

From the President

Dr. Warren Nichols

Harvey Brings Out the Best in COM

With apologies to Charles Dickens:

These were the worst of times; these were the best of times.

We saw Hurricane Harvey crawl across southeast Texas, overflowing collection ponds and bayous, overwhelming dikes, flooding roadways, homes and businesses.

News channels showed reporters standing in hip-deep water at the intersections in Dickinson, La Marque and Friendswood, pointing out where roadways had been turned into lakes and rivers.

Then, when the rains abated, we saw the devastation. Thousands of homes destroyed; tens of thousands of automobiles inoperable. Refrigerators, bookcases, sofas, and furniture stacked high with Sheetrock and soiled carpets along the curbs in dozens of subdivisions.

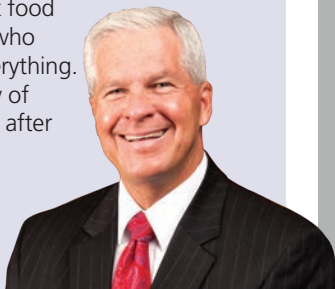
Property lost, lives turned upside down; it was the worst of times.

What happened next, however, will live in our memories long after the last home is restored.

We saw boats crossing flooded streets to rescue stranded residents. We saw churches and schools turned into rescue centers. We saw neighbors carrying hot food to families who had lost everything.

A rainbow of compassion after a week of destruction.

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Harvey Hits Hard, and COM Responds

It has already been called the Storm of the Century.

Experts say Hurricane Harvey dumped an estimated 27 trillion gallons of water on Texas and Louisiana—and communities served by College of the Mainland received no less than a full portion.

Dickinson, League City and Friendswood, especially, made national news repeatedly throughout the week of severe flooding. Television and social media were filled with images of reporters in waders standing on intersections along I-45, and rescue workers in flat-bottom boats helping stranded residents make their way to higher ground.

By comparison, College of the Mainland fared much better. The moment rain stopped falling, COM's facilities and maintenance personnel moved onto campus to evaluate conditions and begin repairs. Damage was relatively minor, but where workers found wet carpet, Sheetrock or ceiling tiles, these were pulled immediately.

Then crews set up dehumidifiers in buildings across campus to help affected areas dry out quickly—and prevent mold from forming.

COM was the first educational institution in the Houston area to push back the opening of the fall

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Harvey's Financial Impact

COM's Vice President of Fiscal Affairs Clen Burton says the disruption caused by Hurricane Harvey will likely cost COM \$678,080 in facility damages, equipment loss and faculty salaries paid when the college was closed.

Burton says the college anticipates an \$815,000 loss in tuition caused by students who may find it impossible to return to classes after the storm.

The Torch

NEWS FROM COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND

Vol. 1, No. 2, October 2017

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

Published by the Marketing & Public Affairs Office

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Harvey Hits Hard *Continued from page 1*

semester to Sept. 11, a full two weeks after the scheduled start date. The decision was made, says President Dr. Warren Nichols, "to make sure our students and employees have time to recover.

"My visits with students and with faculty lead me to believe we were successful."

More than 300 students came out for "lunch with the President" during opening week, happy they could return to class once again.

"Our community suffered greatly," said board Chairman Kyle Dickson. "Administration, faculty and staff did an outstanding job responding to the needs of our students, co-workers



and the community as a whole, especially considering the unforeseen magnitude of Harvey."

Adjusting the Calendar

With classes beginning two weeks later than normal, COM leaders and faculty moved quickly to create a new schedule to help students affected by the storm.

Rather than a traditional 16-week semester, the college created a 14-week schedule, and allowed faculty to recommend alternate times to replace classes missed while the campus was closed.

Faculty and administrators also created several "12-week" semesters for select programs, a big help for students needing even more time.



And students can also choose a seven-week semester, if they need more time recovering. The seven-week session begins Oct. 30.

COM Steps Up

Many COM students and employees severely affected by Harvey's flooding received much-needed help from their friends and colleagues at the college.

Amber Lummus, COM research analyst, created a Google document where employees could request or offer specific help for flooded homes and other needs. Many employees volunteered to wash clothes or help clean/out houses. Some provided transportation, tools or cleaning supplies to their colleagues.

The employee group, **COMPeers**, volunteered at the League City Harvey Relief Distribution Center.

The Student Life Office and student groups went to homes in COM's district to remove water-damaged belongings, flooring and Sheetrock.

Others acted individually. One **Collegiate High School** employee donated an air conditioning window unit to a Collegiate High School student affected by the flood. Another employee and his family volunteered at the Dickinson storm shelter.

Other COM employees collected school supplies for Santa Fe ISD.

Lisa Jensen, advancement services specialist, and her husband, Chris, took their boat to Dickinson and rescued several families during the worst part of the flooding.

Two members of the COM board suffered flooded homes, **Melissa Skipworth** and **Don Gartman**.

"I have been overwhelmed by the help we received from college employees and students," Skipworth said. "I applaud the college for its quick response and readiness to give students and employees time to take care of their homes and families. I am very proud of the employees and administration."



Fall Enrollment Up 9%

Unofficial headcount enrollment for the opening day of the fall semester stood at 4,333, up nearly 9% over the same period in 2016.

The last time COM enrolled 4,300 students was 2010.

Do you qualify for a homestead exemption?

If you live in your home (are not renting it out), you may qualify for a homestead exemption. You may also qualify if you are over 65 or a disabled person. You must submit an ID and proof of residency and the application form. Learn more at www.galvestoncountytexas.gov.



Despite Growth, COM's Tax Revenues Remain Stable

COM's 2017-2018 budget, adopted by trustees recently, keeps tax revenues stable.

In a meeting delayed by Hurricane Harvey, trustees voted to continue a tax rate of .208376-cents, even though the college's \$32.8 million budget is up 9.6% over the previous year.

The college's effective tax rate (the rate needed to raise the same amount of funds as the previous year) is .216791-cents per \$100 of valuation.

The new budget reflects the college's strategic goals and confidence in future growth.

According to **Clen Burton**, vice president for fiscal affairs, the new

budget anticipates "stable tuition and fees, and a slight increase in state appropriations and ad valorem tax revenue."

The budget includes no tuition increase for students in the coming fiscal year.

"As this budget indicates, College of the Mainland, now more than ever, is committed to providing educational opportunities to its residents through instruction that is second to none, programs that help students succeed, and facilities that inspire learning," said COM President **Dr. Warren Nichols** in a statement.

Concerned Alums form 'Adopt a Gator' Scholarship Fund

Seeing the devastation of Hurricane Harvey on the City of Dickinson inspired four COM alums from the 1989 Dickinson High School class to create a scholarship fund to help current Dickinson High School students.

The "Adopt A Gator" campaign is led by Allison (Farris) Fox, Eric Driskell, Stephen Tackett and Bernie Smiley.

From homes as far away as Maine and close as League City, these Gators connected and created a plan for raising significant funds to provide 25 need-based scholarships for students who are enrolled through dual-credit, Collegiate High School (an early college program) or are set to graduate this year with plans to enroll as a traditional college student.

Contributions can be given online at www.com.edu/adoptagator.

For more information about the fund, call Matthew Busby of the COM Foundation at 409-933-8613 or email mbusby1@com.edu.

Retirees reunite monthly

COM retirees from across the years gather to strengthen bonds of friendship at monthly luncheons organized by the COM Foundation.

Retirees meet the second Wednesday or Thursday of every month at a local restaurant to reconnect and fellowship.

For further information, contact Lisa Jensen of the Foundation Office at ejensen2@com.edu or 409-933-8624.



Allison Fox
WASHINGTON, DC
Founder.
Has spent the past 7 years working as an independent consultant as a Customer Manager for the Department of the Treasury's Budget Formulation and Execution Manager program.



Eric Driskell
DENVER, COLORADO
Practicing lawyer and team member. Has worked for the past 8 years as a member of the law firm Driskell, Fitzgerald & Ray, L.L.C.



Stephen Tackett
PORTLAND, MAINE
Team member. Management background in Product Management / Product Development in software development for financial services companies. Employed by AOC Solutions for last 3½ years.



Bernie Smiley
LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS
Team member. Professor at College of the Mainland for past 13 years.

All About COM

Professor **Kristy Peet** has photography on display in China for an exhibition by Society for Photographic Education Honored Educators and their mentees. Her photographic work was also included in this year's The Big Show at Lawndale Art Center.

Professor **John Kiefer's** seventh book, **Electric Baroque**, was released this summer. The edition features modern electric guitar transcriptions from the baroque era. He plans to use this material with students for years to come.

Sparky Koerner, music professor, performed recently at Baywind Village Care Center for the Houston Symphony League of Bay Area and at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Nassau Bay.

Trish McIntosh, COM emergency management coordinator, has been invited to serve on the International

Association of Emergency Managers Certification Commission. She will represent higher education on the board. The board reviews those applying to be certified emergency managers and those renewing their credentials.

The COM Cosmetology Club recently held a "day of beauty" for a local women's shelter. Club members brought women to the salon, cut and styled their hair, gave manicures and pedicures, and fed them lunch.

The **Music Department** has a new piano lab featuring state-of-the-art electronic keyboards.

And, the **Fine Art Building's** old recital hall/teaching auditorium has been turned into a band hall. Auditorium-style seating has been removed and new carpet added, giving students an updated learning facility.

Fitness after 50 is Possible at COM

Texas City resident Curtis (last name withheld) knew he needed more than a career change—he needed a health change, too.

“My blood pressure was pretty high. I was sedentary. I had a stress-related heart attack at about 50,” he said.

“When I found out I could go to the COM gym for free as a student, I was ecstatic.”

He took safety classes, anatomy, physiology and nutrition.

“I pushed myself in



workouts and made good habits,” Curtis said.

Gym senior memberships are \$30 per semester for those in-district residents. Gym memberships are \$40 per semester for adults under 50. Michael Junemann of Sante Fe said, “I’ve been working out in the COM Gym for 45 years. Exercising helps me stay fit and keep my weight down, and reduces stress.”

Florita Cormier, 73, of Texas City, tries to work out every day at the gym.

Besides working out at the COM Gym, Brenda Mahoney, 73, of La

Marque, takes total body fitness, spinning and

line dancing classes in the COM 50+ Program.

“Classes give me strength training and help me balance. And I have time to fellowship with other senior citizens,” Mahoney explained.

Most COM 50+ Program classes are \$15 semester for those over 50. Options include yoga, Pilates, dance, spinning, Tai Chi, Zumba and weight training.

Gym membership includes access to the weight, cardio and spin rooms, plus dry sauna, free weights and basketball court.

The gym is open Monday to Thursday 6 a.m. - 10 p.m., Friday 6 a.m. - 7 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Learn more at www.com.edu/gym or call 409-933-8422.

Tour Vienna and Germany this Christmas with COM 50+ Program

Hop aboard a riverboat in Europe with the College of the Mainland 50+ Program. Adults of any age can join breathtaking excursions along the Danube.

In the nine-day Vienna and Christmas market trip scheduled for Dec. 3-11, participants will float down the Danube, enjoy an onboard concert and tour Vienna, the city of music.



At stops, tourists will sample mulled wine, browse Christmas markets in Frankfurt and Nuremberg, and explore Melk Abbey and other medieval sites. Plus, travelers can take walking tours of Rothenburg and Regensburg, two of Germany’s oldest towns.

An optional day tour to Salzburg covers the historic center made popular by “The Sound of Music” movie.

The cost (\$2,995) includes hotel, airfare, 18 meals and a six-night cruise aboard the Amadeus Silver II.

The COM Lifelong Learning Center-Gulfway Plaza is located at 14057 Delany Rd. in La Marque.

The COM 50+ Program offers trips, lectures and classes from art to technology for adults of all ages. Classes are discounted for people over 50.

For more information call 409-933-8912.

COM to Open Part-Time Nursing Program in Spring 2018

If your quest for a fulfilling career in nursing has been thwarted by “real-life” issues such as time or money, COM may have a solution for you.

Beginning in spring 2018, the college’s acclaimed nursing program will open a part-time Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Licensure Track program that allows nursing candidates to complete training in six semesters rather than the customary four.



It is the only such part-time nursing program in the region.

Classes begin in February. The deadline to apply is Nov. 2.

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, Registered Nurses earn \$67,500 annually, on average. Most are employed in hospitals, doctor’s offices and clinics. As the population ages, the need for RNs increases.

The COM ADN program prepares students for careers through hands-on classes, labs and clinical experiences at area health care facilities. Classes are small, and nursing tutors are available for individual and group sessions.

Students entering the program are required to take or have completed prerequisite courses in English, Psychology and three Biology courses.

COM’s ADN program has a 88.61% licensure exam pass rate, and a 97% employment rate.

Information about the program and how to apply are available online at www.com.edu/nursing, or call the office at 409-933-8425.

New 24/48 paramedic class opens at COM

When seconds matter after a patient has a heart attack or stroke, paramedics are often first on the scene.

COM is the first school in the area to allow working emergency medical technicians or firefighters to fit paramedic classes around a rotating work schedule. Students meet for eight hours every third day to accommodate 24/48 schedules, where an employee works 24 hours on and 48 hours off.

“Becoming a paramedic allows you to be exponentially more hireable. It’s a much higher level of care we are able to provide,” said Marshall Boyd, a firefighter with Webster Fire Department. “Paramedics do what emergency room staff can do, but they are doing it in someone’s living room. A paramedic can slow your heart or speed it up or put a tube in your throat to keep you breathing.”

COM’s paramedic instruction is second-to-none. In the past four years, 100% of the program’s graduates have passed the state’s certification exam.

Paramedics, the highest level of

emergency medical technicians, are in demand in the Gulf Coast as medical facilities expand.

Demand nationwide is expected to increase 24% by 2024, according to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*.

COM trains the next generation of paramedics by applying rigorous standards. Students learn cardiology and pharmacology and reading ECGs. Students also run through emergency scenarios with manikins on the new iSimulator, which allows them to practice ECG interpretation, cardioversion and heart defibrillation.

Students enter the program already certified as emergency medical technicians. The COM program expands their skills and prepares them for national certification as paramedics.

COM offers three levels of emergency medical technician training—basic, intermediate and paramedic certificates—plus an associate degree in emergency medical services.

To learn more about the COM Paramedic or Emergency Medical Technician Programs, visit www.com.edu/ems.



COM theatre major wows audiences in Moody Gardens internship

Hunter Morris spent summer in a pineapple under the sea—a paid theatre intern at the SpongeBob Squarepants Adventure at Moody Gardens.

The College of the Mainland theatre major from Santa Fe learned more about improvisation and puppeteering digital animations.



“This will actually help me out a lot in my future career because it helped me become better at staying in character and building a show off the top of my head,” Morris explained.

Working as a digital puppeteer allowed Morris to interact with an audience unseen as he manipulated digitally animated characters, gave them voices and responded to audiences’ questions. The technology is similar to operating characters in a video game and is now used at theme parks around the globe.

D.J. Martin, SubPants Adventure venue manager, praised Morris’ work as a full-time employee.

“He has had ample opportunity to perform in front of guests as a vactor (virtual actor) alongside our regular team,” Martin acknowledged. “Hunter has adapted well to some unforeseen changes and curveballs that are inevitable during busy times like this in the tourist and resort industry.”

Morris is currently working towards acting in plays as well as voice acting, and hopes to broaden that to television, movie, and motion capture.



Cousins Chasity Porter and Shonna Bellow

Cousins Chasity Porter and Shonna Bellow are triple threats.

They are among only a few who are certified as firefighters, police officers and paramedics—and they are cousins who supported one another through each career step.

They encouraged each other to earn state emergency services certifications while working and being moms.

Bellow began the College of the Mainland Fire Academy as a single mom of two.

“I was 4’11” and 100 pounds soaking wet,” said Bellow. “I ran, worked out, and trained. I learned how to compensate for my size, and how to climb things to crawl into an attic space. Everything was doable; instructors were outstanding with helping me figure it out.”

She was the oldest in her COM Basic Peace Officer Academy class and earned an Academic Achievement Award in 2016. She’s now assistant fire marshal in Texas City.

Porter began in COM’s Emergency Medical Technician Program, was hired as an EMT, and earned an associate degree in fire technology

from COM. To qualify as an arson inspector, she finished the COM Basic Peace Officer Academy.

“I don’t feel the need to go far for an education when COM is here. If I have any questions, I can come back to COM and ask a professor,” she said. “COM has a family feeling.”

Porter wears many hats as a full-time firefighter/paramedic with the La Marque Fire Department, deputy fire marshal with the Dickinson Fire Marshal’s Office, and a reserve deputy with the Galveston County Sheriff’s Office.

As deputy fire marshals, both Bellow and Porter investigate fires, conduct inspections and educate the public, often going to schools to discuss fire safety.

“The best part of my job is when I go into high schools and kids remember me from fire prevention and give me a hug,” she said.

Bellow recently completed her associate of applied science and plans to earn a bachelor’s degree to continue serving the community.

“It’s a calling,” she said. “No two days are ever the same.”

“Every day is a new adventure,” Porter added.

“The COM Theatre Program is probably the best thing in my life right now,” he said.

“Aside from the incredible tutelage and opportunity, the people at COM are close-knit, supportive and welcoming. We’re like a family that

constantly strives to improve the others as well as ourselves.”

Learn more about the COM Theatre Program at www.com.edu/theatre or call 409-933-8348.

Residential Postal Patron

El Torch está disponible en español @ www.com.edu/torch

From the President *Continued from page 1*

And the world witnessed it all. Even as the rain poured down, the leadership team of College of the Mainland gathered by telephone to assess campus conditions and plan for recovery. Our top priority: How could we bring our facilities back to normal and make the delayed opening of the fall semester a positive experience for our students?

The institution acted decisively. Personnel moved in quickly to pull carpets, replace ceiling tiles and replace computers and wiring.

We pushed the start of classes to Sept. 11 so students and employees had time to deal with personal issues, while most employees reported to campus on Sept. 5 to open registration, advising and financial aid services.

The library staff opened so residents had access to computers, necessary to file insurance claims and find supplies. The foundation created a fund to help students and employees with critical needs.

Faculty agreed to create new class sessions to replace those canceled by

the storm, and "invented" a 7-week semester beginning Oct. 30 for students who simply could not return to class in Sept.

For students forced to drop all fall classes, we refunded 100% of their tuition and fees.

The best of times. A great college working hard to help students succeed.

A college to be proud of.

Walter R. Rife

Fine Arts Calendar

PLAYS

Nov. 2–19:

Eurydice



Jan. 25–Feb. 19:

Lucky Stiff



Get tickets at www.com.edu/theatre

COM ART GALLERY EXHIBITS

Sept. 28-Oct. 23:

A Decade of the Dallas Pottery Invitational

Nov. 2-Dec. 4:

COM Student Art Exhibition; award announcement and reception Nov. 9 from 6-7 p.m.

Free and open to the public: www.com.edu/art-gallery

CONCERTS

Oct. 26:

Monster Musik
7:30 p.m.

Oct. 31:

Jazz Ensemble Concert
7:30 p.m.

Nov. 20:

Concert Band Concert
7:30 p.m.

Free and open to the public: www.com.edu/music