

TORCH.COM

THE COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND NEWSLETTER

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From the President

Dr. Warren Nichols

The time is now for College of the Mainland.

After spending two decades building colleges in other states, I've arrived back in my home state at the perfect time. Opportunity is knocking, and COM is ready to respond.

The economic vitality that has energized the upper Texas Gulf Coast these last few years is predicted to continue. Forecasters say the I-45 corridor from Houston to Galveston Island will burgeon with industries not limited to petrochemical, health, travel, and bio-medical.

Business growth means population growth, and the demand for new courses, services, facilities, and locations for COM students.

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COM Moving Forward and Looking to the Future

COM trustees and administrators met in a half-day public work session recently to flesh out long-term plans for the future—one that includes modernizing current facilities and building new ones, and making an education at the 50-year-old college more accessible in days to come.

"It's a new day for College of the Mainland," said President Dr. Warren Nichols, who joined the college in February. "Our summer retreat showed this board is engaged and working proactively to move us into a bright future."

Addressing Student Needs

Part of that vision includes COM's part in implementing the state of Texas' 60x30 higher education plan, that, if successful, will help 60-percent of all Texans between 25 and 34 years of age attain a certificate or degree by 2030.

"Student success is our top priority," Nichols said. He outlined a goal to grow the college's full-time "equivalency" enrollment to 4,000 by 2025.



While COM's headcount is more than 3,900 students, 70%, or 2,778, are part-time students. Achieving an enrollment "equivalent" to 4,000 full-time students will significantly increase both full- and part-time students.

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Now, Not Later

COM trustees have approved a plan that will "jump start" the renovations of aging college facilities by using a revenue/maintenance bond that will not impact taxpayers.

At its July 24 meeting, trustees approved a contract for bond underwriting services, which will provide funds for renovations and repairs.

On the list of facilities targeted for upgrades are a 50-year-old chemistry lab, the façade of the student center, and theater and auditorium renovations.

Further, the COM gym and pool areas will be transformed into recreational and instructional spaces, and underground infrastructure campus-wide will be repaired or replaced.

Work on the first project is expected to begin this fall.

Community Leaders Join COM Trustee Board

Retired businessman **Don Gartman** and resource manager **Melissa Skipworth** are bringing their business and community experience to COM as newest members elected to the board of trustees.

An Army veteran, businessman, and community advocate, Gartman has spent decades serving Galveston

County, and first became involved with COM while working with the Galveston County Small Business Development Center.

Gartman has a long history with community boards, including the Galveston Chamber of Commerce, Texas City Rotary and Galveston United Way.

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COM Adds \$250.9m to Galveston County Economy, Report Says

Even those who never step onto College of the Mainland's campus benefit from the boost the college gives to the economy and savings it provides taxpayers, according to a new economic impact study.

EMSI, a CareerBuilder Company specializing in educational institutions' economic impact, says the college's total impact on mainland Galveston County is \$250.9m, a total of college, student and alumni spending, and increased tax revenues.

In 2015-2016, COM added \$31.4 million in income to mainland Galveston County through its day-to-day operations, according to the EMSI study.

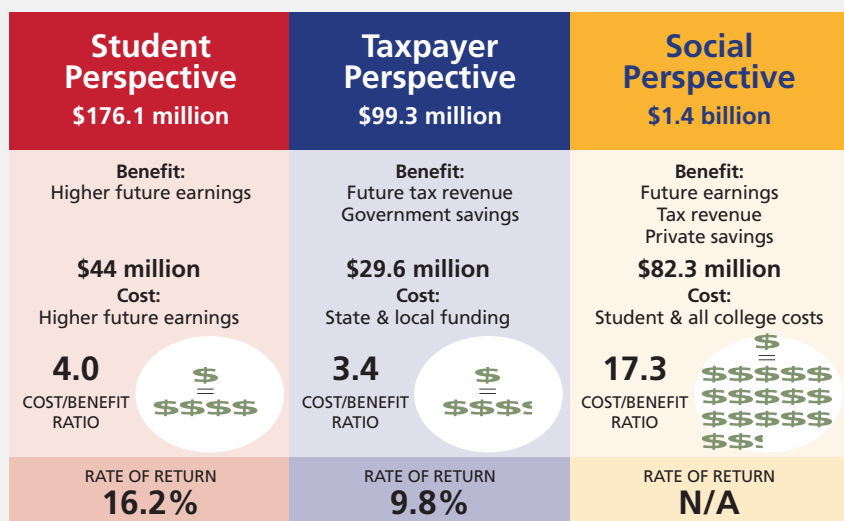
COM served 5,580 credit students and 4,678 noncredit students in 2015-16. Students who remain in or come to mainland Galveston County to attend COM generate \$646,300 additional income in the community from their spending.

Even after students graduate, they continue to add income to the community. Current students and alumni generated \$218.9 million in added income for the region, the equivalent of supporting 3,116 jobs.

COM generates more in tax revenue than it takes. As students earn more, they pay more in taxes. Employers pay more in taxes and purchase more. By the end of 2015-16, students' careers, state and local governments had collected \$94.2 million in added taxes. Plus, students are less likely to be unemployed or on welfare, so they save taxpayers money. Benefits to taxpayers totaled \$99.3 million when these savings are added.

COM received \$29.6 million from state and local governments in 2015-16. Comparing this number with the benefits to taxpayers means that for every dollar of public money invested in COM, taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$3.40 over the course of students' working lives.

To view the complete economic impact report visit www.com.edu/EMSI



Future benefits are discounted to the present.

COM Moving Forward *Continued from page 1*

Dr. Nichols also gave trustees a plan to double the number of annual degrees and certificates by 2025. His agenda includes decreasing the number of years it takes for students to complete a degree by lowering the average number of credits students are required to take—from an average of 101 semester hours to 70.

Addressing Facility Needs

Perhaps no topic received more interest than a plan to expand and enhance the college's aging facilities, necessary to meet the workforce needs of business and industry in the region.

"Improving our facilities to serve our workforce needs is critical to the

future and economic well-being of our communities," Dr. Nichols said.

The president presented an aggressive plan to begin now, rather than later, to transform the campus by using a 2015 master plan as the "blueprint."

The board reviewed each of 13 projects and indicated they felt



positive about the direction college is taking.

Addressing Employee Needs

Another goal discussed was creating a college environment that attracts administrators, faculty, and staff serving COM students.

The plan includes implementing recommendations of recent compensation studies.

COM will get a facelift to its current brand and communication plans, as well. Trustees reviewed a new look for publications and new communication vehicles rolled out by the college's Marketing and Communications Office.

Trends Show Fall Enrollment is Surging

College officials are optimistic that enrollment will be dramatically higher this fall.

With good reason. Summer enrollment, for classes just ended, increased by 13% over last year, and registration is up by double-digits over fall 2016.

Registration continues through Aug. 25. Classes begin the week of Aug. 28.

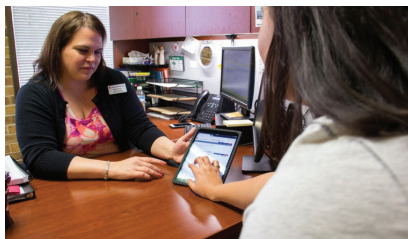
A strong local economy, fueled by a growing population and expansions in the petrochemical and construction trades industries, are part of the reasons more students are entering COM this fall.

Other reasons include additional classes, such as those added for pipefitting and welding, and new courses in oceanography, German, business communication and sign language classes to give students even more options.

According to enrollment figures for 2016-2017, COM students are diverse, young, and predominately female.

Whites account for half of the enrollment, Hispanics are 29%, and African-Americans 17%.

Females outnumber males by 58-to-42%. Students age 24 and



younger represent 68% of the enrollment.

Residents from Texas City, Dickinson, Sante Fe, La Marque, and Hitchcock are 72% of COM's enrollment, while out-of-district areas, such as League City, Friendswood, and Kemah, account for a substantial 38%.

FALL REGISTRATION CONTINUES

It's not too late to register for fall classes, if you act quickly! Here's how:

- 1 Apply online at www.com.edu/apply
- 2 Meet with an advisor
- 3 View classes and register at www.com.edu/register

For help, call 409-933-8663
Classes begin the week of August 28.

COM Trustee Board *Continued from page 1*



"I'm a firm believer in community colleges, and COM is one of the best, in my opinion," he said.

Skipworth works for accounting firm Grant Thornton LLP. She has been a member of her neighborhood homeowner association and volunteer during "community impact days" with her company.

"Community colleges are becoming more important as university tuition increases and the demand for employees with degrees



is increasing," said Skipworth. "COM has great workforce and 50+ programs. I want COM to be the people's first choice for work or college.

"Great things happen at COM every day," the trustee said. "We have high-quality staff and faculty who care about students."

Gartman and Skipworth will work alongside incumbents Kyle Dickson, board chair, Alan Waters, vice chair, Rosalie Kettler, secretary, Rachel Delgado, and Bennie Matthews.

The Torch

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COM'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, Sante Fe, Friendswood, Kemah, and League City.

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COM Expands Opportunities in League City

COM recently signed an agreement with Odyssey Academy in League City to lease space for the college's burgeoning dual credit and academic credit classes.

The center, renamed COM Learning Center-League City East, is the college's second instructional site serving League City residents.

The college also operates a learning center at 200 Parker Court.

COM is mandated by the Texas Legislature to serve the higher education needs of residents in League City, Friendswood, and Kemah—as well as Texas City, Dickinson, Sante Fe, Hitchcock, and LaMarque.

This newest instructional center will open this fall in 6,000 sq. ft. at 102 E. Walker St.

Costs will be covered by out-of-district student tuition, not by COM taxpayers.

The center will offer history, sociology, sign language, and German classes in the evenings during the fall 2017 semester.

The center will be busy. It will serve COM credit students in the evenings and afternoons, and dual credit students from Clear Falls High School in the mornings.

Scott Livingston, director of economic development for League City, praised the announcement.

"A community college provides quality education that supports the economic well-being of a community in many ways. It provides convenient and affordable vocational training and college education that strengthens local businesses. The college's presence makes the community more competitive in attracting new, quality primary employers, and supports citizens who are entering the workforce for the first time, re-entering the workforce, and/or changing professions," he said.

All Things COM

Professor **James Heffel** and the **COM choirs** recently returned from touring in the Czech Republic and Germany.

Maria Henriquez, COM Collegiate High School student, explored the galaxies in the Texas High School Aerospace Scholars Program, an online program sponsored by NASA. Henriquez was invited to an onsite experience or the Johnson Space Center with expenses paid.

Kari Drake, travel coordinator, received a Phi Theta Kappa Alumni Award of Merit for her work supporting the COM PTK chapter. **Tige Cornelius**, director of student life, received a Phi Theta Kappa Distinguished Administrator Award for his work with the COM PTK chapter.

Josh Hayes, director of adult education, represented Texas at the Coalition for Adult Basic Education Capitol Hill Day in Washington, D.C.

Thirteen COM theatre majors are now armed with certifications in single sword fighting after excelling on double-edged tests. Yes, there is a national certificate—issued by the Society of American Fight Directors—for actors who train in sword fighting on the stage or in the movies. **H. Russ Brown** is head of theatre

Professor **Douglas Alvarez** traveled with COM psychology students to Europe as part of COM's study abroad program. Professor **Luis Sabido** traveled with students to Belize to study culture and sociology.

COM's chapter of **Phi Theta Kappa**, the international honor society, was recently recognized as a Top 100 Chapter in the world.

Cosmetology students hosted Project Cinderella, an organization that helps high school girls afford to go to prom. COM cosmetology staff and students provided free hairstyling, makeup and manicures to 16 girls.



COM Learning Center, League City, Texas



COM Grad Enters UH with Pocketful of Achievements

Kaci Maris of Dickinson is on her way to the University of Houston, armed with scholarships and awards earned during her two years at COM.

A mother of three, Maris was one of four Texans named a 2017 Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team Gold Scholar.

She also received the prestigious Terry Scholarship, awarded for academic achievement, demonstrated leadership, and financial need.

Maris also won the Texas Academic Team Award as one of the top

100 community college scholars in the state.

The scholarship, valued at \$51,200 over three years, will help the young wife and mother continue her studies without having to hold down a part-time job.

After attending a university but not earning a degree, Maris decided to return to college in 2015.

She excelled in classes and earned a spot in Phi Theta Kappa, the international community college honor society. Last year, she was elected president of COM's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.

Maris was selected as one of Phi Theta Kappa's 2017 Distinguished Chapter Officers by a panel of judges from over 391 nominees internationally.

This fall, Maris enters the University of Houston Bauer School of Business as an Honors Student.

"My children saw me work hard," Maris said.

"My daughter says she wants to be a PTK president when she grows up."

COM Professor Discusses U.S. Election on Japanese Radio



On professor Shinya Wakao's office walls hang three college degrees: one bearing the University of Texas seal and two in Japanese script.

Wakao's studies have taken him backpacking across China, translating surveys in Tokyo, dissecting data at University of Texas and, in 2013, to College of the Mainland, where he teaches U.S. and Texas Government.

Earlier this year, Wakao was interviewed by a large radio station in Tokyo about the inauguration of President Donald Trump. Wakao discussed the 2016 election and the

reaction to it in America.

"I believe everybody has to know about government," said Wakao. "Politics affects everything."

A subscriber to news magazines since middle school, Wakao works to instill his thirst for knowledge in his students.

"I use a lot of data, charts, graphs, articles and video. My role is to bring information for students to analyze for themselves," he said.

"If students see for themselves how government affects their lives, maybe it will increase their motivation."

Are you Senior and Want to Stay Active?

Here are 10 things Senior Citizens can do at COM!

1 Check out a play or musical. Enjoy award-winning performances by outstanding COM theatre majors and talented regional actors. (www.com.edu/theatre)

2 Stretch your muscles the COM Gymnasium. Memberships available, and adults over 50 get a discounted rate. (www.com.edu/gym)

3 Make music with a COM ensemble. Ensembles are open to COM students and community musicians. (www.com.edu/music)

4 Join a studio art class. Classes are open for credit and non-credit students in ceramics, drawing and painting. (www.com.edu/ce/schedule)

5 Take a group photography, acting, piano, or guitar class. (www.com.edu/ce)

6 Learn a new language. COM now offers Spanish, German, and sign language. (banderson@com.edu)

7 Jog the track around the lake (and maybe feed some ducks).

8 Check out a book from the COM Library. (library.com.edu)

9 Get resume help at the COM Speaking, Reading, and Writing Center. (www.com.edu/srwc)

10 Take a COM 50+ class, join a day or extended travel trip, or attend a lecture. (www.com.edu/50plus)

New Center for 50+ Giving Seniors a Reason to Cheer



A spacious 15,000 sq.-ft. COM Lifelong Learning Center opened earlier this year, and classes are growing faster than predicted.

Located at 14057 Delany Rd. in La Marque, the center houses eight classrooms, offices, and reception area, and is home to more than 75 fitness, art, craft, technology, and Spanish classes for adults.

“We have one of the largest Lifelong Learning programs in the state,” said Director Alesha Vardeman.

The COM 50 Plus/Lifelong Learning Program offers:

- Extended travel trips (Vienna and Christmas Markets River Cruise coming up)
- Day trips (Alley Theatre, Moody Gardens, and San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge)
- Classes (Art, Fitness, iPhone, and more)
- Lectures (such as Guarding Your Investments and an Alzheimer’s Caregivers Workshop)
- Discounts on plays at COM Community Theatre
- COM gym discount

The program offers classes to all adults over 18. Classes are offered at \$15 per semester for those over 50. Lectures are free and open to all adults.

For more information, visit www.com.edu/50plus or call 409-933-8226.



COM's PTECH Students Receive Accolades from Industry Leaders

COM is tied for fifth among more than 1,200 two-year colleges in the nation for the number of degrees awarded in science technologies/technicians, according to a report by *Community College Week*.

The achievement was underscored when COM graduated 78 Process Technology students this spring.

COM's Process Technology program is among the oldest and most successful program of its kind in the nation.

According to industry leaders, the college's reliance on input from industry representatives to determine program standards is one important reason why.

"We have offered internships to more than 70 COM students, and many are now full-time employees," said David Gosnay, manager of training and logistics at LyondellBasell.

"I am responsible for hiring and training of all new employees, and I



am closely involved in COM student development and evaluation. My opinion and experience is that COM students seem to be better prepared for the transition from education to industry."

The Process Technology program teaches students through labs and hands-on classes operating industry equipment such as COM's glycol separation unit.

"COM tries to recreate a real-world environment as much as possible. I

am an active member of the PTEC Advisory Panel. I attend many functions including the 40-hour run [of the glycol separation unit] and student projects," said Gosnay.

As industry expands along the Gulf Coast, job opportunities for graduates multiply. COM first-year process technology grads earn \$77,268, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

"COM grads show the most promise in new employee training orientation," said Mae Francis, plant training specialist at Ashland Chemical in Texas City.

Barry Elkins, 54, graduated with honors from the COM Process Technology program this May.

"I've done a lot of research on other PTEC programs," said Elkins. "The training at COM is unsurpassed. It's not facilities that makes program successful; it is the instructors."

COM Professor Fights Fires by Night

When Speech Professor R.E. Davis dismisses his last class of the day, he goes on call for the San Leon Volunteer Fire Department.

His dual roles as speech instructor and firefighter complement each other, people say. His communication skills are vital in emergency situations.

"The last call was an RV fire," said colleague Jess Turrubiate. "As soon as we got off the truck, he knew what he was doing. Davis is very trustworthy; the younger firefighters look up to him."

Davis, who has a doctorate in communication from the University of Oklahoma, believes communication skills are important in every walk of life.

"People want to feel listened to. I have to empathize and communicate that we're here for you," he said.

Real-world communication challenges are something he

emphasizes in his interpersonal communication and speech classes.

"We study how conflicts unfold, and how to have healthy work and romantic relationships," Davis explained. "Speaking gives you influence in communicating in your family, business and community."

Student Rose Pipkin took Interpersonal Communication this semester.

"Dr. Davis is always happy, and that happiness is shared with all his students," said Rose Pipkin. "Everything that I learned in his class I apply in my everyday life between work, school, and home."

"I've learned to read people's facial expressions and know if they are going through something; I've learned how to talk to them."

Davis, a COM graduate, has completed the COM Emergency Medical Services Program.

"I teach to give student tools they need to increase their ability to influence their universe," he said.



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From the President *Continued from page 1*

New growth—and renewed interest from long-time neighbors, as well. COM is anticipating a double-digit enrollment increase this fall, fueled in large part by students from Friendswood, League City, and Kemah. COM is mandated by the Texas Legislature to provide higher education opportunities to these communities, and we welcome the challenge. Our second learning center in League City opens this fall, and others will likely be added in time.

Be watching for visible signs of progress on the COM main campus. Beginning this fall, the college will start upgrading more than a dozen original buildings. Campus visitors will see scaffolding and construction equipment on

our lawns and parking lots as we improve the learning environment for our students.

But many signs of progress will be “unseen.” In short order, COM will be known as a leader in aggressive, student-focused strategies.

This fall, for example, we kick off a “Finish Faster” initiative, designed to help students who struggle in math and English improve their chances for success, and trim a semester off their college degree in the process.

We are implementing the state of Texas’ 60x30 higher education plan to help more residents attain a certificate or degree by 2030.

And there’s more. Much more. I’m proud to be part of this season of progress now underway

at this historic institution. I am thankful to be surrounded by trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff who care deeply about COM and the community, and are committed to its success.

Opportunity is knocking, and COM is answering the door!

Walter Nicks



Theatre Calendar

2017-2018 Theatre Schedule

Get individual or season tickets at www.com.edu/theatre or 409-933-8345.

Sept. 7-24, 2017

Talley's Folly by Lanford Wilson
Winner 1980 Pulitzer Prize and NY Drama Critics' Circle Award



Nov. 2–19, 2017

Eurydice
by Sarah Ruhl
2003 recipient of the Whiting Award for Drama

Jan. 25 – Feb. 11, 2018

Lucky Stiff
Book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens,
music by Stephen Flaherty

April 5 – April 22, 2018

Of Mice and Men
by John Steinbeck
Winner of the 1938 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award

May 17 – June 3, 2018

God's Man in Texas
by David Rambo

July 12 – July 29, 2018

Cry-Baby: The Musical
Book by Thomas Meehan and Mark O'Donnell, music and lyrics by Adam Schlesinger and David Javerbaum

