

## From the President

*Dr. Warren Nichols*

### COM enjoys strong community support

When College of the Mainland needed to know how well it was meeting the community's expectations, it decided to ask.

The results are in, and COM has much to celebrate.

In a survey of 400 residents conducted by Austin-based research firm Baseline & Associates, COM was rated as "very valuable" to the community by 67% of respondents—and "valuable" by 23% more.

Some 80% had strong positive feelings about the two-year college. Only the University of Houston, at 84% positive, scored higher among a listing of regional colleges.

When asked, 60% said they would "strongly consider College of the Mainland as an option for post-high school education or job training for yourself, your child or someone you know." Another 25% said they would also consider COM for transfer or job training education.

The reasons for public support are numerous—and growing.

The college enjoys a stable and forward-thinking board of trustees and rising enrollments. We recently unveiled an Academic Master Plan which includes new courses and programs that prepare individuals for emerging industries and technologies in the college's service area.

*Continued on page 8.*



## COM Trustees Call for \$162.5 Million



**W**ith students and their success as the focus, COM's Board of Trustees unanimously approved calling for a \$162.5 million November bond referendum to add three new buildings to its aging Texas City campus.

The bond referendum, which was called following a recommendation from community members, proposes the construction of a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)/Allied Health building, Industrial Careers building and a Student Success Center which will house all student enrollment offices such as admissions, financial aid and advising.

"We are confident the communities COM serves are supportive of higher education and will approve this bond proposal," said Kyle Dickson, board chair. "We owe it to the parents and businesses of our great communities, but most importantly, we owe it to students to provide them with

state-of-the-art facilities and relevant programs that will benefit them as they enter the workforce or transfer to a four-year institution."

COM trustees approved calling for the bond referendum in a 6-0 vote following a presentation by community members Dawn King and Bill McGarvey. Trustee Rosalie Kettler was unable to attend the meeting due to a death in her family.

*Continued on page 2*

### WHO CAN VOTE?

**Registered voters living within Dickinson, Hitchcock, Santa Fe and Texas City school districts**

**Early Voting: Oct. 22 to Nov. 2**

**Election Day: Nov. 6**

# The Torch

NEWS FROM COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND

Vol. 2, No. 3, July 2018

© July 2018 by the Marketing & Public Affairs Office of College of the Mainland

1200 Amburn Rd., Texas City, Texas 77591. All rights reserved.

The Torch, named for College of the Mainland's distinctive logo, reflects the college's commitment to providing outstanding, relevant higher education. This commitment is represented by a double flame, depicting the enlightenment of the human mind and spirit through education. The emblem, a torch, signifies tradition, heritage, and the eternal value the college places upon education.

The Torch is published quarterly to residents of its service area: Dickinson, Hitchcock, La Marque, Texas City and Santa Fe.

Published by the Marketing & Public Affairs Office

## Editor:

Steve Lestarjette, director of Marketing & Public Affairs

## Correspondents:

Ruth Rendon, Steve Lestarjette

## Photography:

Scott Turnbough, Ruth Rendon, Amanda Garza

## Design:

Jay Loucks, Barry Gremillion

**Distribution:** Amanda Garza

## Web:

Chris Carpenter

Dr. Warren Nichols, president

Mary Ann Amelang, vice president for Institutional Advancement

## Trustees:

Kyle Dickson, chair  
Alan Waters, vice chair  
Rosalie Kettler, secretary  
Rachel Delgado  
Don Gartman  
Bennie Matthews  
Melissa Skipworth

La Antorcha (Torch) esta disponible en español @ [www.com.edu/Torch](http://www.com.edu/Torch)

For more information:  
409.933.8437

College of the Mainland, which has not approved a bond referendum since voters approved a \$4.75 million package in May 1970, is at capacity and unable to offer any new programs.

"The college has done its due diligence in determining the utmost

needs of the students and the communities we serve," said Dr. Warren Nichols, COM president. "This bond proposal will enable COM to provide a learning environment with updated and modern amenities."

*To learn more about the COM bond proposal, visit [www.Compass2025.com](http://www.Compass2025.com)*

## Citizens Advisory Committee Studied Urgently Needed Programs to Determine

Community members from the college's taxing district met for months to review the college's Academic Master Plan before recommending the college pursue a \$162.5 million bond referendum to construct three new buildings on its Texas City campus.

The Academic Master Plan itself evolved as a result of student and growing regional workforce demands. The college and its students are an economic engine for the booming region which has seen

an expansion in the petrochemical industry as well as medical facilities and construction.

"Our college has been fiscally conservative for so long, but it's been more than half a century and it's time to make major improvements to our campus," said trustee Don Gartman, who heads the board of trustees' building and grounds subcommittee.

"Our region is growing and COM needs to be an integral part of that growth."

### NEW STEAM/ALLIED HEALTH BUILDING

The proposed 160,000-square-foot STEAM/ Allied Health building will allow expansion of the college's nursing program, which annually has a waiting list due to space limitations. New programs in surgical tech, imaging tech, dental hygienist,

physical therapy assistant and communications also will be housed in the new building. The college also plans to add programs in four engineering disciplines – civil, chemical, electrical and mechanical.

### NEW INDUSTRIAL CAREERS BUILDING

The college's Process Technology program – the first of its kind in the country – will be able to expand. Space in the 90,000-square-foot building will be allotted for the relocation of the Gulf Coast Safety Institute as well as the Occupational

Hygiene and Safety Technician and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) programs. Instrumentation and electrical programs also will be included.

### NEW STUDENT SUCCESS BUILDING

A Student Success Building will be constructed to replace the existing administration and enrollment center. This building will consolidate and streamline all student services such as admissions, financial aid, student engagement, business office and dean of students. The 60,000-square-foot building also will house the college's leadership team and a board meeting room.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The college's current tax rate is .216 per \$100 valuation. If approved, the average home within the taxing district valued at \$120,809 could see its taxes incrementally increase to \$141.55 annually, or about \$12 a month.

# COM Signs Articulation Agreement with GISD

College of the Mainland and the Galveston Independent School District signed an articulation agreement recently enabling students at Ball High School to receive college credit for some courses taken while in high school.

The agreement was signed by COM President Dr. Warren Nichols and GISD Superintendent Dr. Kelli Moulton to allow Ball High School students enrolled in graphic design and audio/video production to get credit when they enroll at COM after graduating from high school.

“This articulation agreement paves the way for Ball High students to earn college credit when they take graphic and video classes in high school,” Dr. Nichols said.

In order to get college credit, Ball students must earn a grade of 80% or better and then enroll at COM after high school. Students will need to complete at least six semester credit hours in non-developmental courses before receiving the articulated credit at COM.

“I’m happy to be here and happy to be helping our students grow,” Dr. Moulton said after signing the



Front: GISD Superintendent Dr. Kelli Moulton and COM President Dr. Warren Nichols. In back: Ball High School CTE Director Eric Paul, Ball H.S. Principal Joe Pillar, Coleena Jackson, program coordinator for COM’s graphic design program, and Selina Rahman, COM associate professor and department chair of business and computer technologies.

agreement, which also was signed by Dr. James Templer, COM vice president of instruction, Dr. Steven Sewell, COM dean of academic programs, and Coleena Jackson, program coordinator for COM’s graphic design program. Eric Paul,

the Career Technical Education director at Ball High School, also signed the agreement.

COM and the Galveston school district will be examining other courses which may be eligible for articulation.

---

## COM Joins Guided Pathways to Success

A Guided Pathways initiative—geared for students completing their education in a timely basis as well as assuring that students wanting to transfer to a four-year institution have taken appropriate courses—is gaining national attention.

COM is the latest institution to join the Houston Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) alliance, a regional collaboration of higher education institutions implementing the initiative.

“College of the Mainland is excited to join other area schools to help provide our students who are continuing their education at a

four-year institution with a seamless transition,” said Dr. Warren Nichols COM president.

“Through Houston GPS, area schools are working together for the benefit of all students in the region.”

Aside from COM, 10 other institutions encompassing more than 300,000 students make up the Houston GPS alliance: Houston Community College System, Lone Star College System, San Jacinto College District, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston-Downtown, University of Houston-Victoria, Victoria College and Wharton

County Junior College.

The hard work and success being realized at COM is being noticed.

COM was the first college in Texas to fully implement the co-requisite initiative, a major component of Guided Pathways, and showed a dramatic increase in the number of students succeeding and advancing toward a degree or certificate.

Dr. Nichols shared COM’s success story at the American Association of Community Colleges 2018 Convention in Dallas and participated in the AACC Pathways Institute held in Baltimore, Maryland in June.



## Air Force Vet Retooling for a New Career at COM



Staff Sargent George Spencer, USAF Retired, has a message for veterans transitioning out of active duty.

“College of the Mainland is a great place for vets right out of the military,” he says.

Spencer, 58, served 11 years in the Air Force and nine years in the

reserves where he got a taste for video conferencing and information technology.

Later, he worked at related jobs with several companies before finding himself at College of the Mainland in 2017.

He’s studying computer networking and learning how to take the skills he

learned in the military and combine them with advanced computer technology. What he learns will make him a highly sought-after telecommunications expert.

Now, he is ready to start out on a new career after graduation in December.

“COM has been wonderful to me,” Spencer affirms. “Here I’ve benefited from counseling, financial aid, small classes, flexible scheduling and great instructors.

“Plus, there are other veterans on campus and access to veterans’ organizations through the college’s Veterans Center. It’s like a community.”

The La Marque High School graduate said a stop at the COM Office for Veterans Success opened a huge door for him.

“They reminded me about the GI

*Continued on page 5*

## All About COM

Four *Process Technology* students from College of the Mainland competed in the North American *Process Technology Alliance Troubleshooting Skills Competition* recently at River Parishes Community College in Gonzales, La. The team was one of 10 that competed. Representing



*PTEC Team*

COM were *Murphy Richards*, captain; *Breanna Clark*, *Arthur Little* and *Steven Brock*. The teams competed using a web-based Learning Management System (LMS) to answer questions related

to troubleshooting scenarios. Each team had to contend with four timed scenarios and answer up to 20 questions related to the troubleshooting scenarios.

*Jeremiah Lewis*, a Collegiate High School graduate at College of the Mainland, received a Phi Theta Kappa 2018 Distinguished Chapter Member Award during the organization’s national convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Lewis was one of 30 nationwide to receive the award. Lewis received his Associate of Arts degree in general studies in May, and plans to attend the University of Houston and major in computer science.

*Trish McIntosh*, emergency management coordinator, presented at the Texas Administrators of Continuing

Education State Conference. Her presentation was titled, “Harvey Goes to College: Continuing Education and the Whole Campus Community: A Discussion of Best Practices and Lessons Learned.”

*Matthew Busby*, advancement officer for the COM Foundation, was part of a panel discussion on “How Your Advancement Shop Can Help Avoid Fiscal Combustion” at the annual American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) convention in Dallas.

*Lisa Hacker*, coordinator of the Speaking, Reading, and Writing Center, gave a presentation on the challenges and successes of cross-departmental collaborations at the Association of Colleges for Tutoring and Learning Assistance (ACTLA) Conference in San Diego.

## Air Force Vet *Continued from page 4*

Bill and the Hazlewood Act, which has paid for all my college courses.”

Today, veterans also benefit from the College Credit for Heroes (CCH), a state initiative administered by Texas Workforce Commission. CCH turns skills and knowledge gained in the military into college credit, reducing the time many vets spend in the classroom.

“My COM instructors gave me a better understanding of how information technology is the combination of networking technology infrastructure and computer technology,” Spencer says. “Today these technologies are used in everything from cell phones to computer-driven cars, and in every industry from entertainment to the military.”

Spencer recommends a community college education for vets no matter their age.

“I came back later in life and COM has been very helpful to me. At my age I have a very clear picture of what I want to do, and feel I’m well prepared.

“I have a sense of mission, instilled by my years in the military. I’m on my way.”

## New Public Safety Training Facility a Product of City, College Partnership

**P**artnerships with communities and local businesses are the backbone of community colleges, and COM is no different.

The college and the City of Texas City have entered into a memorandum of understanding to build and operate a \$15 million Public Safety Joint Training Facility at Humble Camp Road and Attwater Ave.

The planned 22,000-square-foot complex will give COM the opportunity to expand its training classes for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services as well as emergency management. The facility also will provide a location for local industry and municipalities to have their employees attend training.

At the moment, the nearest complex for municipalities and industry to send their firefighters is College Station.

“I don’t know of any place like this,” Texas City Fire Chief David Zacherl said. “It’s going to be unique in that it addresses all four responder programs in one location.”

The city recently acquired a 26-acre site for the facility. Construction will begin once surveys and architectural renderings are completed.

The new facility will allow the city to provide continuing education and advanced level training of its employees in public safety while COM will be able to improve and continue to develop training and academic courses designed to increase the available pool of public safety personnel to address the needs of the providers of emergency services.

The joint training center will cover training dealing with petrochemical plants, live-fire shooting training facility, bomb range training area, gun range, urban search and rescue, K-9 training, driving track course, vehicle extraction pond, fire pump training, survival simulator, confined space training and trench rescue.

Though it will be a few years before the new facility opens, the arrangement between COM and Texas City demonstrates how public institutions can accomplish more by working together.

---

## COM Students Named to All-Texas Academic Team

Three College of the Mainland students were named to the All-Texas Academic Team from among Texas community colleges.

Breanna Clark, Maria Henriquez and David Milling were named to the team and recognized by the University of Texas System and the Texas Association of Community Colleges this spring in San Antonio.

Clark, 20, is a process technology major, who graduated in May.

“I plan on getting a good job and bettering my life through my degree. I eventually want to travel and



From left: Maria Henriquez, David Milling, Breanna Clark

my degree will help me be able to accomplish that. Above all, I will be able to provide a good life for myself, she said.

Henriquez, 17, graduated as Salutatorian of Collegiate High School in May. She also graduated in May with an Associate of Arts degree in general studies and an AS degree in science and mathematics.

As the first in her family to attend

college, she plans to further her education at the University of Texas at Austin and major in chemistry.

Milling, 21, also plans to attend the University of Texas after receiving his associate degree in general studies. At UT, he will study kinesiology.

All three COM students are members of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society which recognizes academic achievement of community college students.

Each year, about 100 outstanding community college students who excel in academics, leadership and service are selected from the 50 community college districts in Texas to be honored as members of the All-Texas Academic Team.

## New scholarship endowed by Sean and Melissa Skipworth will help a student entering college this fall



**W**hen water rose into the Dickinson home of Sean and Melissa Skipworth during Hurricane Harvey, the couple experienced an outpouring of support from the community, including COM students.

Sean is a professor of Government at COM. Melissa is a member of the college's Board of Trustees.

The couple's gratitude gave them the idea to pay it forward. Together they have endowed the Sean & Melissa Skipworth IMPACT Scholarship, which will be awarded this fall to cover the entire tuition and fees for a student.

"When I ran for office, I came in at a high level, but I wanted to make a difference," Melissa said. "After attending student events and meeting students, I am inspired by them."

The Skipworths each endured the hardships of having to pay their own expenses as college students and know a scholarship will make a difference to someone. Sean was a first-generation college student.

"Putting yourself through college is

hard. I understand that. If I can make it less of a struggle, why wouldn't I?" Melissa, a resource manager for Grant Thornton, said.

Sean said he knows that many of his students attend school and work full-time. "If students can go full-time and have to work less, it'll be better for them. We can help pay it forward."

The Skipworths initially planned to donate toward a one-time general scholarship. However, after realizing the cost for creating a permanent, lasting scholarship was about the same amount they paid for their young son's day care, they changed their mind. The couple learned they had flexibility and could pay for the endowed scholarship over multiple years instead of creating a one-time scholarship as they initially thought.

"You don't have to be a millionaire to endow a scholarship," Sean said.

While the deadline to apply for the Sean & Melissa Skipworth IMPACT Scholarship has passed, other scholarships are available. To apply, go to [www.com.edu/scholarships](http://www.com.edu/scholarships).

## Focal Point

*from the Foundation Executive Director Mary Ann Amelang*



As we near the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Harvey, I can't help but reflect on how, in the face of unspeakable devastation to our communities, so many individuals and organizations rushed to help in so many ways. College of the Mainland Foundation Board of Directors quickly directed funds to assist students who lost books in the flood, needed car repairs or temporary housing.



Tyronda Jones was one student who received Harvey funds from the Foundation, having also been a Dow Process Technology scholarship recipient. She has four children, ages 6, 4, 2 and 1, and her father helps with the kids while she is in class. Halfway to her degree, Tyronda has maintained a 3.0 GPA. She is going into PTECH because she has a past in the field, having worked at a plant doing maintenance and fire watch.

"Donors give us hope and motivation," said Tyronda. In the future I want to be one of those donors. My dream is to open a nonprofit helping children. I'll tell them that if I can come from a similarly difficult place as them, then they too can rise up and overcome."

Sean and Melissa Skipworth were no doubt thinking about students like Tyronda when they endowed a scholarship at COM Foundation for young people who have graduated from Dickinson and Santa Fe high schools within the past 10 years.

With the help of our donors, COM Foundation is helping the college build tomorrows.





## Scratch these trips off your bucket list with help from COM's Lifelong Learning Center

COM is making traveling easier with trips anyone would want to scratch off their bucket list!

The college is working with Premier World Discovery on exciting excursions in the coming year.

**Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, Oct. 5-10, 2018.**

Six days, five nights with two nights' accommodations at Albuquerque Marriott and three nights at Inn of the Governors or Hilton in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Highlight will be the Balloon Fiesta, tours of Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Los Alamos Science Museum, Taos Pueblo, High Road to Taos and more. Cost up to \$2,625 per person, including airfare.

**New Year's Rose Bowl Parade, Dec. 30, 2018-Jan. 4, 2019.**

Six days, five nights, including San Diego excursions. Highlights are the Tournament of Roses Parade,

showcase of floats, Richard Nixon Library & Museum, Rodeo Drive, Hollywood Walk of Fame, San Diego Harbor Cruise, and more. Cost up to \$3,019 per person, including airfare.

**Holland Windmills, Waterways & Tulips River Cruise, April 2-12, 2019.**

Eleven days featuring Amsterdam, two nights in a Dutch village, a tour of Monschau, Germany, the Henri Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium and Maastricht in the Netherlands, and seven nights cruising aboard the Amadeus Star. There is an option for an extended two-night stay in Paris, France.

Cost for the trip varies depending on accommodations on the Amadeus Star.

For more information, contact COM's Lifelong Learning Travel Coordinator Gail Wheeler at 409-933-8912 or [gwheeler@com.edu](mailto:gwheeler@com.edu).

## COM Volunteers Brighten the Spirits of Families at Ronald McDonald House in Galveston

COMPeers, a College of the Mainland employee volunteer group, paid a visit to the Ronald McDonald House and its residents in Galveston recently.

The group hosted an ice cream social for the 30 residents staying at the house. The Ronald McDonald House is like a home away from home for families of children who are patients at the University of Texas Medical Branch, the Transitional Learning Center and Shriners Hospital for Children.

Many of the children and their families who stay at the House are burn victims from around the world.

COMPeers provided the residents at the house with a much-needed

diversion of not only ice cream but also arts and craft projects. They led the families in making beaded necklaces, as well as yarn and paper crafts.

The group also donated about three gallons of aluminum can tabs and toiletries.

COM employees and others who volunteered include Amanda Garza and her daughters, Ami and Mia Brown; Kari Drake and her mother, Dr. Mary Starz; Lauren Davila, Rosie Rojas, Leanne Downton, Chris Rushing and James Schroeder.

COMPeers is but one way College of the Mainland employees are working to improve lives throughout the college's service area.



COMPeers hosted an ice cream social at the Ronald McDonald House in Galveston on Saturday, June 30. Pictured are (front) Ami and Mia Brown; (standing from l-r) are Dr. Mary Starz, Amanda Garza, Kari Drake, Lauren Davila, Rosie Rojas, Leanne Downton, Chris Rushing and James Schroeder.

Residential Postal Patron

La Antorcha está disponible en español @ [www.com.edu/torch](http://www.com.edu/torch)

## From the President *Continued from page 1*

The college was the first in Texas to fully implement a new state mandate called "Co-requisite Learning," which greatly helps students who need remedial instruction succeed in math and English.

The college also is implementing Guided Pathways, an initiative designed to help students determine their "career path" and move more quickly to achieve it, saving both time and money. As a result, more students are succeeding in their studies.

With new programs comes the

prospect for new buildings in the future. COM's campus on Amburn Rd. in Texas City is at capacity. Already the college is renovating existing facilities and upgrading its aging infrastructure—especially underground pipes, cables and wiring, and roofs.

By the opening of classes in late August, the college will have modernized its student center, added a multi-purpose conference facility to its PE building, and changed an outdated chemistry lab into a state-of-the-art learning classroom.

The survey showed that COM garners

its highest praise among senior citizens. Though popular with all ages groups, some 73% of residents 60 and older expressed positive support.

And 70% of residents overall said they would support a college initiative to construct, renovate or expand facilities in the future.

All good news for a college which is taking bold new steps for the future.

Dr. Warren Nichols  
President



Construction crews are part of everyday life at College of the Mainland these days as workers continue to make improvements and upgrades to various buildings at the campus.

The physical education building remains closed and off limits except for construction workers, said Charlie King, director of facility services. Crews are handling asbestos abatement and demolition work inside the building, part of which is

being converted into a multi-purpose center large enough to seat more than 500 people.

Facilities improvements also will focus on the Student Center and chemistry lab.

The facilities upgrades are part of a \$16.25 million maintenance project approved by the college's board of trustees.

The Student Center will see all exterior brick walls replaced with metal stud walls, insulation and

then brick. The center will have a contemporary look and include an outside terrace overlooking the lake on campus, plus a canopy and sunlight screens to shade the area and existing glass wall. The building's second floor will feature an added canopy and lobby addition over the main entrance.

The chemistry lab will get a much-needed makeover and be transformed into a state-of-the-art learning environment.

The construction projects will create a sort of "musical chairs" as some staff are temporarily relocated to other parts of the campus.

COM officials, the construction company Bartlett Cocke and architects PBK meet bi-weekly to discuss the progress, any changes and concerns. The architects report that "everything is going smooth."