can be combined with HVAC skills to position them for success in the industry. The rise in female talent is paving the way for women-owned businesses in the U.S.

So, what are Santillan’s future plans? “I actually just passed the State HVAC Contractor’s exam a few months ago and am now in the process of setting up my own business, D&D AC Service. I’m very excited to continue to grow my career in this way.”

### FLYING HIGH

Japan native Yuno Niwano faced many obstacles — a language barrier and low self-confidence — when she headed to Texas to pursue an aviation technology degree at TCC Northwest, which is home to the Erma C. Johnson Hadley Northwest Center of Excellence for Aviation, Transportation





**The one thing I like most about my job is that you will never fly the exact same flight. Even if you are flying in the same area, it will be with a different student or passenger, in varying weather conditions and different maneuvers will be performed. No flight will be the same. It has been more than three years since my very first flight lesson, but this joy of flying never gets old.**

**Yuno Niwano**  
Certified Instructor for  
Florida-based Tomlinson  
Aviation Aviation Technology  
Graduate at TCC Northwest

& Logistics (CEATL). Although her dream ultimately was to become a news helicopter pilot, it wasn't her first choice.

After graduating from high school in Japan, Niwano decided to pursue a career in the fashion industry. However, her first tour flight in a helicopter shifted her career path 180 degrees. "I felt a tingling sensation run up and down my body at the moment of take-off, and I knew that would be the career that I should seek," said Niwano. "I didn't know anything about helicopters before I started my flight training, so I had no idea this would be the most challenging thing that I've ever accomplished in my life."

Interestingly, Niwano believes her lack of knowledge about the field actually allowed her to jump right in without any fear. She seemed more concerned about her limited English-speaking skills.

"It seemed like this language barrier really delayed my progress throughout the courses," Niwano said. "Although being an international female helicopter pilot really made me stand out at the CEATL campus, I felt lucky at the same time because it was easy for me to make new friends at TCC. I wouldn't have been able to make it this far without help from all my friends and faculty at TCC. I can't wait to see all of my pilot friends accomplishing more and more, and to keep up with them."

Currently, Niwano is a certified instructor for Florida-based Tomlinson Aviation, where she helps students prepare for a checkride — the final exam for pilots. Since her company doesn't have designated ground instructors, Niwano teaches ground lessons and practical training. "In one-on-one lessons, we discuss aviation regulations, aerodynamics, human factors and aircraft systems; pretty much everything that's crucial to be a safe pilot," said Niwano.

Her short-term goal is to become an Electronic News Gathering (ENG) pilot and fly for a news company. The average salary for an ENG pilot is \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually, with pilots typically getting paid weekly. "It's going to be an 'on-demand job,' meaning I will need to stay close to an airport and stay alert for calls to cover breaking news stories."

Her long-term goal is to help invigorate the helicopter industry in Japan. "It's not a popular way of transportation due to the limited number of helicopter pilots and aircrafts," Niwano explained. Japan is not a big country, so she believes the industry has great potential for development.

As for being a woman working in a male-dominated field, Niwano claims she has never felt any sort of discrimination at work. "All my colleagues are very respectful,"





she explained. “We have a safety meeting once a week, and the owner always respects my opinion. I truly appreciate the work environment where I can share my ideas with everyone.”

According to Niwano, being a pilot offers a steady dose of “new” with each flight. “The one thing I like most about my job is that you will never fly the exact same flight. Even if you are flying in the same area, it will be with a different student or passenger, in varying weather conditions and different maneuvers will be performed. No flight will be the same. It has been more than three years since my very first flight lesson, but this joy of flying never gets old.”

## DATA PROTECTOR

Jona Turner loves everything about the world of Information Technology — especially cybersecurity. “I think I really enjoyed risk assessment and identifying vulnerabilities. I liked using all the different tools/software to find exploits, vulnerabilities and high-risk factors. I like the process of finding the risk factors, the ability to fix the vulnerabilities and implement how to move forward. It’s very interesting to me,” said Turner.

Turner, a dental assistant for the past 14 years, knew she wanted a different career — a challenge for herself that would enable her to better provide for her family. Initially, nursing looked appealing, but the waiting list didn’t. After some thought, Turner found herself enrolled in engineering courses and was on her way. On her way, that is, until she had the chance to attend a presentation about Information Technology (IT) that would lead her to professional sleuthing and protection within the world of Cybersecurity.

“I was given the chance to attend a presentation on cybersecurity. The speaker told us about the field, his backstory and how he made a career in cybersecurity, which

was incredibly encouraging,” said Turner. The guest speaker described the stability of the field, the fact that the field was diverse and one that consistently expands as technology advances, all while offering job security with competitive salaries.

“After leaving that presentation, I did my own research into the field. I realized this field would give me room to grow, advance and make a good salary. It was then I made the decision and I switched my program to cybersecurity,” said Turner. Additionally, as there aren’t as many females in the field, Turner discovered that with the right certifications, females typically land job interviews easier and get that coveted job with the good salary over other lesser-educated candidates.

“My time at TCC was amazing. I was learning new things and that kept me motivated. I completed the Associate of Applied Science – Information Technology – Cybersecurity degree along with the certifications for Ethical Hacking and Cybersecurity Specialist,” she said. Additionally, after reviewing her credits, Turner realized she also would receive her Associate of Arts degree in Summer 2019.

TCC allowed Turner to “get educated at a low cost, keep working as I attended classes, meet some great people and learn a new trade. I accomplished what I set out to do,” said Turner.

She completed the program in three semesters with a few summer classes. “The only disappointing aspect was I noticed that most of my classes would only have two to three women in them. Sometimes, I would be the only one. The males didn’t treat me any differently. The professors encouraged that the class help one another, because in the job force, you would be working as a team,” said Turner.

“Professor Sellers and all the teachers in the program were always great to me and available anytime I needed help or career advice. Professor Sellers kept telling me, ‘There are







**I would encourage anyone who wants to change their life to pursue getting an education. If you feel stuck in life, if you're unhappy with your life, you have the choice of changing it. I did it and will always encourage others.**

**Jona Turner**  
Associate of Applied Science  
Graduate

few women in the field. You'll move more to the top of the list because you are a woman and a woman of color.' I felt like I really have a chance to make my mark because of who I am," said Turner. "I was told by friends and family to 'Do it. Max it out. You will make it,'" she said. Turner feels confident her job search will be quick, even amidst economic uncertainties caused by COVID-19. "If they know I'm a woman, I'm going to get thrown in the mix first, because there's so few women in the field," said Turner.

"Jona was an excellent student. She helped all of her peers in the classes I had her in. She already had some background in information technology but was attending to expand her knowledge and achieve her AAS degree," said Richard Sellers, instructor of computer science and department chair at TCC Northwest. "Jona excelled, and Jona can continue in her education with a BAAS in Cybersecurity if she chooses. Jona has gained a firm foundation in IT that will help her succeed in any Information Technology career she chooses."

Turner's end goal is to be placed into Cybersecurity or Cloud Services at a management level, a goal that will take Turner several more certifications, building toward the credential of Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP).

Turner is evaluating job opportunities while completing the CompTIA Security+, a global certification that validates the baseline skills needed to perform core security functions and pursue an IT security career. With an associate degree and advanced certification, Turner is likely to advance over other applicants and easily land a job.

"I would encourage anyone who wants to change their life to pursue getting an education" she said. "If you feel stuck in life, if you're unhappy with your life, you have the choice of changing it. I did it and will always encourage others."

Women continue to make significant contributions in many male-dominated occupations and as they achieve success, they will inspire other women to consider similar pathways. Today, one in three jobs held by women has been designated as "essential," according to the federal government's essential worker guidelines.

TCC is committed to increasing female employment in male-dominated fields, providing students with full opportunities for economic security through accredited, award-winning degree and certificate programs.

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To learn more about culinary arts, cybersecurity, aviation, automotive, heating, air conditioning & refrigeration technology (HVAC) and other programs at TCC, visit [tccd.edu/academics](https://tccd.edu/academics)



# Credit Given Where Credit Is Due

## PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT ALLOWS QUALIFIED STUDENTS TO APPLY WORK EXPERIENCE TOWARD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS


By Paul Sturiale

**F**or many TCC students, the prospect of attending some of their classes may remind them of one of former New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra's signature lines: "It's like déjà vu all over again."

While there is some value to in-class lessons that include previously acquired knowledge and skills, TCC administrators and counselors generally agree that students are best served by receiving credit for knowledge they already have gained in life and/or on the job. As a result, school academic leaders and academic/veteran counselors have embraced a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) approach that lets qualified students replace traditional classroom courses with earned credits in subjects in which they already are proficient.

The students can have developed this proficiency through life/professional experience or successfully passed standardized exams such as College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exams, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams and an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. They also can refer to military experience, prior work or volunteer experience, professional certifications/licenses or have passed on-credit academic or trade courses.

The PLA process is an important part of TCC's participation in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30 Initiative, which looks to prepare Texans to be competitive leaders in the future workforce. It calls for several goals for students by 2030, the most



What they don't always realize is that they can qualify for up to 42 credits with Tarrant County College, then they can finish their bachelor's degree in only three semesters.

**Christopher Hunt**  
Veterans Counselor



It's really to help the students save class time and costs. To help them avoid having to sit in a semester-long class reviewing information or training that they already possess.



**Rosalind Walker**  
District Director  
of Academic Operations



Now (nursing professionals) are realizing that they need that next step of certification to be able to continue to advance their careers.



**Chelsey Smithley**  
Career and Technical Education  
Academic Advisor,  
Health Care Professions

ambitious of which is to have 60 percent of Texans ages 25 to 34 years earn an academic certificate or degree and have marketable skills that match workplace needs.

Research has shown that students who are awarded PLA credits have higher graduation rates, show greater persistence in their studies and need less time to earn their degree or certificate. As a result, the entire process allows them to complete their certificate or degree sooner, move into a position to start or advance their career and save money because they pay lower total tuition costs and avoid many course- and school-related expenses.

As part of the PLA program, TCC students can earn credits for up to 75 percent of their course credit hours. Students must earn the remaining 25 percent of their credit hours from TCC and be enrolled there at least one full semester.

Rosalind Walker, TCC's district director of academic operations, oversees the process with the assistance of a 10-member Institutional Review Council, which meets annually to conduct a program review, identify changes in academic credit criteria and identify ways to improve or streamline the credit-award process.

"Our task is to conduct an annual review that looks at the program's processes, especially with tests and program content," said Walker. "My job is to contact departments and then to analyze what they are doing or how their tests or course content may have changed. It's really to get some input, especially when something like course content or training has been approved or updated. I also look at any type of prior learning that does not come from sitting in a classroom. Then I share that information with the program review council and advisors for students and veterans.

"It's really to help the students save class time and costs. To help them avoid having to sit in a semester-long class reviewing information or training that they already possess," she said.

Walker says she is very encouraged as she watches trends in the prior learning field. "I think it is going to continue to increase. There are so many industry certifications now that we can tap into to get our students to move ahead faster," she said. "Plus, the military is coming together a little more. They are trying to standardize their testing criteria and streamline their processes. Then veterans will be able to use their benefits more efficiently and effectively."

One of the most popular PLA-oriented programs is TCC's Nursing and Health Care Professions track, says Chelsey Smithley, career and technical education academic advisor.

Smithley has been a PLA advisor in the nursing program for several years. During that time, she has seen student nurse participation in the emerging program grow about 60 percent from the first year to the 2020 spring semester.

She spent the past three years slowly but surely simplifying the process so students can easily and quickly take advantage of the opportunity to upgrade their certification. "Many of those



students used to have a certificate because that was all the job market required. Now, employers and institutions want to see advanced certification and ongoing improvement in their education and expertise,” she said.

“Dating as far back as the 1970s, we have had quite a few students get through the nursing program without fully qualifying for their certificates. They just wanted to get their professional training and find a job,” Smithley said. “Now a lot of them are realizing they need that next step of certification to be able to continue to advance their careers.”

Continually refining and simplifying the process is important. “We don’t want students who are already working in the field to say it is too hard and takes too long to get their certificate or degree. They’re often shocked by how student-friendly the process has become and how easily and quickly it can make them more marketable and professional,” Smithley added.

Marketability and scholastic achievement are especially important to Christopher Hunt and Valerie Groll, TCC military veteran student counselors.

Hunt, who is based at the TCC Northeast Veteran Resource Center, is a U.S. Air Force veteran from the Desert Storm conflict era and has been active in the PLA process for almost two years. During that time, he has helped about a half-dozen students to better understand and take advantage of the larger academic/technical opportunity their military service created for them.

“They just don’t realize how much their experience can translate into civilian-world credits,” Hunt said. “While we are checking their transcripts, we can share information on related areas like writing résumés and then check to see what other opportunities are, given their experience. We can really help them in identifying and transferring credits because we know what to look for.”

Hunt said TCC’s PLA efforts help many veterans expedite their pursuit of a four-year degree and beyond.

“What they don’t always realize is that they can qualify for up to 42 credits with Tarrant County College, then they can finish their bachelor’s degree in only three semesters. They may even qualify for a double degree at the university level. We focus on getting benefits that transfer to the university level and then maybe they can even get up to eight more elective credits,” he added.

Groll, a veterans’ counselor at TCC Trinity River, said she notices that many of the veterans she advises are focused on a bigger picture. “They want to go to school and then go back to work. They want to serve the economy. But what they really want is to continue to have a sense of mission in their lives. It is healthier for them to have a mission that guides them and puts everything in perspective,” she said.

Groll said she often helps students identify education tracks that lead them into careers that reflect their experience and expertise. “They seem to be most successful when they pursue areas where their experience is most likely to translate into qualified PLA credits. If their program does not parallel their experience in the military, they have no equivalent training that qualifies for direct articulation with military credits. The students who most benefit are students who do something in similar professions or programs that parallel their areas of military service.”

She added that military certification in skills jobs (information technology, welding and logistics, for example) often can be credited against veterans’ class loads, which translates into a faster track to graduation.

Hunt and Groll agree that the most student-friendly way to start the process is a discussion with a TCC-designated contact person or counselor for the process. TCC has two-to-three contact people on each campus who are knowledgeable about the process and can provide personal insights, as well as information and support that can make the application process as easy as possible. They also can steer students to detailed program information and refer them to students who are currently enrolled in the program or who have used it to shorten their in-class time and lower their overall tuition and course-related expenses.

In addition, TCC has veterans’ counselors/advisors on the Northeast, Northwest, South, Southeast and Trinity River campuses who are qualified to manage the paperwork, processes and factors that are unique to military veterans.

Smithley has seen consistent growth in interest in the PLA process because of the word-of-mouth endorsements by current and former students who are making their friends and colleagues aware of its benefits. It’s a steady growth trend that TCC staff and counselors all agree is noticeable throughout TCC’s trade and academic tracks.

“We all are working toward creating situations where military credit can be applied and new degree plans can be developed,” Hunt said. “This could be great. It could be another way for veterans to maximize their military training and experience by translating it into practical credits that can help to make their college degrees more easily and affordably attainable.”

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For more information about TCC’s Prior Learning Assessment options, visit: <https://www.tccd.edu/academics/academic-help/advising/prior-learning-assessment/>

# FAMILY TIES

## TCC GRADS BECOME FIRST FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO AT GRAPEVINE FIRE DEPARTMENT

By Alexis Patterson

**T**he fire service is often referred to as a brotherhood for the intensity of the bonds between firefighters. But the connection shared by Grapevine Fire Department colleagues (and Tarrant County College graduates) Morris Leondar and Marissa Sauble is even more profound than most.

That's because Sauble is Leondar's daughter. They are the first father-daughter pair in Grapevine Fire Department history.

"We've always been close, and this whole process has definitely strengthened our relationship even more," says Sauble. "It's fun."

The family legacy started for a simple reason: Leondar needed a job. "I was recently divorced and had a small child to support," he recalls. "So, I decided to get educated."

The fire service seemed like a reliable choice. Leondar enrolled in TCC's Fire Academy as part of class No. 7 in 1992.

He vividly remembers his young daughter looking on as he graduated from the academy.

"It was the greatest! Marissa was there and so proud of me, smiling with her missing teeth," Leondar shares.

When he hired on with Grapevine Fire Department, Leondar found much more than a steady paycheck. He found his calling — and colleagues who were indeed like a family.

Of course, his actual family made visits to the station. And those visits would set Sauble on the road to her future career.

"For as far back as I can remember, I've been fascinated by the fire service," she says. "I think it started when I would come up to the station as a child. We would eat dinner with the crew and look at all the apparatuses — the engine and the ambulance."

As the years passed, Leondar knew Sauble was very proud of him. She signed him up for career day at school (because of his "cool job") and one year, even donned his firefighting gear for Halloween. Even so, Leondar didn't realize his daughter would follow his path. She actually didn't really know either — until a terrible Tuesday in 2001.

"9/11 was the deciding factor in my career path, just like it was for many first responders in my generation," Sauble says. "It was such an impactful event that changed everyone's life."

Sauble nurtured her interest in serving the community by joining her dad in the volunteer fire department in Aledo, where the family lived. She went on to enroll in TCC, just like her dad — beginning paramedic school in 2005. Sauble did her paramedic internship with Grapevine Fire Department (on the same shift worked by Dad). In 2020, she took the next step in her training by enrolling in TCC's Fire Academy, class No. 91.

Leondar was impressed with how the TCC Fire Academy had grown and developed in the years since he was a cadet. "We had one classroom, one fire truck and a drill tower," he says. Today, the College's academy is







TCC's paramedic program and Fire Academy both had incredible instructors who were instrumental in my education," Sauble notes. "They gave me a great education that I'll build on throughout my career. And now, some of those instructors are my coworkers.

**Morris Leondar**  
Grapevine Fire Department

a modern, high-tech facility spread across 22 acres at TCC Northwest.

"TCC's paramedic program and Fire Academy both had incredible instructors who were instrumental in my education," Sauble notes. "They gave me a great education that I'll build on throughout my career. And now, some of those instructors are my coworkers."

But before her job came graduation. And when the ceremony rolled around, it was Leondar's turn to look on with a grin — even though he had to do so from a computer screen, since COVID-19 forced a virtual graduation for Sauble's class.

It was a proud moment for their whole family. "I was really happy that Marissa wanted to follow in her dad's footsteps," says Leondar's wife, Kimberly. "I saw how much he enjoyed mentoring her as a volunteer for Aledo. They have a special bond, and she looks up to him for his dedication to public service."

Those who know Sauble best weren't surprised she chose firefighting. In addition to being the daughter of a firefighter, Sauble is married to one (he's the fire marshal for North Richland Hills and, as it happens, a TCC student working toward an emergency management degree) — but Sauble did have one surprise in store for her dad. "When I found out she was going to test to work at Grapevine Fire Department, I was thinking, *Really?*" he remembers. "I was proud, scared and thrilled at the same moment. It's one of the coolest things. I'm still in a little bit of a shock that my daughter is actually working here."

For Sauble, Grapevine Fire Department was just where she felt like she belonged. "I've always loved the city of Grapevine," she explains. "I felt like I was coming home when I started the testing and hiring process. Grapevine Fire Department had everything I'm looking for. I'm very interested in the fire prevention team, Honor Guard — from my high school ROTC days — and the dive team. I knew Grapevine was a smaller department compared to many others, and I wanted to feel like family and not a number. Grapevine Fire Department hits all those points for me."

The department's leader is quick to return the praise — for father and daughter. "Morris and Marissa are fantastic human beings with a strong desire to serve others," Chief Darrell Brown says.

Today, Sauble is a probationary firefighter-EMT-paramedic. "That means I am the new person on the crew," she says. "I have a lot of learning to do to be really proficient in my craft. Learning never stops. Training never stops."

Brown says Sauble got an excellent foundation at TCC. "From their college degree program to their certification classes, rescue certifications, swift water rescue training and recruit academy, TCC is known for a top-notch program. They have a fantastic history of turning out quality fire recruits."

One of those recruits, Leondar, is now looking ahead toward retirement. In September 2024, he will mark 30 years of service with Grapevine Fire Department. While he plans to step down from his official role as a driver-engineer-firefighter-EMT at that time, he'll remain connected to the fire service — through the Aledo Volunteer Fire Department and visiting his daughter at her station. In retirement, Leondar also will have more time to spend with his grandsons: Sauble's 4- and 7-year-old boys, or "third-gens," as the family has taken to calling them in anticipation of them carrying on the family tradition.

"Recently they have been consistently saying they want to be firefighters and to 'help the boys and girls,'" says Sauble. "It makes me so happy that they have those ideas at such a young age."

Consider their spots in future TCC Fire Academy classes saved.

For more information about TCC's Fire Academy, visit: <https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/credit/fire-technology/fire-academy/>

# REDEFINING TRADITIONS

THE PANDEMIC ERA HAS CREATED NEW CHALLENGES,  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFE'S MILESTONE EVENTS

By Bill Lace

**O**n Friday, March 7, 2020, the normal euphoria prior to TCC's Spring Break was tinged with apprehension as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold. Then, the one-week break became two weeks, then two months. Spring melted into summer and the College family was still wondering when – and if – and how – they would be back.

Our day-to-day lives folded inward. We couldn't go to a movie or a restaurant. We couldn't visit Grandma in the nursing home. We prowled stores for toilet paper, searched the internet for hand sanitizer recipes and were home with our families perhaps more than might have been good for both them and us.

But we discovered that life goes on, that the signature days and events that mark our earthly passage continued, but hardly as usual. We learned to cope, to be inventive, to take the lemons dealt to us by the coronavirus and try to make lemon birthday cakes.

## **Life went on, some just beginning.**

Pregnancy was stressful enough, but what most worried Kathleen Ahles (TCC Northeast) was the possibility of contracting the virus prior to baby Ethan's birth. "They were separating COVID-positive moms from their babies," she said, "and we really tried to make sure we didn't contract it because I didn't want to be separated from him."

Then, too, there was the chance that husband Andrew wouldn't be allowed in the delivery room. "That was terrifying," she said. Fortunately, their hospital didn't enact that policy.

Still, Andrew was the only family to be with her, both during delivery and in the hospital room, sleeping on a







Lauren McClain had it all planned out. Turn in grades at TCC Northwest. Attend Commencement on May 9. Get married on May 22 in a small ceremony in a private room at the country club followed by a big reception dinner. Honeymoon. Back in time for Summer I.

COVID-19 had other plans.

recliner. “Actually, that worked well for us because our first 36 hours were just with Ethan,” she said.

Ahles wasn’t the only family member sidelined because of the virus. Daughter Evelyn, 3, was missing her friends at the TCC Northeast Children’s Center and wasn’t sure that she wanted a sibling. All changed when everyone was home. She’s a big help, her mom says, and “likes to rub his little peach fuzz and say, ‘I love you, Baby Brother.’”

#### **Life went on, some lives joined.**

Lauren McClain had it all planned out. Turn in grades at TCC Northwest. Attend Commencement on May 9. Get married on May 22 in a small ceremony in a private room at the country club followed by a big reception dinner. Honeymoon. Back in time for Summer I.

COVID-19 had other plans.

“We rescheduled it (the dinner), but we just really wanted to be married,” she said. A justice of the peace would have to do, but nobody answered at the Dallas County Courthouse, and emails went unanswered. “So, we called over to Tarrant County, went and got our certificate and scheduled our ceremony for May 29. It was really nice. She (the JP) was very sweet; she had

prepared something and made it her own. It was very moving and very quick!”

It was only the three of them – no one else allowed – and everyone wore masks, except when McClain and new husband Matthew pulled down their theirs for a quick kiss.

They had never settled on a place to honeymoon, but now that was no longer possible, even though Matthew had arranged for some time off. So, the newlyweds were “just hanging out at home,” said McClain. The honeymoon? Maybe later...sometime, somewhere.

#### **Life went on, including birthdays.**

Pamela Quinn (TCC Northeast) was looking forward to a Big with a capital “B” birthday. “It was one of those decade things,” she said. “All the ones that end in zero are worth celebrating, but this was my 70th.”

Yet the big party, in the works since January, evaporated in March. Then, daughter Kelly Arbabi took over.

“She had a great big sign put up in our front yard that read ‘Happy Birthday to Pippa Pam.’ Pippa is my ‘grandmother’ name.”

But there was much more to come. Arbabi finagled all of her mom’s contacts and asked them to surreptitiously send in congratulatory video clips. The



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For four years, members of the Class of 2020 at Marine Creek Collegiate High School had been raising money — selling chocolates, painting faces, running ring-toss games — for what their class president, Veronica Sandivar, called “our dream prom.”

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replies, from 65 people in 16 states, ran more than two hours but was pared down to about 30 minutes.

On the night of the birthday, May 12, she sprung the surprise. Champagne corks popped, and the big screen TV was switched on. “It was just beautifully done,” Quinn said. “It was very entertaining, very personal – childhood friends, high school friends. This might have been better than a party.”

**Life went on, and we celebrated graduations – sorta.**

For four years, members of the Class of 2020 at Marine Creek Collegiate High School had been raising money – selling chocolates, painting faces, running ring-toss games – for what their class president, Veronica Sandivar, called “our dream prom.”

“Then we went on Spring Break,” she said, “and never came back.”

Sandivar was “very devastated” that there was to be no prom, even more so that there would be no walk-across-the-stage graduation. In fact, these seniors missed two ceremonies, one from high school and the other from TCC.

“Not only was it our accomplishment,” she said, “but also that of our parents. So, it wasn’t only not celebrating among my classmates, but it would have been way to let my family know that if it wasn’t for them, it wouldn’t have been possible.”

**Life went on, but lives don’t last forever.**

MaryLynn Young’s family knew that this birthday on March 25, her 87th, might well be her last, so daughter Ashley Burgardt (TCC Northeast), with whom she was living, decided that a party was in order.

“Of course, no one could come visit because of COVID, so my





daughter arranged a Zoom party,” Burgardt said. “It was just wonderful. We had my brothers, my nieces, all her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We all sang ‘Happy Birthday,’ and you could see the joy on her face.”

But MaryLynn’s numerous health problems cascaded shortly thereafter, and she passed away on May 6. “We knew it might be her last birthday,” Burgardt said, “but we didn’t expect her to go so soon.”

The memorial service, of course, will have to wait.

The ways we celebrated — and grieved — during the pandemic were hardly normal. They were not what we wanted, only what we could manage, but we found ways that, if not perfect, were by no means completely inadequate.

MaryLynn Young’s family can hold and treasure that joyful smile.

Whereas in other times the world might have intruded, Ahles and McClain had some precious “just us” time, Ahles with her husband and newborn son and McClain with her new husband.

Sandivar did have a virtual graduation ceremony complete with a 10-second farewell by each member of the 87-member senior class. In hers, she thanked her family for their “unconditional support.”

And Quinn has her video to watch and re-watch. “You know, a lot of people have videos made for their funerals,” she said. “I get to see mine while still alive.”



**The ways we celebrated – and grieved – during the pandemic were hardly normal. They were not what we wanted, only what we could manage, but we found ways that, if not perfect, were by no means completely inadequate.**

**Ashley Burgardt**  
MaryLynn Young’s daughter

# The TCC Way - Greet, Listen and Resolve

**S**ince its beginning in the spring of 2004, the TCC Information Center has handled myriad phone calls and emails from students and prospective students, as well as faculty, staff and community members. With a staff of 17 (13 full-time and four part-time), the Center fields anywhere from 11,500 calls per month during moderate periods to 21,500 per month during peak periods (August and January), providing general information and enrollment support for all six campuses. Additionally, team members respond to approximately 1,000 emails per month.

Enrollment-related calls comprise 40 percent of calls received. “The Information Center is in a unique position to see students in all phases of the student lifecycle,” according to Michael Tribble, manager of the Information Center. “Our role is to be student advocates. Our goal is to create a genuinely supportive atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and safe.”

Issues with enrollment addressed by Information Center assistants and specialists include Admissions, Transcripts/Records, Financial Aid, Testing, Advising and Counseling, Registration, Business Services, Student Activities, directions to and on campuses and navigational assistance for Blackboard, WebAdvisor and the TCC website.

David Ximenez, associate vice chancellor for Enrollment and Academic Support Services, considers the Information Center an important asset to the enrollment and onboarding process. “The team is knowledgeable, helpful and responsive to those who contact the Center,” he said.

What qualities does Tribble look for in his team members? “We ascribe to the Toro Way: 1) Greet, 2) Listen and 3) Resolve. The Toro Way is a resolution process that helps our Information Center assistants hone all the critical skills needed for good customer

service.” Human Resources and the Information Center collaborated on retooling the customer service training course, “Taking Care of the TCC Customer,” for newly hired and current employees.

Sarah Chavez-Reckling, an assistant in the Information Center, believes “you have to be passionate about providing quality customer service.” Excellent listening, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are important to her, as well as patience and emotional self-control. Because the Information Center is often the first contact callers have with TCC, Chavez-Reckling says, “We truly need to know a little bit about everything in the District.”

All calls are considered Tier 1 when they first come in and are handled by Information Center assistants like Chavez-Reckling. If needed, they are escalated to Tier 2 calls, which are handled by Tribble or Information Center specialists like Teshia Barnett or Katie Pham.

Barnett says she enjoys helping students navigate through the enrollment and academic process. “Some students are excited, while others are nervous. Either way, I aim to make them feel welcome with a positive experience of TCC when they call the Information Center,” she said. In their roles, she believes it is necessary to have a true passion for helping people and the ability to network with colleagues across the District to provide knowledgeable information to the TCC community.

According to Pham, “effective communication, a pocket full of patience and a positive attitude” go a long way in the success of Information Center team members. She says while representing all TCC campuses and centers is “understandably challenging,” she considers the Information Center team “resilient and great at what they do.”

With the high volume of calls the Information





## THE INFORMATION CENTER PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON ALL THINGS TCC

By Kendra Prince

Center receives, invariably there are those that are rather unique and require Center assistants and specialists to go the extra mile. Chavez-Reckling recalled a student who asked if she could get security footage because a cat she had been feeding on campus had disappeared. She was connected to the TCC Police Department.

A TCC alumnus once asked Pham for directions to a restaurant. He didn't know how to work his smartphone. "He mentioned that we are so helpful, he thought would could help with that," she said. "He was very appreciative of the help. It was an unusual call, but it goes to show that TCC has left a great impression with the community."

Barnett says some of the most unique calls they receive are not related to TCC at all. "I remember during the 2017 solar eclipse, I received a call from a senior couple wanting help in making a homemade eclipse viewer from a cereal box," she said. "I found a YouTube video and helped the couple; they were so excited and appreciative."

And then, there are those calls that stay with team members because they are so touching. Tribble says they receive calls like that all the time, especially from first-generation prospective students. "Every time, it brings me back to my first experiences at TCC as a student when I was in the same situation. This is the main reason why I enjoy working at TCC."

Pham agrees. "Because our Center is the College's first, and potentially only, contact with the prospect/student, my favorite calls are the ones where we got

the chance to be a cheerleader helping to motivate the prospect/student to continue to pursue their goals," she said. "Those are the type of callers I have a soft spot for, because I understand how hard it is to make the decision to go back to school."

She shared about a recent call with a veteran seeking information on coming back to school with TCC. "I could tell he was on the fence and a bit on edge with the decision," said Pham. "After going over his account and speaking with him, he felt comfortable enough to share why he wanted to come back to school. That's when I knew we won his trust." Pham considers it gratifying to connect with students. "Making the first call carries a lot of weight to that individual, and we want to respect that."

Chavez-Reckling said she is often touched by students who are overcoming odds to work toward their degrees and career goals. "Just yesterday, I spoke with a student who shared how nervous and excited she is to get back into college. She left college about five years ago due to a terrible divorce and had to focus on providing for herself and her child," she said. "I was moved by her determination and tried my best to encourage her on the next steps in her journey. I believe that is a major part of my job — to be a voice of encouragement and positive energy in that moment."

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For more information on the TCC Information Center and answers to commonly asked questions: <https://www.tccd.edu/services/support-services/information-center/>

Issues with enrollment addressed by Information Center assistants and specialists include Admissions, Transcripts/Records, Financial Aid, Testing, Advising and Counseling, Registration, Business Services, Student Activities, directions to and on campuses and navigational assistance for Blackboard, WebAdvisor and the TCC website.

A young man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue button-down shirt and a brown belt, stands outdoors with his arms crossed. He is smiling slightly. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

# Breaking Out of His Shell

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
LEAVES ALL THAT IS FAMILIAR  
TO FIND A NEW HOME AT TCC

By Kendra Prince

**A**fter a 13-year wait, Shaw Hu's green card finally arrived, giving him the green light to live in the U.S. Things changed quickly, and Hu left his homeland of Taiwan to live with his aunt and uncle in the Metroplex. "It's kind of like I came here to explore," Hu said.

Once he arrived in the U.S., Hu knew he still wanted to go to college. Not only was he the first in his immediate family to come to the U.S., but he also would be the first to attend college. However, saving money was a big consideration. For that reason, he chose to work for a year to earn money for school and to gain his residential status. He landed positions with Sam's Club and the Grapevine ISD.

When Hu started researching colleges, his uncle suggested he look at Tarrant County College since one of the campuses was close to their home. Hu didn't know much about the American education system, so starting with a community college sounded good to him. He was surprised to find he could take the same class at TCC as a four-year school for about one-third of the cost.

"The reason I picked TCC in the beginning was mainly for the price," he said. "I'm really, really





What impresses me most about Shaw is his courage to come to America on his own and make a new life for himself. He's been doing great things with his education since being here.

Michael Given

Assistant Speech Professor at TCC Northeast

grateful that I picked TCC." Hu gives a lot of credit for that to his advisor, Martin Pham, who worked closely with him on his choice of major – Aviation Technology: Professional Pilot. Pham also helped Hu find on-campus employment.

Hu completed TCC's Professional Pilot program by earning his private pilot license (just one of the program requirements). However, he was unable to get his Instrument Rating and Commercial Rating due to a lack of funds for flight hours. He met with Pham once again to explore his interest in programs involving biochemistry and biology.

Initially, Hu looked at the Physical Therapist Assistant degree, but Pham suggested the Nursing program because he would be able to start working in the field while completing his BSN. Hu entered TCC's Nursing Program in the fall of 2019.

Pham describes Hu as "a determined young man who demonstrates tremendous character," noting "he excels academically by putting in the time needed to keep up with his near perfect GPA, yet finds time to actively participate in student organizations and community outreach."

Getting to that point wasn't easy for someone so far from home. Like many international students, Hu struggled with the language barrier. "In my country, they teach a little bit of English, but you learn from a textbook and it's not regular English." American slang and menus proved most challenging for him.

Hu appreciated instructors like Yvonne McCoy, who taught his General Psychology course at TCC Northeast. She worked with him during her office hours to make sure he understood the coursework. "He was a very smart student; it was primarily being so new to the English language that was difficult for him," McCoy said. "I appreciated how diligent and determined he was. He really gave it his all."

Another challenge Hu faced? Loneliness. He chose to address it by becoming involved at TCC Northeast, serving as a student ambassador, participating in Phi Theta Kappa (the honor society for two-year colleges) and joining the Men of Color Collaborative (MCC) through the Intercultural Network.

Hu ended up becoming an officer for the Phi Tau Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. "As vice president of fundraising, Shaw's discipline and humility set him apart from many student leaders," said Janjura Williams, student development associate and chapter advisor. "He always made himself available to help others and be an impactful part of the success of the team and the PTK mission. His courage to think outside the box and seek out new innovative ideas allowed for profitable growth,

increased membership and engagement."

Marjeanna Burge, coordinator of Intercultural Student Engagement and Academic Success, said Hu has been a pleasure to know since he became part of the Men of Color Collaborative (MCC) more than two years ago. She praises him for not giving up in spite of challenges. "He is an inspiration to many," she said.

Hu values the networking of both groups and is impressed by the diversity. In the Phi Tau chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, he met students from the Congo, Brazil, Nigeria and India. "And then I suddenly realized I'm not the only one (from abroad)," Hu said. "I feel like I belong."

Even though Hu now is studying Nursing at TCC Trinity River East, he makes time to go back and support MCC and Phi Tau. "I'm busy, but I go back to support the activities they host. We all take it seriously," said Hu.

"What impresses me most about Shaw is his courage to come to America on his own and make a new life for himself. He's been doing great things with his education since being here," said Michael Given, assistant speech professor at TCC Northeast. "Since becoming a TCC student, he has effectively maintained healthy relationships with others by involving himself in both on-campus and off-campus activities."

Hu acknowledges it wasn't easy. "I wasn't an outgoing person at all, I am kind of shy in my work. Especially when your English is not good," he said. "It's hard to break the shell, but you have to."

Hu says he is proudest of getting his private pilot license. "The reason why is that it is the first time for me in America getting something that can show my work," said Hu. He also takes pride in being a first-generation college student.

Now that Hu has successfully escaped his shell, he looks with anticipation to the future. Following his completion of the Nursing program, he plans to take his board exam and go to work immediately as a nurse while completing his BSN. Once he finishes his BSN, he is considering joining the U.S. Air Force. "Planning so far," said Hu. "But you know, plans are meant for changing sometimes."

To learn more about TCC's Aviation Program:

<https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/credit/aviation/>

To learn more about TCC's Nursing Program:

<https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/credit/nursing/>



# OPENING DOORS

## TCC CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF HELPING IMMIGRANTS ASSIMILATE THROUGH LANGUAGE

By Kendra Prince

According to the American Immigration Council website, one in six Texas residents is an immigrant. In 2018, 4.9 million immigrants comprised 17 percent of the population.

Immigrants come to Texas with various educational needs. For those in Tarrant County who want to improve their academic English skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar, TCC offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which began at TCC Southeast 10 years ago. Courses range from true beginner (student has little to no English skills) to those which help students become college-ready.

Since ESOL classes began at TCC, students (whose country of origin is known) from 79 countries have participated. Classes offered include Reading, Writing, Grammar and Oral Communication.

TCC Southeast President Bill Coppola is proud of the ESOL program and what it has accomplished. “While the ESOL program is designed to develop the students’ language skills, it provides them with a safe and supportive environment in which to develop confidence and learn about the American college system. Our talented faculty help the students develop self-esteem, which is so critical to their students’ success both in and outside of the classroom,” he said.

Mary Cinatl, coordinator for the ESOL program at TCC Southeast, has worked with second-language learners for more than 40 years, counting her work with Deaf Education. The last 18 years, she has focused on international students, teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) as well as ESOL. “I believe by opening doors to immigrants and helping them learn not only the language of their new country, but how to assimilate and embrace a new culture, I am supporting their dreams,” she said. “I know how determined these students are to succeed and have witnessed the sacrifices they are willing to make to achieve their dreams. Obstacles naturally arise when coming to a new country and an academic environment. ESOL helps students navigate this unfamiliar territory and develop the linguistic confidence they need to succeed.”

Student Minh Vu, who came to the U.S. from Vietnam, has high praise for the program. “TCC brought me, but also many others who immigrated to the U.S. a big chance to have a quality new life,” he said. “I could learn with financial aid during the time I have low income.” She went on to express appreciation for Cinatl’s lectures, finding her “hardworking, intelligent and having a sense of humor.”

Cinatl considers the benefits of her work in ESOL reciprocal. “International students give as much as they





While the ESOL program is designed to develop the students' language skills, it provides them with a safe and supportive environment in which to develop confidence and learn about the American college system. Our talented faculty help the students develop self-esteem, which is so critical to their students' success both in and outside of the classroom.

**Bill Coppola**

TCC Southeast President

receive," she said. "Students share their background, food, politics, struggles and successes with me, and I am always learning from them."

Student Adelino Handem, who is from Guinea-Bissau, West Africa, learned about TCC from his daughter-in-law who improved her English in an ESL class. He visited TCC Southeast and met an advisor who introduced him to the ESOL program. "I learned English, I discovered American society and I met people from different countries and cultures," he said.

Ilka Czczka, originally from Hungary, went through the program and now is working as an on-call instructional assistant in the Reading Writing Resource Center at TCC Southeast. "The instructors' biggest interest is the student's success," she said. "They won't let anyone struggle or fail; they will find a way for student satisfaction."

Former student Huy Phan, who hails from Vietnam, agrees. He says the instructors are "experienced, enthusiastic and dedicated. ESOL classes at TCC were one of the first classes that gave me a good foundation in English and an opportunity to love the new community and appreciate different cultures," he said. Cinatl was his instructor for his ESOL classes. Phan considers her a mentor who always supported him, even when he was no longer in ESOL.

Cinatl worked with a team of educators to develop the TCC Southeast ESOL program. Each educator brings diverse experience and perspective into the classroom.

"An ESOL instructor is a teacher of language but also is the one who connects that student to the culture of this land and is a window to the rest of this place," according to instructor Christina Marrero. Her 20-year, diverse experience in language began with teaching English in South Korea and Taiwan. Later, she taught English language learners from around the world at an inner-city high school in the Bronx while working on her master's degree in New York City. Following that, she taught at an international school in Chile. After teaching in the Intensive English program at the University of Arkansas, she helped begin an English for Foreigners department at a private university in the capital of Colombia.

Marrero says she is intrigued by what people think she does. After hearing she teaches English as a second language, they often ask how many languages she speaks. "I speak English the entire time, as that is what we are learning, and it is the only language we have in common," she said. "So, while there are differences in our students from diverse countries, there are more similarities between their needs and goals."

Adjunct instructor Gabrielle Johnson understands the



We live in very divisive times, but by teaching classes filled with students of all ages, religions and ethnicities, I'm able to help everyone see our similarities rather than the differences.

**Carrie Sullivan**  
TCC ESOL Instructor

challenges of being a second-language learner. Her husband is Hispanic and a native Spanish speaker, which necessitated her learning Spanish. “The majority of my husband’s family speaks little to no English. I needed to be able to communicate with them in order to connect with them,” she said.

Johnson brings techniques that aided her in her learning a second language to her ESOL teaching. “I love to teach with a flare of creativity that means taking steps away from the traditional to incorporate a more communicative teaching environment – a place where students can discover themselves,” she said. “I love to venture outside of the classroom. Students enjoy getting the chance to walk around and really use their English with native and non-native speakers on campus.” Her classes also use descriptive journals. Students go outside and describe what they see, hear, taste, smell and touch. Other activities involve students conducting polls and interviews.

Carrie Sullivan came to TCC after receiving a master’s degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which she pursued after teaching English at the junior high and high school levels. She believes it is important for TCC to offer ESOL. “We have a growing population of non-native English speakers. Providing them a solid foundation in the four skills of English not only gives them confidence as they move forward with their degree, it also gives them valuable skills they will be able to use in their lives,” she said. “Students learn how to effectively communicate verbally and with the written word, which serves them in social situations, as well as places of employment.”

When she joined TCC as a writing tutor, Nicole Procell was working on her bachelor’s degree in Linguistics and her TESOL certificate from the University of Texas at Arlington.

“I believe ESOL acts as a bridge between the community and college that many second language learners need to gain fluency and confidence using English to better their future,” she said. Procell believes ESOL instructors should be able to assess a student’s knowledge and use strategies to relay information to them in an understandable way. Even more so, instructors should be open to building relationships with all cultures and people from different parts of the world.

Like most TCC faculty, the ESOL teaching team had to adjust how curriculum was delivered once the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the shift of most TCC classes to an online environment. “On the fly, we went remote as most everyone did,” said Marrero. “We worked hard to adapt the material to be as interactive as possible while still achieving all of our language goals for the second half of the (spring 2020) semester. Some students transitioned with ease logging in and out and some had greater challenges.”

According to Procell, because classes were moved online, some of the assignments requiring in-person collaboration became limited. “Previously, there were not any ESOL courses offered online because a huge part of ESOL is face-to-face interaction,” she said. “I have had to adjust by coming up with activities that allow students to continue to work together as if they were face-to-face.”

She also has had to find new ways to provide feedback to students. “For many students from different countries, computers are not used as heavily in education, so learning how to submit work online and navigate Blackboard Collaborate extensively can be a challenge.” Procell says students must be more self-motivated to check Blackboard consistently for updates and assignments and reach out by email with questions. “This can be intimidating for ESOL students since they may not have strong writing skills in





I believe ESOL acts as a bridge between the community and college that many second language learners need to gain fluency and confidence using English to better their future.

**Nicole Procell**  
TCC ESOL Instructor

English,” she said.

Sullivan says her students have been wonderful about the changes in lesson delivery. “For the most part, they all courageously adapted just like the teachers did!”

Every member of the ESOL teaching team says the experience is rewarding; both Marrero and Johnson say it means everything to them. “It is who I am,” said Marrero. “I am so passionate about what I do, and I am so dedicated to this field because I know that education has the power to change people’s lives.”

While improving their English is always a primary factor, the underlying reasons students take ESOL are as diverse as the countries they represent. Lilia Vazquez Zaragoza, a lawyer from Mexico, wanted to improve her English before she starts working in the U.S. “I would like to know more about the law in this country, but I’m not sure if I will study something related with my major,” she said.

Johnson admits she has not had the opportunity to travel around the world, however. “Because of what I do, I have the world sitting in my classroom,” she said. “I get to hear first-hand experiences about events I have read about in books and seen on TV. My students bring their culture, life lessons, passions and insecurities into the classroom. I could not ask for more.”

Cinatl says, “I have always wanted to work in a career where I can help others... in some small way make a difference in the lives of others, especially those that may be misunderstood or marginalized. I am grateful to do just this.”

Taking great pride as an educator in this field, Sullivan says she sees it as a way to promote unity. “We live in very divisive times, but by teaching classes filled with students of all ages, religions and ethnicities, I’m able to help everyone

see our similarities rather than the differences.”

#### **Future Plans:**

Minh Vu plans to start attending a four-year university next year to study Medical Lab Engineering.

Huy Phan already has graduated with a degree in Biochemistry from the University of Texas at Arlington and as of this writing, was applying to dental schools.

Ilka Cziczka started the ESOL program at TCC after she and her husband moved here from Houston because of his promotion. “Taking advantage of my free time, I thought, it’s time for me to master the English language.” She selected TCC because “I needed something that has purpose. This program prepares students for higher education with academic language and with conscious and consistent work,” she said. The ESOL program played a big part in her goal to complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Eventually, she wants to get her Master of Science in Business Analytics.

Adelino Handem, who now is retired after a career in water supply and sustainable development, plans to write books, starting with an autobiography followed by a series of novels based on stories from his homeland. To improve his writing skills and give him a better understanding of the world, he intends to take courses in literature, history and philosophy.

While the majority of ESOL students attend TCC Southeast, classes are available at other campuses as well. For more information on the ESOL program at TCC and how to enroll: <https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/courses/developmental-studies/english-language-learning/esol/>

# Living Larger than Himself

## TCC ALUMNUS WORKS TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

By Rita L.B. Parson

**F**or Pelkins Ajonah, Tarrant County College alumnus and MIT graduate, starting the fall semester as a graduate student at Harvard University was just the next step in his methodical journey toward making a difference.

Ajonah enters into the prestigious academic atmosphere to pursue a Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Engineering Sciences in the newly instituted, hybrid environment as one of 30 recipients of The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, a \$90,000 graduate school fellowship for outstanding immigrants and children of immigrants in the United States.

Ajonah's lifelong vision to live a life larger than himself is rooted deeply in his childhood rearing in Limbe, Cameroon, a coastal town on the western shores in the southwestern region of Africa. His mother, a businesswoman, was very active in the community and instilled in him the significance of hard work and the importance of giving back to the community. She repeatedly told him, "It's not about you. It's about the community around you."

Before his early death, his father, an elementary school principal, taught him the importance of achieving an education. A razor-sharp focus on mathematics is what he recalls about his father. "If I had 100 percent on every other thing and I wasn't the first in math, he (would) be like, 'Why are you not the first in math? What's going on?'"

"It was a routine every day with my math homework (that) he would do it with me and teach me stuff. It's funny now, when I think of it, because he used to look like a god because he was so good at math," said Ajonah. He reflected that after his father explained the solutions to the problems, he would ponder: "How do I really get there? I just knew because of the way my dad laid a lot of emphasis on it (that) this is something I (needed) to take seriously."

Because he heeded his father's guidance, Ajonah graduated with the top test score on the national advanced level test taken by students in Cameroon. He did so despite the hardship of completing most of his high school education without his parents' guidance; his mother emigrated to the United States after his father's death so she could better provide for their family.

Ajonah's receipt of the top honor already was virtually a guarantee that he would escape a traditional agrarian future. Previous winners routinely entered the fields of engineering or medicine, something he knew was not for him because he did not like blood. His choices were extended since, as a minor, he could take advantage of his mother being in the United States and become the only one of his siblings to join her here.

"I went to Tarrant County College 'cause my mom lives in Arlington," he said, explaining that he did not come to the United States to attend college. "It's near home, so I was like, okay, that's the next step."

At TCC, Ajonah took advantage of what the College had to offer. He built his confidence and honed his leadership skills by participating inside and outside of the classroom.

Jill Trask, TCC Southeast economics professor, recalled that her class was the first one Ajonah took at TCC and reflected on his transformation.

"During that time, Pelkins sat in the back of the classroom. I could not get him to engage, but on tests (and) on assignments, he was doing really well. (Initially) he was so quiet," Trask said. "Things changed suddenly as the class progressed. I thought: 'Oh my gosh, what happened?'"

While he grew up speaking English, the language he found in America differed from his familiar British dialect.

"So, he listened to the news (and) he watched television shows, (then) halfway through the semester he felt comfortable, so he started speaking up in class," Trask said. "Since then, he has just been a wealth (of information)."

TCC Southeast Dean Jerry Coats, sponsor of the two-year-honor society Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), was impressed with Ajonah at their first meeting.

"The first time I met Pelkins, he walked into my office (because) he wanted to join Phi Theta Kappa. He seemed to know everything about it already," Coats said. "He had done his research. He had looked online. He had talked with friends who were members."

"He knew he wanted to join, and he was considering running for officer that following year," Coats said. "So, he was that kind of guy. You knew right off that he had done his homework."

Ajonah also distinguished himself during his time at TCC because he was thorough and willing to participate.

"He always seemed to be scholarly in his endeavors (and) was one of our lead researchers for our Honors in Action project that year. He always seemed to be willing to do something more," Coats reminisced. "He would show up for late nights in the library to do rewrites for Honors in Action, our college project (and) he was always at events."

A 2015 TCC graduate with an Associate of Science degree, Ajonah earned the highest distinction and was named a Guistwhite Scholar by PTK. He continues to show his dedication to TCC by returning to speak to classes and at PTK functions.

TCC Southeast Vice President of Academic Affairs Zena Jackson, who first met Ajonah after he delivered an inspiring PTK induction speech as the club's president, recalls her visits with him on campus. "I never saw Pelkins in a situation where he just didn't seem happy. I think that's one of the most impressive things about him. He encouraged others around him," Jackson said. "I think that one of his greatest traits was that he was inspiring to his peers."

When she heard that Ajonah had been accepted to Harvard, Jackson said, "I was very, very pleased for him because I knew that he would be able to achieve his dream of being able to go





For me, my vision for the world is bigger than myself. My philosophy is really living for a purpose that's bigger than me.

**Pelkins Ajonah**

**Tarrant County College Alumnus  
and MIT Graduate**

back home and be a resource in some way with his engineering background.”

Ajonah already has distinguished himself in engineering while interning as a self-driving car engineer at General Motors when he patented a novel technology for calibrating radars for autonomous vehicles. The technique he developed greatly increased the efficiency of the self-propelled cars, reducing the time it takes to execute the calculations necessary to propel them.

For his work at MIT, Ajonah was awarded the Albert G. Hill Prize and the Suzanne Berger Award for Future Global leaders.

Although it was a major accomplishment, it was not enough for Ajonah, who questioned himself.

“What are you doing for other people who don’t necessarily have it (as good as you do?) So that’s why at MIT (I struggled). How can I ensure that I’m giving back?” (What am I doing that) I’m creating space for other people to be innovative?”

His passionate concern for his homeland resulted in a salient contribution when he collaborated with two friends — an MIT classmate and a childhood friend. Together, they launched CassVita, an agribusiness in Cameroon that converts cassava, a rapidly deteriorating tropical tuber, similar to the sweet potato, into shelf-stable flour. CassVita now empowers a farming community of more than 300 farmers in Cameroon. Its products are sold in more than 30 supermarkets locally and internationally.


Now, as Ajonah is beginning his studies at Harvard, he plans to take his life’s goal to the next level and spend his days focusing on how he can leverage technological innovation to create sustainable economic opportunity globally.

“For me, my vision for the world is bigger than myself. My philosophy is really living for a purpose that’s bigger than me,” Ajonah said. “(It) wasn’t really about I wanted to go to Harvard. It was about I want to solve this problem. This is the vision I have (so) where is the best place and (what) was the most optimal path to get there? That’s why I took that path.”

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Learn more about Pelkins Ajonah by viewing this video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbVDz4FXoIQ>

# NDT INSPECTING EVERY



This program would appeal to students who enjoy the practical use of physics and technology. Individuals who like working with their hands outside or in industrial environments using technically advanced equipment and are good at interpreting and explaining complex data to decision makers.

Walter “Buddy” Jeter  
TCC Instructor

*Aerospace. Defense.*

*Oil and Gas and Fabrication.*

*Power Generation. Inside.*

*Outside. Small. Large.*

*Domestic. Global.*

These diverse career opportunities, working environments and job locations are among the benefits to seeking a high-demand career in Nondestructive Inspection, Testing and Evaluation (NDT/I). Though often overlooked or even when encountered, unfamiliar to most, NDI/T plays an invaluable role in numerous businesses that impact daily life.

Nondestructive testing is used to inspect a component or system to verify that the system, or part, meets engineering requirements so that the system will function as designed. NDT testing uses state-of-the-art technologies such as ultrasonic, electromagnetic, X-ray and liquid penetrant inspections. Typical inspections conducted by NDT technicians include aircraft engine components, aircraft airframes, power generation equipment, bridges, buildings, electronic components, automotive components, space systems and defense systems.

Unfortunately, this critical field has been so far off the beaten path that recruitment has not kept pace, so extinction looms unless the field soon is infused with a younger generation of workers to fill the anticipated vacancies.

“The NDT community has an aging workforce and will need replacements to support the expanding industries,” said Glenn Rodriguez, quality operations manager, NDI, MRB, Tooling & Metrology, Responsible Level III at Flight Bell. “An example for Bell is (that) 40 percent of the NDT workforce will retire or look for other opportunities



within the next five years.”

Rodriguez approached TCC Dean James “Clint” Grant about re-establishing a program that would provide a direct pipeline to job opportunities in this vital industry. The two-year program requires 60 credit hours, including a summer term, and is offered at the Erma C. Johnson Hadley Northwest Center of Excellence for Aviation, Transportation and Logistics. Classes include topics such as metallurgy, aerospace engineering technology, ultrasonic testing, composite fundamentals, plane trigonometry, psychology and industrial radiography.

“TCC previously had a program, from which I graduated in 1982. I felt it was important to restart the program to support the needs in the local DFW area,” said Rodriguez, who chairs the program’s advisory council (AC).

Grant said establishing the program is the latest example of how TCC’s reputation is viewed by regional businesses, allowing it to be the college of choice when industry needs arise.

“There are no other public programs in the north central Texas area that offer training in NDI/NDT certifications. Like many other industries, the need for trained workers is increasing as the workforce ages and no pipeline is in place to replace them,” Grant said. “The advisory committee members’ concern is the lack of training in this area. Other community colleges offer NDI/NDT, but they are located too far away to be a source of talent for local industry.”

Dale Norwood, AC member and Parker Aerospace NDT Responsible Level III, concurred. “It has always been extremely difficult in the North Texas area to find and hire qualified NDT inspectors. This program will give all employers a great pipeline to find inspectors,” said Norwood, adding that he has enjoyed working with other industry leaders on the advisory council. “Because a program like this has

been way overdue and needed for years, I wanted to help in every way I could to make it happen. Over the last 15 years, I have traveled to South Texas and to many states to interview graduates of NDT programs. It will be great to hire graduates from a local school.”

Besides making training in NDT available in the North Texas area, it also will expand traditional offerings, Grant said. “Many NDI/NDT programs tend to focus solely on materials made from metal such as those used in shipping, gas/oil piping and other welded structures. The AC wanted the TCC program to have a focus toward aerospace and aviation applications, which use advanced composite materials that require different types of NDI/NDT techniques.”

When it became time to staff the program, TCC went to an industry leader who could develop, teach and inspire students entering the program – Walter “Buddy” Jeter, a 34-year veteran and Level III in Ultrasonics, Liquid Penetrant, Magnetic Particle and Eddy Current. For the last eight years, Jeter was the Responsible Level III for NDT Certification for a major global company with more than 500 certified NDT technicians.

“I wanted to give back to the industry what I have learned, having the ability to use my experience to shape the course to meet the industry needs,” said Jeter, adding that he discovered he enjoyed teaching when required to do some training for some of his previous employers. “I think a critical part of the program is not only (ensuring) students know how to do the inspections, but (enhancing) their integrity and confidence in their abilities (that) will improve their ability to succeed in the industry.”

Jeter, who discovered the field after he dropped out of college, said a good candidate for the program is anyone who wants to make a good living in an

important, growing field without spending four years to earn a degree.

Additionally, Grant said, “This program would appeal to students who enjoy the practical use of physics and technology. Individuals who like working with their hands outside or in industrial environments using technically advanced equipment and are good at interpreting and explaining complex data to decision makers. It (also offers) the potential to work independently.”

Other important traits for potential candidates include “the ability to understand, interpret and explain data, with an interest in how materials are created and (how) structures are assembled and (those who) enjoy physical activity and working outside or in industrial environments,” Grant added.

Students who successfully complete the program will satisfy the educational requirements to earn credentials as a Certified Level I or II in any of the inspection methods, Jeter explained.

Grant said jobs are available in a variety of fields.

“Typical jobs would be for almost any company that is involved in manufacturing such as welding and fabrication shops, aircraft manufacturers, airlines, shipping, oil and gas and construction. These types of industries can be found locally, nationally and throughout the world.”

Although the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates NDT jobs are estimated to grow by 6 to 7 percent, Texas is in the top 10 hiring states with an expected growth rate of about 20 percent, according to Recruiter.com.

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For more information about TCC’s NonDestructive Inspection, Testing and Evaluation (NDT/I) program, visit: <https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/credit/nondestructive-inspection-testing-evaluation/>



# SKY-HIGH DREAMS

TCC'S PROFESSIONAL PILOT PROGRAM  
HELPS CRAIG LOVE REALIZE A 20-YEAR DREAM  
— TO FLY HELICOPTERS

By Bill Lace





It was kind a fluke,” he said. “On a lark, one day I drove out to Alliance because I knew the program was there. They were having a briefing (an orientation for newly enrolled students) — the last one before classes began — and Joan Murali, the admin who really makes things happen for the flight program, asked if I wanted to sit in and listen. By the end, I was saying, ‘OK, let’s get started.’ I have a really strong faith, and it was almost as if I was directed to go there that day.

Craig Love

TCC Professional Pilot Program Graduate

**T**CC’s Professional Pilot Program, grounded by the Novel Coronavirus in the Spring, has taken off once again. It couldn’t have come sooner for Craig Love, who needed to log in a few more flight hours to complete his Certified Flight Instructor — Helicopter rating.

Love will thus finally realize a dream going back to his 20 years in the U.S. Army, which included duties in and around helicopters, but not flying them. “I got bit at a pretty young age and knew it was something I’d really, really like to do,” he said, “but I wore glasses, and you had to have 20/20 vision to be a pilot.”

The vision requirement was eventually eased, but by then Love was older than the 32-year maximum age for pilot training, but 12 years after leaving the military, he discovered TCC’s program.

“It was kind a fluke,” he said. “On a lark, one day I drove out to Alliance because I knew the program was there. They were having a briefing (an orientation for newly enrolled students) — the last one before classes began — and Joan Murali, the admin who really makes things happen for the flight program, asked if I wanted to sit in and listen. By the end, I was saying, ‘OK, let’s get started.’ I have a really strong faith, and it was almost as if I was directed to go there that day.”

Love began by earning a Private Flight rating and then started moving up the ladder — Instrument Flight, Intermediate Flight and Commercial Flight before tackling the highest rating of Certified Flight Instructor. It’s been a long haul, but not by choice. As a veteran, like most of the helicopter students, he depends heavily on financial aid and on his Veterans Administration benefits, which aren’t always immediately available.

Program costs fall into two categories. Ground classes, covering everything from meteorology to navigation to aviation law, are taught by TCC faculty at normal tuition and fee rates. Hands-on flight training is provided under contract by two vendors — one each for airplane (fixed-wing) and helicopters — at going rates, which are high, but competitive with private flight schools. The estimated flight fees for Love’s current program, for example, total \$12,530.

“It’s kind of scary when a board member or my president looks at the cost,” said Clint Grant, dean of Aviation, Business and Logistics at TCC Northwest, “but I have to remind them

that they’re not comparing us to welding or culinary arts.”

Actually, as the only community college in Texas offering a pilot training program, TCC is a bargain for those determined to fly, thanks to the much lower cost of ground courses. Then, too, most students take the two additional courses toward needed for the Associate of Applied Science degree, an especially rigorous popular option for airplane students eyeing careers with major airlines.

The Professional Pilot Program is not only expensive, but also academically rigorous. “You’ve got to be dedicated,” said Program Chair Chad Weigand. “There’s a vast amount of coursework, and there’s nothing they’re learning that they’ll never use again. Everything they’ll learn, they’ll use throughout their entire career.”

Love agrees and adds that the flying part is no snap, either. “An airplane, by its very nature, wants to fly,” he said. “A helicopter does not. A helicopter beats the air into submission. One of our instructors, Joe Gonzalez, says that hovering is like trying to juggle while bouncing on a basketball that’s sitting on top of another basketball. It’s really tough.”

Perhaps, but many students once they begin flying in the first semester, are captured by the experience. “It’s like a virus, in a way,” Weigand said, “in that the only cure is to keep flying.”

Just ask Love, who was eager not only to finish the program, but simply to be aloft again. “You think back centuries to stories of how man tries to free his bonds from the earth and fly through the sky,” he said. “I love being in the air. I love the solitude of flying.”

This free-spirited passion, Weigand said, seems to be more prevalent in the helicopter jockeys than airplane pilots. “They seem to just want to get out there and do flying,” he said. “They don’t want to be stuck behind a bunch of rules.”

Love puts it somewhat differently. “Do you know the difference between a helicopter pilot and a savings bond?” he asks, a twinkle in his voice. “The savings bond eventually matures.”

Professional Pilot Program Information:

**<https://www.tccd.edu/academics/courses-and-programs/programs-a-z/credit/aviation/professional-pilot/>** or contact Chad Weigand, program director, at **817-515-2128**.

# Taking TCC to the Community

## TRUSTEE GWEN MORRISON IS ALL ABOUT ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

By Paul Sturiale

If you want to make Gwendolyn Morrison's day, tell her that you are engaged.

Morrison, the District 6 representative on Tarrant County College's Board of Trustees, has spent her life bringing people together to build common bonds. She refers to it as 'getting people engaged,' which she describes as a new name for an old concept — making people feel like a welcome part of a concept so they embrace it.

"I love it that the Chancellor says we have to be a student-ready campus. That's the expectation — build this beautiful, shiny campus, and people will come. But the truth of the matter is that in some cases, it might be a little intimidating for some people," Morrison says. "So, the way I see it, it's more important to take the College to the community. I see that as more of my role. And, I want the College and staff to feel that wherever they are, the College is, too. Whether they're at their churches, their community, their neighborhood, their block, at the grocery store, they are the community's access to the College. And how I act models that belief. My events are just an embellished way of presenting the idea of the College to the community."

Morrison has been a TCC trustee continuously since 1976, when she was elected as an at-large candidate and has served her constituents in District Six after it was created in 1988. District Six includes East and Southeast Fort Worth, Forest Hill, Everman and part of Southwest Fort Worth.

From the start, Morrison has been dedicated to building common bonds between individuals and generations through tangible initiatives. Over her tenure, her vision has evolved into an event calendar of six activities, which either TCC sponsors or partners with groups to host on the South Campus or at the TCC Opportunity Center, located by Dunbar High School in South Fort Worth. All of the events serve as opportunities for people to share opinions and ideas, and to take those ideas back to their neighborhoods and families.

"The true meaning of these events is to have that conversation and to carry that conversation to the new generation and to create new conversations," Morrison said. "People do not go where they are not invited or where they

do not feel welcome. And once they are there, they don't stay unless they are engaged. And so, that's why we have discussions where people can raise their voices and participate in a very respectful way."

As the youngest of 17 children in Neches, a small community located about 30 miles southwest of Tyler in East Texas, Morrison learned the importance of people communicating and cooperating to build a family and community. Those lessons set the stage for the way she has interacted with people her entire life and nurtured her belief in being involved in leadership roles in organizations and events that matter to her.

Her involvement with Texas 4-H clubs in grade school developed her leadership and public speaking skills, which led to being valedictorian in high school and securing her undergraduate and master's degrees from Stephen F. Austin State College, where she was voted Miss Stephen F. Austin and Outstanding Student Woman and served as president of Gamma Sigma Sigma Sorority.

"The thing that most impressed me was that everybody on campus was very friendly, and they always spoke to you. It was a very welcoming environment," she said, noting that her experience helped form her belief that a welcoming, inclusive attitude is essential to a school's efforts to bond with people as a way of becoming a vibrant part of the community.

"Community engagement was different when I first joined the Board. So, basically, it was like you went to your board meetings and you showed up at events if you were invited," Morrison explained. "I wanted to do more. I felt the need to engage the community in a systematic way. I have been fortunate that I have had the opportunity to interact with older women in the community. These were women who were business owners or educators who had that iconic presence. And, they had been trailblazers in their communities and in their professions.

"I wanted younger people to have that kind of connection with history. I didn't want people to lose the value of those lessons. So, I wanted to share that."

After embracing the idea of promoting community





INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

bringing people together to build common bonds



BREAKFAST WITH OUR ELDERS



50TH FAMILY ANNIVERSARY EXTRAVAGANZA

engagement with TCC as her mission, the biggest challenge Morrison faced was determining how to do it effectively. She decided the solution involved bringing together community members of all ages to start dialogues they would carry back to their family and friends. And what better place to do it than TCC facilities?



**It is so important that education is a part of the thought process, and for me, education means that TCC is part of everything that happens,” Morrison said. “It has become very important that TCC becomes involved with every aspect of the community. Whenever anybody thinks of training people or educating people, I want them to say ‘Let’s talk to the people at TCC. How can TCC help us? What are they doing that we can partner with?’**

**Gwendolyn Morrison**  
District 6 Representative,  
Tarrant County College’s Board of Trustees

## **INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

From that point, it was only a matter of how and where to start. Her answer was to create the first Intergenerational Community Conversation (The Conversation) in 2012.

Held in the fall of each year, the TCC-sponsored Conversation spotlights TCC as a positive force and resource in the community and showcases TCC as a viable and valuable resource to high school students and others who are considering returning to school.

“I wanted to bring together people — even some of the people who went through that first class at TCC — and talk about what TCC has meant to the community,” said Morrison. “I wanted to help young people to see what it still can do for them and the community. That TCC should be their first college of choice. I wanted every student to believe that, regardless of where else you plan to go to school, you should all apply and think about going to Tarrant County College. So, I came up with this concept of the intergenerational conversation. And invited people by sending out letters to community leaders and community thought leaders — ‘influencers’ we call them now, that wasn’t a term then — and invited them to be part of that conversation.

“My idea was to plant that seed and to bring people together and have students and faculty and staff to accept that concept as their own. To embrace it, but to embellish it in their own way. To bring their own genius to it. Over the last eight years, it has

changed and grown, and it has become different from what I envisioned. But the goal is still the same,” said Morrison.

## **STOP SIX SHAPE-UP**

Seeing the success of the Conversation prompted Morrison to launch the Stop Six Shape-Up in 2014, designed to help local residents address the needs and nature of their area. Stop Six is a community on Fort Worth’s east side.

Morrison sees the Shape-Up as a way to create the initial ripple that spreads ideas and information throughout the area.

“The concept was ‘What do you need to do to shape up a community? What are all of the aspects of a community?’ There’s health, there’s wealth, there’s development. All of those factors need to be engaged and all moving forward on an upward spiral if you’re going to revitalize and keep the community going,” she explained. “We have people engage the community in health and wellness and economic development to bring it to a personal level. And also different training programs, experts come in and talk to the community about what you can do to enhance your earning power and the earning power of your family.”

Because of its tradition of close-knit family ties, she recognized that the community had a natural resource for carrying the ideas and information to their family and friends. “I truly engaged the grannies, aunties and the networks in the neighborhood because the aunties and the grannies have the time to go out and gather the information, and then they can bring it to the grandson or the nephew or the niece who needs that information and that sense of direction.”

Morrison also focused on local community groups that served children at early ages because “we wanted to engage churches and schools, child care centers and other organizations that impact children directly. Everybody wants to talk about kids going to college when they get to high school. But we need to start talking about it when they are in elementary school,” Morrison said.

## **STATE OF THE SIX**

Recognizing that the Conversation needed to include elected and public administrative officials, Morrison extended the concept of the Stop Six Shake-Up in 2014 to create State of the Six, a community report-style event where TCC leaders meet with officials to exchange information and ideas and get their input on their challenges. The group meets every December at a TCC facility.

“I want to develop a relationship with all of the elected officials and TCC so that TCC is on the top of their minds. And I want TCC to be the school-of-choice for everybody who lives here,” she said. “When they think about training they might need, the first thing I want them to say is ‘What does TCC offer? How can TCC help me to do this?’

“The State of the Sixth is an opportunity for all of the elected and appointed officials to get together to talk about the challenges they’re facing and all of the challenges that they are addressing on behalf of the community. And how they can partner with the community and with TCC to better accomplish that service.”



## BREAKFAST WITH OUR ELDERS

Capitalizing the “I” in Intergenerational Community Conversation as the key to successful interaction, Morrison started the Breakfast with Our Elders event in 2015. The annual breakfast brings together families to develop a better sense of TCC’s heritage and how it still is a relevant resource today in their lives.

Ordinarily, this event is held on the first Friday of August. But the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped it into a virtual event that brought a limited number of students and their families together to explore ideas and meet TCC leaders, faculty and representatives. Hopefully, Morrison says, in the post-COVID-19 period, the discussions will resume as an important in-person opportunity to boost attendees’ awareness of the College and identify ways that TCC can benefit them.

“I felt that we needed to do something else to really connect high schoolers to TCC and people in the community. So, we identified people who had been part of education and leadership in the community and at TCC and had a breakfast. We invited them to bring their families and to bring students from kindergartens and childhood centers. We also made sure to include student athletes from Dunbar High School. We let them know some of what we’re doing, but we also let them honor the elders,” she explained.

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN HEALTH EXPO

TCC South is the original home of the College’s nursing program. Though many nursing programs have moved to TCC Trinity River East, TCC South still is home to several related programs, including physical education, massage therapy and kinesiology.

So, it seems natural that TCC South spent many years as the home for the African-American Health Expo, a wide-ranging collection of speakers, service providers and public health programs that address health issues that are relevant to the county’s African-American community. The event traditionally has been held annually in April to coincide with African-American Health Month. Post-COVID-19, the Expo is expected to move to the William M. McDonald YMCA in South Fort Worth.

## JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Prior to COVID-19, TCC planned to substantially increase its involvement with the 2020 edition of Juneteenth, the celebration of the June 19, 1865 announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas. The pandemic forced Juneteenth organizers to adapt several events to a virtual environment and stage limited-attendance events in Downtown Fort Worth. Post-COVID-19, TCC plans to have TCC South host the celebration, which is expected to attract many first-time visitors to campus.

“It is important not just for the day but because of the concept of empowerment that comes with it and what it represents,” said Morrison. “I think it has a tremendous impact

and serves as an eye-opener for many people.

“What I want is for people to embrace the campus as their own. As I see it, it is a chance to be invited, be welcomed, be engaged and be valued. By having that familiarity with the campus, it gives people that feeling. And, it’s one they will carry away with them.”

Beyond the celebration, the opportunity to host Juneteenth, says Morrison, is special because “It reminds me of my days at Stephen F. Austin College because of the familiarity that people can gain and the affinity that can come from that. That’s why it is so important. It brings people together on campus for meaningful activities in which they are engaged.”

## UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY

For the past three years, TCC has sponsored a monthly Unity in the Community event to bring families to TCC South to get information, access resources and build familiarity with TCC. The Tarrant Area Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry participates to distribute food and personal items to attendees. It also is a way for TCC to create a favorable impression that will last long after the event.

“It is so important that education is a part of the thought process, and for me, education means that TCC is part of everything that happens,” Morrison said. “It has become very important that TCC becomes involved with every aspect of the community. Whenever anybody thinks of training people or educating people, I want them to say ‘Let’s talk to the people at TCC. How can TCC help us? What are they doing that we can partner with?’”

## WHAT’S NEXT?

One would think that such a full agenda would be enough for someone who obviously has fulfilled the challenge that she set for herself nearly a half-century ago.

But as one might suspect, Morrison doesn’t see it that way. “My new word is ‘NEXT.’ My focus is on what’s next. What can we do better? How can we serve better? How can we reach further to the top, deeper to the bottom and enlarge our engagement better? So that’s what’s next.”

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**Morrison, the District 6 representative on Tarrant County College’s Board of Trustees, has spent her life bringing people together to build common bonds. She refers to it as getting people engaged, which she describes as a new name for an old concept: Making people feel like a welcome part of a concept so they embrace it.**

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# PROVIDING HELP AT A TIME OF NEED

## TCC'S STUDENT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND DONORS HELP KEEP STUDENTS ON TRACK

By Paul Sturiale

EDITOR'S NOTE: The names of the students in this article have been changed at their request.

**T**he COVID-19 crisis has some TCC students wondering where they can turn for the assistance needed to keep pursuing their dreams, and donors wondering how they can help. The TCCD Foundation has the right answer for both — the Student Emergency Assistance Fund.

TCCD Foundation's Student Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF) offers a way to connect deserving students with donors who want to help meet the increasing need during the crisis. The Foundation received 53 applications for SEAF assistance between January 13 and March 8. During the next 3.5 weeks (March 16-April 8), new applications jumped to 234 (a 441 percent increase).

"It's important in times of community need that we all work together," said Kelly Hanley, vice president, Corporate Philanthropy and Community Relations at Wells Fargo Bank. "This pandemic has created many hardships, and we wanted to do our part in helping these students stay on track for graduation and beyond. We hope that our support provides a measure of relief as we stand with the community during this challenging situation."

The normal amount of a SEAF award per semester is \$500. In addition to meeting immediate needs, the funds help students manage day-to-day challenges like the cost of books and supplies, child care, computer access and even one-time expenses like tire repair.

"I'd hate to see a non-scholastic problem get in the way of a student completing a degree or certification that could lead to gainful employment," said retired lawyer Mattie Compton. "The pandemic has revealed how close to the edge people are living. Helping a student through a tight spot, keeping them in school, can make a world of difference to that student."

Compton's award through the TCC Foundation was

a crucial financial bridge for Ladonna, a single mother with a seven-year-old daughter and an "essential worker" at a local hospital who wants to enroll in TCC's nursing program. Her work hours were reduced but her child care, rent and utility bills continued. The situation became discouraging and overwhelming. "I thought about just dropping all my classes because I was getting behind in my bills, but then I thought that would be teaching my daughter about giving up. So, I am choosing to do something, and I am grateful that TCC is helping me to complete my college dream," she said.

In addition to helping students weather the immediate storm, local donors recognize that the long-term benefits of their generosity will be felt in myriad ways. Since each student touches multiple lives throughout the community, donor gifts literally keep on giving.

Bank of America's Fort Worth Market President Mike Pavell said his firm invests in the SEAF "to eliminate barriers to success for TCC students. This investment helps students to stay on track and complete their educational goals, thus strengthening the future workforce and ultimately, the Tarrant County community."

Yet, it can be hard for TCC students like Becky, a stay-at-home mom in her mid-30s, to grasp the bigger picture when her short-term needs are so immediate, and her life plans seem so distant. Becky's award through the TCC Foundation was an important lifeline after her husband, a restaurant worker, was laid off. Their savings quickly dwindled, and they faced a mounting pile of bills, a defaulted student loan and multiple disconnect notices from their electricity provider. "Can you imagine having a small child without any electricity? And staying focused on my school work with no electricity. No way!" she said. Since then, she has brought her bills current, completed her semester and is preparing to transfer to a four-year





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TCC and the Foundation have proven faithful to their mission, making it an easy choice for Freedom Construction to come along side and provide financial support.

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**Tamrya Franks**  
Freedom Construction



university to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Donors continually reference TCC Foundation's critical role providing support and relief to students whose academic continuity is threatened by unexpected financial emergencies or hardships.

Zak Anderson, president, BNSF Railway Foundation, said his firm supported SEAF because "the most effective way for us to help, both short- and long-term, was to get funds directly to students as quickly as possible. TCC has done an incredible job in providing a safety net for those most vulnerable during this incredibly stressful time."

The variety of donors who have stepped up to support the fund has not been lost on TCCD Foundation Executive Director Joe McIntosh. "The cross-section of types of donors supporting the fund is gratifying. They represent community members, TCC alumni, private foundations, local businesses, faithful donors already engaged with TCCD Foundation, members of the board of trustees and employees and TCCD Foundation board members.

"This initiative resonates with donors. They recognize the broad support students need to complete their degree/certification plans — needs that go beyond funds for tuition and textbooks. Many students are just one emergency away from totally having to close down their college pursuits. Support from this fund helps keep them on track to complete," McIntosh said.

To learn how to support TCC students through the Student Emergency Assistance Fund, please visit <https://foundation.tccd.edu>.



PAIGE



KIARA

# BREAKING STEREOTYPES

## in the Automotive, HVAC Industries

TWO FEMALE GRADS DISCOVER OPPORTUNITIES  
IN NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS FOR WOMEN

By Paul Sturiale

**K**iara Castaneda and Paige Morrison, two recent TCC graduates, used their college time to prepare for careers in traditionally male-dominated industries: Automotive Repair and Refinishing and HVAC. Both women say initially they found the prospect of male-filled classes a bit intimidating. And, both agree that discovering they could earn their place in the classroom prepared them to find their place in the business world.

Morrison, who was sometimes the only female in HVAC classes of 20 or more students, cites her age (early 30s) and the support of fellow students as important factors for completing her associate degree and securing a spot as an apprentice technician at AC Supply, where she maintained and repaired HVAC equipment. That training gave her the technical foundation and people skills to advance to a customer relations manager position at TD Industries. Today, Morrison is involved in internal and external sales and, she says, “Just about a little bit of everything. I love it. It’s really dynamic. You get to work with your hands some days, and you get to solve customers’ problems. It’s challenging sometimes, but I like that there’s always something new to learn.”

Morrison credits her HVAC scholarships through the TCC Foundation in both semesters of her final year as being the financial bridge that allowed her to complete her studies.

Similarly, Castaneda attributes her ability to complete her degree both to her work-study program in TCC’s library and receiving Red River Triumph Car Club scholarships through the TCCD Foundation.

Castaneda, 21, earned an associate degree in Automotive

Repair and Refinishing, which led to a job as a technician preparing cars for repair and spray painting with Carvana, an online automotive retailer. She chose the field partly because of her admiration for her uncle, who worked as an automotive mechanic and refinisher while she grew up in Mexico.

“When I finally earned my degree, I thought if he could do it, I could too. And, I really like it,” Castaneda said. “It’s very satisfying. You have a vehicle there that you’ve painted. You can see how it looks and how well you did. It’s really a good feeling.”

It also satisfies her creative arts interests, “I’ve always liked to draw and paint. That’s really why I like it so much. When I was in school, I learned as much as I could so I could get better at the skills I need to be a painter. Ultimately, that is what I would really like to do — be a painter.”

Both women agree that their time at TCC developed the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to establish a solid place in male-dominated environments. And they hope that other female students recognize that they have a realistic opportunity to pursue their interests and careers in whatever fields they choose.

Morrison says that she advises young women to “not be intimidated. A lot of women are pretty intimidated by the idea of going into a class or a job that they think is mostly made up of men. They don’t think that they can do it,” she said. “But I say, don’t be scared to step up and try something new. You’ll be surprised that you can do it.”

To learn how to support TCC students through a Foundation scholarship, please visit <https://foundation.tccd.edu>.





# Our Lives Are Unsettled. Our Futures Don't Have To Be.

Tarrant County College recognizes that these uncertain times have left many people feeling lost. Yet, we also know education can and should be the answer to social and economic challenges.

**At just \$64 per credit hour (or \$960 for a 15-hour semester), students benefit from all that TCC offers:**

## *Variety:*

- More than 70 fields of study
- 82 Associate Degree Programs
- 132 Certificates of Completion
- 18 Occupational Skills Awards
- 200 Technical Programs
- 5 Fully Transferable Degrees for students looking to pursue a four-year degree
  - More than 80 Transfer Agreements with four-year colleges and universities throughout the state and online
- More than 70 Community Engagement and Education (CEE) Programs
- Approximately 173 student clubs and organizations
- Corporate Workforce Training (Customized)
- College For Kids
- Early College (Collegiate) High Schools
- Senior Education
- Adult Basic Education
- Developmental Education

## *Excellence:*

- Ranked in 2020 as the nation's #1 online community college by Intelligent.com
- Named one of the nation's Top 150 Community Colleges by the Aspen Institute
- Ranked as the 2nd best college nationwide for U.S. veterans by Military Times magazine
- Approximately 350 instructors with doctorate degrees
- Average pass rate of 90 percent for TCC's 29 state licensure programs

## *Convenience:*

- 6 campuses
- Online
- Weekend College
- 8-Week Courses plus Maymester & Wintermester
- Monthly Starts
- Summer Courses

## *Support:*

- Transportation: TCC students with an I.D. card can ride any of the 38 Trinity Metro bus routes in Tarrant County for free. EasyRide also enables students to ride the Trinity Rail Express (between the Intermodal Transportation Center and CentrePort/DFW Airport stations) as well as the Mobility Impaired Transportation Service (MITS) free of charge. TCC students with an I.D. also can use VIA Rideshare in Arlington for free.
- Child Care Assistance: The TCC Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides access to certified, high-quality child care facilities. The CCAP partners with Child Care Management Services (CCMS) to subsidize the cost of community-based child care services.
- Scholarships: Each year, the TCC Foundation distributes approximately \$1.6 million in scholarships.
- Financial Aid: Last year, TCC disbursed \$98.8 million in financial aid.
- Free Tutoring available to all students, 24/7.
- Career Services: Comprehensive support from resume writing and interview preparation to career planning and job search.

We are here for you through these challenging times and beyond. Visit [tccd.edu/admissions](https://tccd.edu/admissions) or reach us directly at [asktcc@tccd.edu](mailto:asktcc@tccd.edu) or by calling 817-515-8223.

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