

From the President

Dr. Warren Nichols

A New Chapter Begins

The comment I've heard most from college administrators this spring is: "Buckle your seatbelts; this is going to be a very busy semester."

Busy because COM is moving forward with ambitious plans sure to change the face of the campus and help students succeed in record numbers.

Specifically, we are taking large strides to modernize our aging facilities even as we implement innovative academic initiatives and finalize an academic "master plan" for the future.

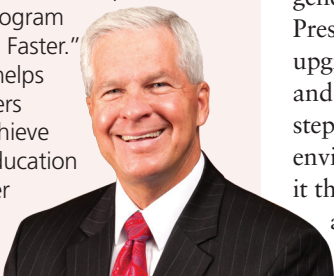
Already workers are replacing worn out pipes and laying new underground utilities. Soon you will see large construction equipment on campus transforming an out-of-service swimming pool area into a state-of-the-art conference center that will hold nearly 560 people in multiple meeting rooms.

After that will come a facelift and interior renovations to the Student Center, as well as the modernization of a 51-year-old chemistry lab. All projects are expected to be completed before classes begin again in September.

There are unseen changes occurring on campus, too.

This fall, COM was among the first colleges in the state to implement a co-requisite program we call "Finish Faster."

The program helps greater numbers of students achieve their higher education goals in shorter



*Continued
on page 8.*



Renovation Projects Ready to Ramp Up at COM

This spring semester promises to be one many COM students will never forget.

Fifty-one years after the college was founded, the campus is about to begin the first phase of a major "overhaul"—with extensive renovation projects beginning on the college's aging infrastructure, its familiar Student Center, gymnasium, and chemistry lab.

Funds for these renovations comes from a \$16.25 million maintenance tax bond approved by the Board of Trustees in October.

The maintenance bond has no impact on taxpayers.

"Our facilities have served several generations of students," said President Dr. Warren Nichols, "but upgrades are overdue. The board and administration are taking bold steps to create a first-class learning environment for our students, and do it this year. We can't afford to wait any longer."

Work crews have already begun replacing underground pipes and utilities.

Soon students will see scaffolding and construction equipment as crews begin modernizing the college's Physical Education building, a familiar landmark on campus.

Plans developed by PBK Architects of Houston and approved by trustees call for the existing swimming pool, now out of service, to be filled in and the space converted into a multipurpose facility.

The space will serve as a multipurpose room offering up to 560 seats in a lecture style configuration, and 360 seats positioned around moveable tables. The room will be able to operate as one large room or easily subdivided into three smaller meeting rooms.

Additional building enhancements include new restrooms, a prep room, furniture storage, a conference room, and an exterior drop-off lane

Continued on page 2



Portions of COM gymnasium and pool area will become a multipurpose meeting facility capable of hosting up to 560 people. This view shows a planned new approach to the building.

Renovation Projects Ready to Ramp Up at COM *Continued from page 1*

with canopies and terrace seating. Modernization of the facility also includes upgrading the existing locker and shower rooms, as well as the fitness center rooms around the existing gym.

Once completed, the new space will serve as a temporary home to employees of the Student Center building, which will undergo its own major facelift.

According to plans, all exterior

brick (masonry) walls will be removed and replaced with new metal stud walls, insulation and brick.

An outside terrace will be added to the north façade adjacent to the existing lake, along with a canopy and sunlight screens to aid in shading the terrace and existing glass wall glass (double height space) inside the Student Center.

The south façade will receive a

canopy and partial second-floor lobby addition over the main entrance.

The college will also modernize an existing chemistry lab into a state-of-the-art learning environment for approximately \$1.2 million.

All projects are expected to be completed before classes open for the fall 2018 semester next September.

Christine Brasher Appointed Staff Attorney

College of the Mainland trustees have appointed Christine Brasher to the new position of staff attorney.

COM has never before had such a position. In remarks to the board, President Dr. Warren Nichols said the staff attorney will save the college “considerably” in fees instead of using outside attorneys on routine matters.

The staff attorney will provide legal representation and advice through established procedures to the college and Board of Trustees. The position will touch nearly every area of law, including labor and employment, public contracting, intellectual property, business transactions, benefits, administrative law, health care law, federal and state



constitutional and public law issues, and more.

Christine is a graduate of the University of Memphis Law School. She has

a bachelor’s degree from LSU.

Most recently, she was Director of Operational Review for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette where she was responsible for contracting, regulatory compliance, business transactions, litigation management, academic and research support, legal analysis and writing, policy development, and other services.

**Enrollment up for
3rd straight semester**

Unofficial enrollment figures for the spring 2018 semester shows 4,087 students, an increase of 3% over spring 2017, and the third consecutive semester.

Contact hours increased, as well, up 5% from a year ago, to 731,416.

Contact hours are the total number of class hours students are taking this spring. The increase means more students are attending full-time than the same period in 2017.

New Co-Requisite Program a Proven Winner for Students

In fall 2017, College of the Mainland implemented a new academic initiative to help underprepared students entering college succeed in higher rates and complete their college goals more quickly.

Results from the first semester are now in, and the “Finish Faster” initiative has already shown itself a winner for students.

In past years, students entering college who received low marks in math or English on the college’s entrance exams were required to enroll in and complete a specialized math or English course to learn what they needed to be successful in college.

“Students pay tuition for the course, but it provides no college credit and does not transfer,” said COM President Dr. Warren Nichols. “Even so, students have to pass their specialized course in order to enroll in a credit course and move toward their degree.”

Decades of records show that the great majority of students did not complete the “developmental” course and either altered their college objectives or dropped out of higher education altogether.

But in fall 2017, COM’s administration, faculty, counselors and advisors worked collaboratively to adopt a “co-requisite” approach.

Finish Faster pairs students enrolled in a non-credit developmental course at the same time they enroll in a credit-bearing course in their field of study. The developmental course serves as a tutorial helping

students master the requirements of the credit courses.

After one semester, the results are already causing administrators to take notice.

In fall 2017, 431 students participated in at least one co-requisite pairing.

Some 122 students took a pairing of IRW-0320, a developmental English course, and English 1301, a first-semester English course required by many degree plans. The average success rate was 70 percent, an increase from 47 percent a year earlier.

Likewise, 213 students took a math co-requisite pairing a developmental and a credit course, with an average success rate of 42 percent. By comparison, for students who enrolled in the lower level math course in fall 2016, only 11 percent of students successfully completed the credit level math course within a year.

Preliminary spring semester figures show a retention rate of 66 percent of students who completed their co-requisite course.

“This program helps students in greater numbers get through their developmental course and begin work on their career goals,” Dr. Nichols said. “That is good for the student, for the community, and for College of the Mainland.”

COM was the among the first community colleges in the state to implement the co-requisite model. The Texas Legislature has now mandated that all Texas colleges implement the program within two years.

The Torch

NEWS FROM COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND

Vol. 2, No. 2, February 2018

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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.

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409.933.8437

Academic Master Plan Community Forum

COM seeks your input!

Make plans to attend a community forum scheduled for 5:30-7:30 Feb. 27 in the Texas City/La Marque Chamber of Commerce office, 9702 Emmett F Lowry Expy, Texas City, TX 77591.

The academic master plan will also be presented to the Dickinson Rotary Club at noon Wednesday, March 21, in the Dickinson ISD administration building, 2218 FM 517 E. in Dickinson.

Businesses or industry representatives that need specific training for future employees are encouraged to attend one or both of these forums.

All About COM

COM Theatre performers have earned high honors from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival because of a recent performance of the musical comedy Lucky Stiff. Special awards were given to theatre majors **Zachary Dockal** and **Auben Brown**, as well as, **Jake Wadkins**, **Amanda Bezemek**, **Curt Meyer** and **Sarah Busby**. Dockal, **Max Bailey**, Brown and Wadkins will to the 2019 KCACTF Region 6 Festival to compete against other students from a five-state region for scholarship money and other awards.

Dr. Patricia MacIntosh has been appointed to the eight-member National Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy by FEMA Administrator **Brock Long**. In December, she received her PhD in Fire and Emergency Management Administration from Oklahoma State University.

Austin Kelton and **Daniel Watson**, both music majors and trombonists, have been selected via audition to perform with the Texas Community College Band Directors All-State Jazz Ensemble, which will perform in San Antonio this month. Over the years, 28 COM music majors taught by Prof. **Sparky Koener** have been selected for All-State and All-Star jazz groups.

COMPeers, an organization of COM employees, raised more than \$1,000 to purchase toys for Toys for Tots.

Students from the **Child Development Lab** collected food to donate to the Galveston County Food Bank.

Amanda Ordonez has been appointed by the COM board of trustees as director of the college's Nursing department. She had been interim since summer 2017.

COM to Open Center for Harvey Fast-Track Training

COM's new Construction Trades Center will open in February in 9,044-sq. ft. of the 60,000-plus square foot Community Family Center at 2000 Texas Ave. in Texas City.

The center will be home to Hurricane Harvey Fast-Track training courses offered through funding provided by the Texas Workforce Commission.

The college will offer short non-credit classes to train workers for construction trades positions, now in high demand following Hurricane Harvey.

"The fact of the matter is there is a shortage," said Jerry Nevlund, president of the Associated General Contractors.

The courses will benefit anyone who wants a working knowledge of home reconstruction.

Most courses are approved by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), a non profit organization that encourages standardized skills and credentialing in more than 70 craft areas.

Programs include a variety of carpentry, drywall, basic interior finishing, painting, masonry, heating and air conditioning, and plumbing courses.

Students will learn basic hand and power tools, and receive the safety credential OSHA 10 upon completion.

Laura Baumgartner, COM's

director of CE Industrial Workforce Programs, explained that classes offered at the center are win-win-win for individuals, the community and the college.

"After Harvey, these entry-level skills are now in great demand," Baumgartner said. "Students who complete these short programs—which last three weeks—will improve their opportunities for employment. That's good for students, the community, and COM."

For more information about Fast-Track Construction Training Courses, call the college at 409-933-8586. Financial aid is available for those who qualify.

Katy Miller gets her 'foot in the door' as a CNA

Santa Fe High School graduate Katy Miller is finding how true it is that allied health career prospects are among the healthiest part of the job market.

Even before completing COM's six-week course to become a Certified Nurse Aide, Miller was contacted by an area hospital about employment. After just a few months, she made the move to Houston Methodist Hospital in the Medical Center, landing in a world-renowned center of excellence in the nursing field.

"I think it's really awesome that the instructors who offer the continuing education classes, offer clinical sites that are willing to hire you if they like you," she said. "They don't just pick any facility—they pick good facilities like UTMB and well-respected hospitals."

Miller started out simply working as a CNA, which is, she said, "awesome for anyone who just wants to get their foot in the door."

While CNAs are limited in what duties they can perform, Miller said both of the hospitals where she has worked offer continuing education opportunities for growth, both in-house training and tuition reimbursement.

Soon after starting work, she received training in phlebotomy, which is the practice of drawing blood from a patient for blood tests.

"It put me in the path of wanting to do phlebotomy in the lab," she said. "I came back to College of the Mainland and I enrolled in the phlebotomy class."

An advantage that COM offers that goes beyond on-the-job training is that its program leads to phlebotomy technician certification through the American Society for Clinical Pathology, which is recognized

training across the healthcare industry.

For new CNAs, Miller said, most job openings are in nursing homes and hospitals. "I think it's really good to try to get into a hospital," she said. "Once you get into that hospital everything is going to change for you, because you're going to learn that basic phlebotomy, and you're going to learn the IV removal and your going to learn the Foley catheter removal."

Coming back to COM allowed her to turn on-the-job training into a marketable certification.

"Nursing school is expensive. If you're trying to save up to do that, the continuing education classes are very reasonably priced," Miller said. "It's a really good place to start, because you can always move up."

COM Foundation directs \$76,895 in emergency aid to those impacted by Harvey

Harvey disrupted hundreds of COM students' lives just as they were about to start the new school year.

It did not take long for the COM Foundation Board to realize that if students were going to be able start the fall semester, they would need help and a lot of it.

Students and their families were suddenly faced with urgent financial needs.

The COM Foundation Board acted quickly by accessing the organization's unrestricted funds, setting aside \$15,000 for emergency needs. COM employees began to donate to the Harvey Relief Fund, and Midland College (located 520 miles west of Texas City) held a

"Turkey Trot" to raise funds for COM's Harvey Relief Fund.

Donors and alumni from as far away as Maine responded to student needs after watching the accounts of the flooding on national news.

As the COM Foundation ran out of Harvey Relief funds, a consortium that included the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and Communities Foundation of Texas came to the rescue with a \$25,000 donation.

Consequently, the Foundation distributed \$76,895 over five months to help 143 students stay in school and get 27 employees back on their feet.

"The responsiveness of the

COM Foundation board, staff and donors allowed us to distribute funds quickly and effectively. The same responsiveness and can-do spirit exist among our Foundation board, staff and donors, but was highlighted during the Harvey relief efforts," said Foundation President Ron Sokol.

One recipient summed up the responses of most benefited by the funds.

"I can't even express how grateful I am for being chosen to receive a donation from you," wrote student Tyronda Jones.

"I thank you so much. I don't know if these donors know it or not, but they give us students a sense of hope. Because of you I have relief."

Mexican Consulate Grants \$28,810 to COM for Student Scholarships



Mainland, the Mexican Consulate in Houston, and student scholarship recipients acknowledge receipt of a \$28,810 grant from the Consulate. From left right: Trustee Alan Waters, Trustee Melissa Skipworth, Trustee Don Gartman, Consul General of Mexico in Houston Oscar Rodriguez Cabrera, COM President Dr. Warren Nichols, student Bellanira Arteaga, student Kimberly Vega, COM board chair Kyle Dickson, COM Foundation Executive Director Mary Ann Amelang, Trustee Bennie Matthews, and Trustee Rosalie Kettler.

The Consul General of Mexico in Houston paid a call on the College of the Mainland board of trustees recently, presenting the college a check of \$28,810 for scholarships benefiting COM students who are Mexican nationals or of Mexican origin through the IME-Becas program.

"Thanks to the partnership

with the College of the Mainland Foundation, this generous donation provides significant support towards funding tuition, fees and books for students beginning in the current spring semester, as well as testing fees for students in the COM's adult education program," said COM Foundation's Executive Director, Mary Ann Amelang.

Focal Point

*from the Foundation Executive Director
Mary Ann Amelang*



Financial barriers are most often cited as the reason preventing college enrollment or completion.

Since 1967, the generosity of our community, COM alumni and donors has been making a difference in the lives of our students through the financial support of COM Foundation.

The Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit governed by a volunteer board of directors. The close partnership between college and COM Foundation focuses on supporting the highest quality of education for students through scholarships, emergency aid, student programs and instructional innovations across campus.

There are many opportunities to help. Whether supporting COM through an annual gift, creating a scholarship, participating in the Foundation gala, or considering including the college in your estate plan, your continued commitment will change lives for generations to come.

Learn more about the Foundation at www.com.edu/giving.



COM Police Academy Grad Feels Well Prepared for His Career

After high school, Kenneth Coleman did what many recent graduates do and attended College of the Mainland to get a start on his education.

Twenty years later, he came back to COM to get started on a new career.

Coleman was one of about 20 students to complete the College of the Mainland Night Police Academy at the end of October. He will soon be starting work as a

police officer in La Porte.

Program director Thomas Karlok said 2017 was a record year for COM's academy. In addition to the usual spring and fall academies and the year-long part-time night academy—all of which were bursting at the seams—COM also conducted a night academy in Liberty County.

In all, the four academy sessions trained 104 cadets, Karlok said, well above the usual count of 72 cadet slots.

Of those 104 cadets, all but four met the academy's standards to take the state test for Texas Peace Officer licensing. All 100 of the graduates taking the test passed, Karlok said.

"They are doing it right," Coleman said of the COM police academy.

"The highlights are the instructors: their ability to teach it, make it fun and make it real," he said. "They offer a lot you wouldn't expect."

Rather than relying on one or two instructors for the whole academy, Coleman said COM brought in specialists for different areas of training.

"They have a lot of instructors they throw at you," he said.

In addition to COM being familiar territory to Coleman, he said his decision to return there for his law enforcement training included other factors. For one, it was one of the academies suggested to him by his future employer.

Also, he said, "COM had good reviews online. They had a 100 percent pass rate. It wasn't easy, and they don't let everybody take the test, but the ones that do take it feel they are prepared."



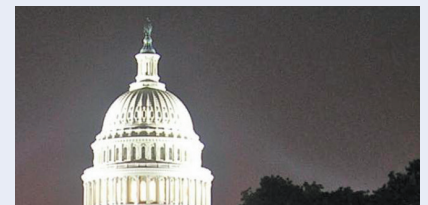
READY TO TRAVEL?

Visit Washington, DC & Williamsburg this Spring!

Join COM's Lifelong Learning Center on a history-filled trip to the nation's capital and nearby Williamsburg, Virginia, May 17-23, 2018.

Scheduled stops include a tour of Washington DC, Arlington National Cemetery, the World War II Memorial, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Jamestown and Yorktown, and other important sites.

Enjoy three nights in both Washington and Williamsburg, along with a visit to Richmond.



Costs include roundtrip airfare from Bush Airport, meals, motor coach transportation, hotel transfers, and a professional tour director.

For more information and to register, contact the Lifelong Learning Center at 409-933-8912, or email Gail Wheeler, travel coordinator, at gwheeler@com.edu.

Register in person at COM's Lifelong Learning Center, located at 14057 Delaney Road in La Marque.

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

From the President

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periods of time, enabling them to move toward their careers more quickly and with less expense and frustration. As you will read in these pages, the results from the program's first semester have been extremely gratifying.

We will tell you about other initiatives, such as Guided Pathways, in future editions.

We are having conversations this month with business leaders and community residents about COM's academic "master plan." We are listening to what leaders have to say about the courses and programs COM will create to provide the training for skills needed in today's workforce.

You are invited to join those conversations, scheduled for Feb 27 at the Texas City/La Marque Chamber of Commerce office.

All this, and we are just beginning.

With new facilities that inspire students to learn and academic initiatives that help them succeed, COM is writing a new chapter in its long history of service to our region.

If you haven't visited the campus recently, I invite you to stop in and tour the campus. I believe you will be inspired when you see a college that is moving forward, fully engaged, committed to the success of its students.

Dr. Warren Nichols
President

COM President Receives The Rising Star award

The Texas City/La Marque Chamber recognized COM President Dr. Warren Nichols with the Rising Star award at its January 18 membership banquet.

The award recognizes an emerging leader whose record reflects ongoing and exceptional growth in contributions to the profession.

Dr. Nichols' nomination notes that "he has demonstrated in every way that he is part of and committed to our community and the college, as he

engages with everyone and constantly searches for ways the college and the community can be innovative partners. He has taken College of the Mainland to the next level and invoked a true sense of confidence from the college's service area."



From left to right: Jenny Senter, chamber president, Dr. Nichols, Jay Carnes, 2017 chairman

Spring Fine Arts Calendar

For dates and locations, visit www.com.edu

MAIN GALLERY

Thru Feb. 21 Joon Sung
"Poetic Musings-
Fine Art Animation"

April 2- May 2 "Transformation"
Juried photography
exhibition

J. PALMER EXHIBITION SPACE

Thru March 7 Helena Gijsbers van Wijk

COM THEATRE MAINSTAGE

April 5-22 Of Mice and Men

May 17-June 3 God's Man in Texas

COM LAB SERIES

April 27-29 Shape of Things



JAZZ ENSEMBLE

March 20 Jazz Ensemble Concert

March 25 Jazz Ensemble @ GCIC
Jazz Festival Kemah
Boardwalk

April 21 Evening of Jazz with guest artist Larry Ham, piano, and Texas City High School Jazz Band @ Texas City High School

May 8 Jazz Ensemble Concert

CONCERT BAND

April 12 Concert Band Concert

April 30 Mainland Chorale and
Duck & Cover Concert