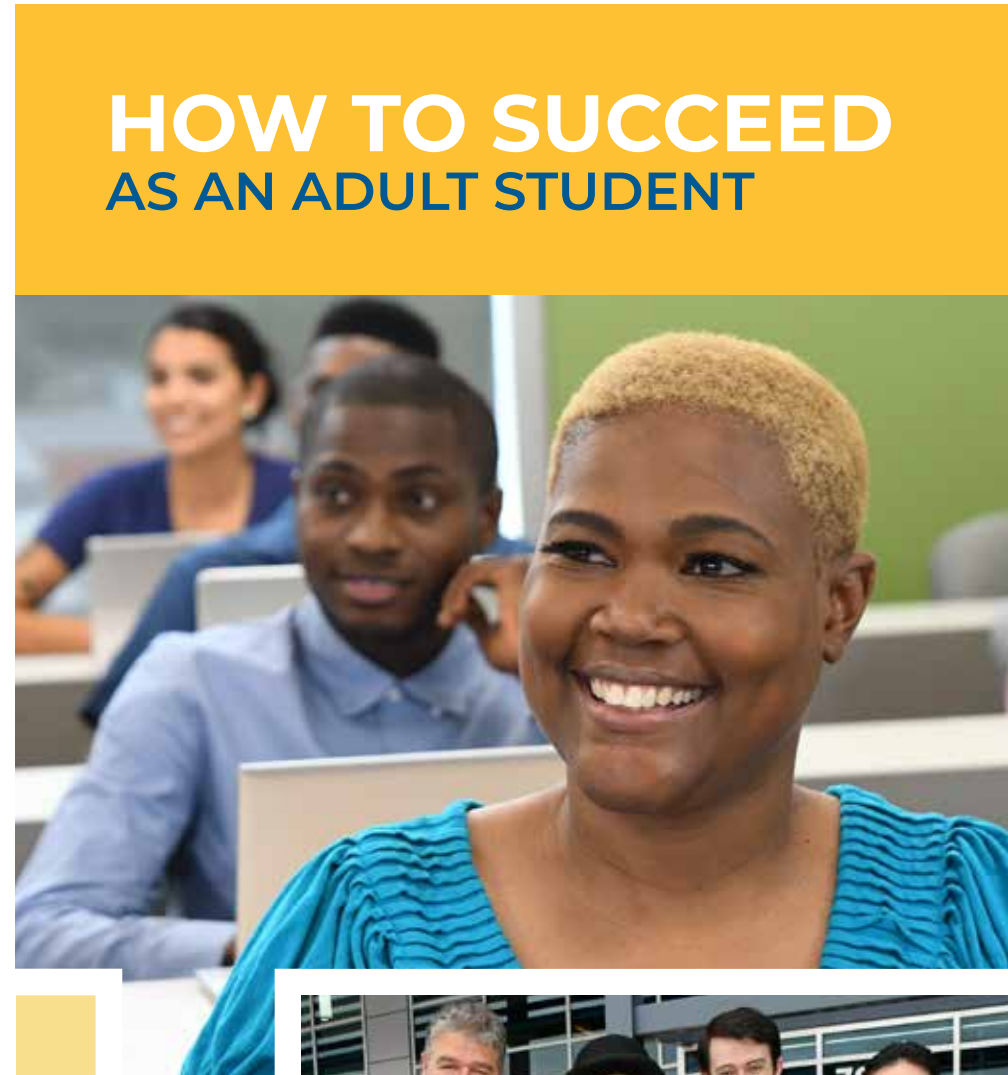


SAN JACINTO COLLEGESM CareerFocus

Summer 2024 • Volume 5 • Issue 2



FROM YAWNING IN BIOLOGY
TO LAUNCHING NEW
BIOTECH PROGRAM



**HOW TO SUCCEED
AS AN ADULT STUDENT**

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2



10



3



12



6



14



8



20

2 News and notes from around the College

3 Building toward the future
Ali's journey through early college success

4 From yawning in biology to launching new biotech program

6 Turning education into opportunity
Morales finds success through connection

7 Art and inspiration
Q&A with professor Naomi Lemus

8 How to succeed as an adult student

10 From newbies to pros, pharmacy tech program offers targeted training

12 Alumna discovers career path in Puerto Rico

13 Alumnus makes his career history

14 Glitz, glam for good cause

17 Choose your path

20 San Jac and Intuitive Machines forge pathways to aerospace careers

SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Questions about San Jacinto College programs and services described in this publication should be directed to the Contact Center at 281-998-6150. Comments or questions about the publication can be directed to the San Jacinto College External Relations Department at 281-998-6152.

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About San Jacinto College

Surrounded by monuments of history, evolving industries, maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has served the people of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. The College is one of the top 10 community colleges in the nation as designated by the Aspen Institute and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. The College is a Hispanic-Serving Institution that spans five campuses, serving approximately 41,000 credit and non-credit students annually. It offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce. The College is fiscally sound, holding bond ratings of AA+ by Standard & Poor's and Aa2 by Moody's.

For more information about San Jacinto College, visit sanjac.edu.

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NEWS AND NOTES

FROM AROUND THE COLLEGE



SAN JAC, LYONDELLBASELL WIN PARTNERSHIP AWARD

The American Association of Community Colleges presented San Jacinto College and LyondellBasell with the Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership Award April 8 during its annual convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

“We are honored to receive this recognition from the AACC, alongside our incredible partner LyondellBasell,” said San Jac Chancellor Dr. Brenda Hellyer. “We have a longstanding partnership with LyondellBasell that focuses on training the next generation of the workforce in a modern facility that was built for industry, by industry. I thank the AACC for recognizing this work that is changing lives and the socio-economic mobility of our region, and I appreciate the collaboration we have with LyondellBasell — and all our industry partners — that makes this possible.”

AACC recognized the College and LyondellBasell for their collaborative approach to student success. Together, through activities such as awarding \$2,500 scholarships to instrumentation and process technology students, employees serving on the College’s curriculum advisory and Chancellor advisory committees, and creating a scaled model glass distillation lab at the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology, LyondellBasell is demonstrating its commitment to San Jac students and its communities.

SPRING GRADS READY TO PURSUE DREAMS

The NRG Stadium floor looked like a black tide May 14 as San Jacinto College graduates rose to their feet to move the tassels on their mortarboards.

During the evening ceremony, 1,626 graduates walked across the commencement stage to accept their diplomas. The College awarded 3,352 certificates and degrees.

Students start at San Jac for many reasons — from getting a solid foundation before transferring or reskilling mid-career to earning a workforce certificate or degree. This spring’s graduates ranged from 14 to 74, proving it’s never too early or too late to pursue dreams.

Congrats to the class of 2024!
View photos at bit.ly/SJC-Grads-Spring-24.



BUILDING TOWARD THE FUTURE

ALI'S JOURNEY THROUGH EARLY COLLEGE SUCCESS

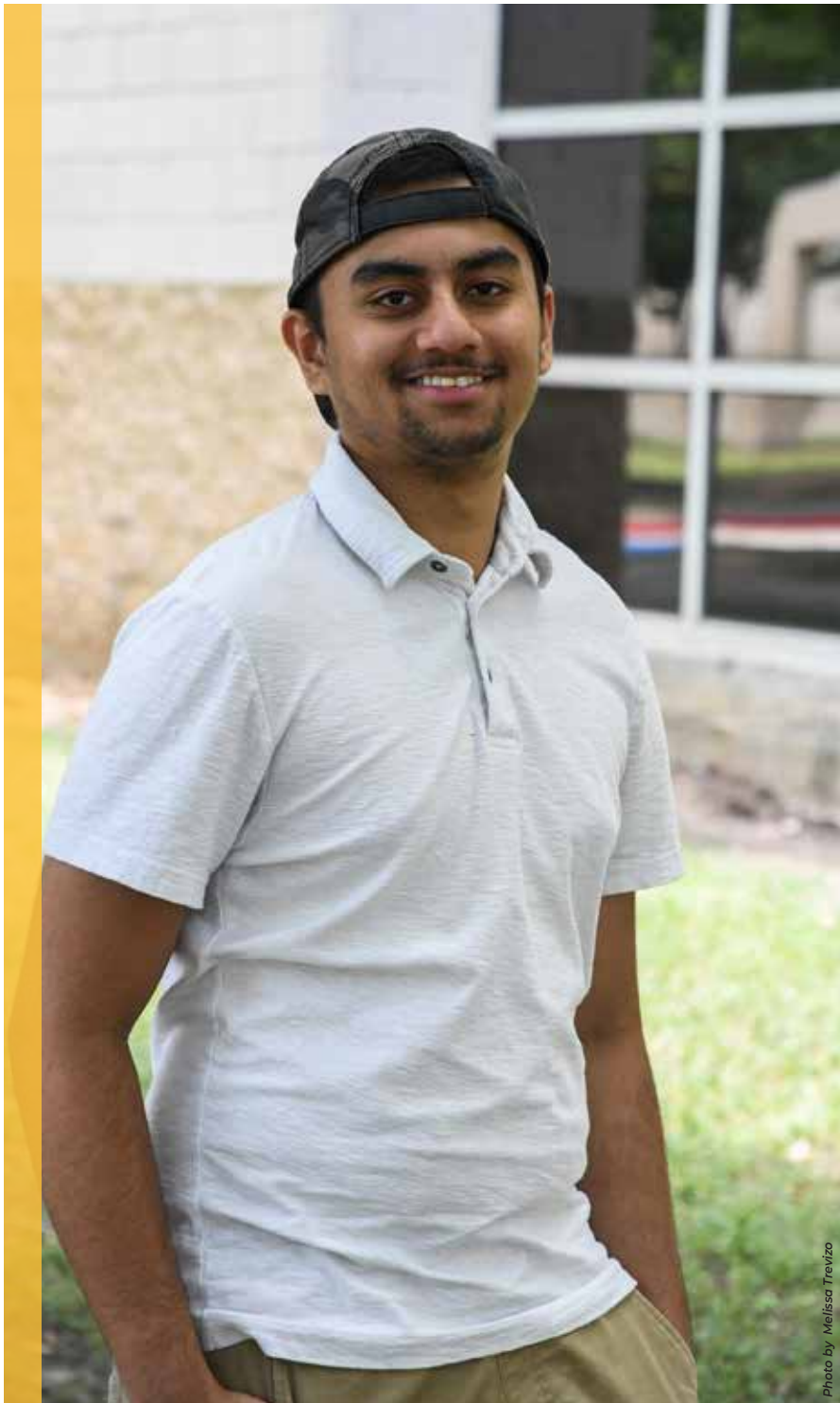


Photo by Melissa Trevizo

| By Melissa Trevizo

As Imaad Ali completed his senior year, he graduated with his high school diploma, a college degree, and an ambitious outlook on life.

Ali enrolled in San Jacinto College's Early College High School program on the South Campus through Dobie High School.

"When I first heard about early college, I thought it wouldn't be for me," he said. "But as my parents and I learned more about it, it seemed like a great deal. My tuition and books are paid, and I'm getting a head start before I enroll at a university."

The Early College High School initiative is an open-enrollment four-year program that blends college and high school coursework, enabling students to earn up to two years of college credit tuition-free while enrolled in high school. This program serves Clear Creek, Galena Park, Pasadena, and Sheldon independent school districts, with eight high school campuses represented.

"I feel like early college gave me a training ground for what life will be like at a university," said Ali. "I'll be two years ahead of everyone else once I transfer."

During Ali's upbringing, his parents held education in high regard.

"My parents immigrated from Pakistan in the early 2000s," said Ali. "They were always worried about my future and college. My mom was a tutor in Pakistan, and she pushed me to be the best that I can. I enjoy school and learning. I get that from her."

Ali took his role as college student seriously, joining Phi Theta Kappa and the student government association. In fall 2023, Ali took on the responsibility of SGA president for the South Campus.

"I feel like early college gave me a training ground for what life will be like at a university. I'll be two years ahead of everyone else once I transfer."

"After joining PTK, I learned about all the community service they do," said Ali. "It encouraged me to do more. I started as the SGA secretary, then ran for president uncontested. As the president, I represented the student body and their needs."

As a business major, Ali took accounting and economics classes along with his basic courses. He hopes to transfer to Texas Tech University to pursue a dual degree in business and architecture.

"I'm looking forward to what the future holds for me after San Jac," said Ali. "I know I've got a good foundation to build on." ■

FROM YAWNING IN BIOLOGY TO LAUNCHING NEW BIOTECH PROGRAM

| By Courtney Morris

STEM was the last box Kevin Rodriguez would have checked on a career assessment. Science seemed linked to yawning.

In Rodriguez's high school biology class, handouts replaced hands-on experiments. It wasn't until five years after high school that Rodriguez changed his thinking.

The epiphany came from the unlikely place: a TV series. Stunning visual aids in "The Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey" captured his attention.

"You take a step back and realize there's a lot more," Rodriguez said. "I knew I wanted to go into science after that."

Today, the San Jacinto College alumnus no longer thinks science is boring or meant for smarter people. In fact, he teaches in the College's newest STEM program: biomanufacturing technology.

Taking one giant leap

While enrolling at San Jac might have seemed a small step for some, it was a giant leap for the 23-year-old Rodriguez in 2014.

The former straight-C student had to take remedial classes and learn how to study. In several classes, he scraped by without textbooks, unable to afford them. Juggling work, family, and full-time classes felt like an "uphill battle."

The turning point came after Rodriguez won biology and chemistry department scholarships through the San Jacinto College Foundation. Tears welled up as he read the award email. No more holding back.

"You feel like you belong — you're validated," he said. "This is the moment where it's up to you. No one cares where you came from, what grades you made in high school. What can you do now?"

Building research resume

After the scholarships came more opportunities. Rodriguez stumbled across a flyer for the CURE program, the University of Iowa Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences.

In summer 2017, he numbered among San Jac's first three students pursuing cancer research at CURE.

"That was the first time I held a pipet and did my own experiments," he said. "It was like being without training wheels. I learned about cell culture and all the reading that research takes."

Rodriguez then leveraged his research experience and a conference presentation to land a Baylor College of Medicine internship, where he did neuroblastoma research for two summers.

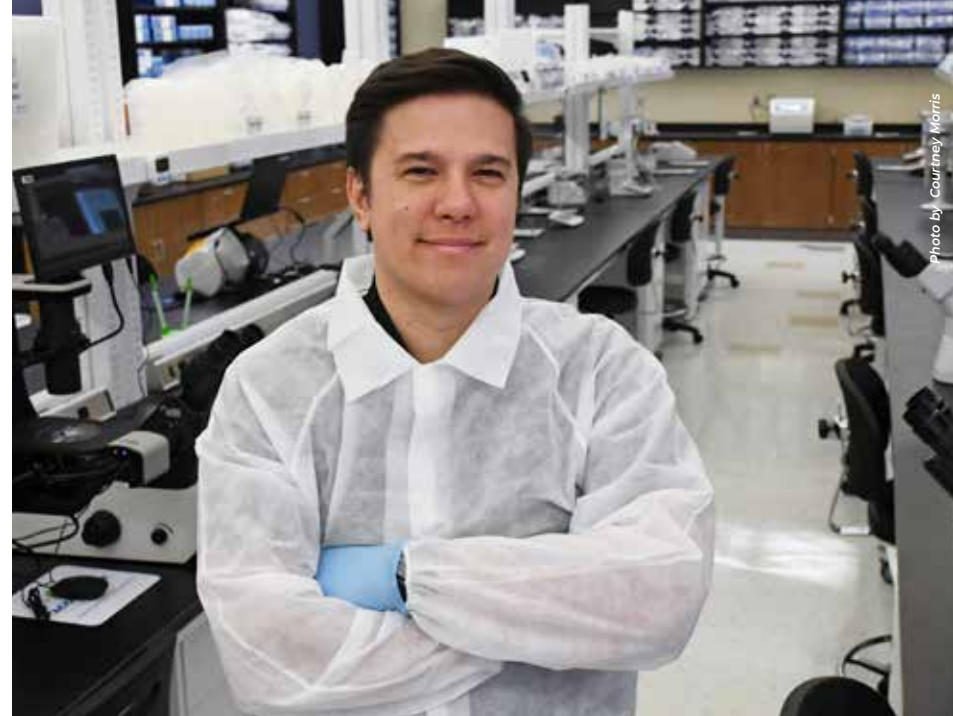


Photo by Courtney Morris

Returning to San Jac

After graduating with a life science associate degree in spring 2018, Rodriguez earned a bachelor's degree in biology. He then helped produce cancer therapies at two biotechnology companies.

In 2023, Dr. Christopher Wild, San Jac's associate vice chancellor of biotechnology, approached the alumnus about an advisory committee for the new biomanufacturing technology program. He also needed instructors.

The timing was perfect. Not only had Rodriguez always wanted to teach at San Jac, but his company was being bought out.

"I have a love for this College," he said. "It changed my life."

In January 2024, Rodriguez joined San Jac. The biomanufacturing technology program offers onboarding training and, beginning this fall, an Associate of Applied Science degree at the South Campus. In 2025, the Center for Biotechnology will open at the Generation Park Campus.

The program trains those who want to help patients behind the scenes — no needles or blood.

"There's a gap between the Ph.D. scientist designing the drugs and the doctor administering the therapies,"

Rodriguez said. "That's where we come in, manufacturing those therapies and drugs."

He compares biotechnology to process technology, involving fundamental science while still being "incredibly accessible."

"You can troubleshoot problems, but you don't need a Ph.D. level of understanding," he said. "It sounds science-y, but it's not as daunting as it might seem."

No holding back

Gone are the days of yawning in high school biology. Now Rodriguez has single-minded focus: training others to produce life-saving therapies.

Ten years ago, San Jac helped him drop self-doubt and seize opportunities. Today, he's helping others pursue brighter futures too.

"There's no one checking your IQ at the door — no one asking for your family history," he said. "The only thing holding you back is yourself." ■

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **biomanufacturing technology program.**



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TURNING EDUCATION INTO OPPORTUNITY

MORALES FINDS SUCCESS THROUGH CONNECTION

By Melissa Trevizo

Amey West and Ana Morales first crossed paths in Dr. Ivy Jenkins' principles of imports class at the San Jacinto College North Campus. This chance meeting led to a new job for Morales and a new colleague for West.

West, a port entry supervisor for the Port of Houston, came to San Jac as a 27-year veteran in the world of logistics.

"I have worked in the industry for almost 30 years, and with encouragement from friends and family, I decided to come to San Jac and get my degree," she said. "It was a bit daunting at first, but the staff here is amazing. Dr. Jenkins always checks in on us to ensure we are OK, which means a lot to me."

When a full-time position became available at her terminal, West knew she had great applicants sitting beside her daily in class and shared the opportunity with Jenkins.

"I encouraged all the students in the class to inquire about the open position," Jenkins said. "It's always a great idea to get a job in the industry, if possible. Experiential learning is a valuable tool."

After learning about the job opportunity, Morales wasted no time applying and was interviewed just before the College's winter break. With her determination and skills shining through, Morales was offered a logistics coordinator position at the Port of Houston.

"I was nervous to apply," said Morales. "I didn't think I had enough experience, but I gave it a shot anyway. Dr. Jenkins encouraged me to go for it, and I'm so glad it worked out."

Morales has been with the Port of Houston for five months, and according to her boss, West, "she's killing it."

"We had over 60 applicants for the coordinator role, but Ana definitely stood out," West said. "She has been a great asset to our team, and I know that the education she's getting is top-notch."

Morales and West continue their studies in the program while balancing their professional roles. Their story underscores



Photos by Melissa Trevizo

About the logistics and supply chain management program

From small shops to large corporations, businesses rely on international trade to function. You can become a vital link in this chain of commerce. Our program can prepare you for careers in transportation, international logistics, and global supply chain management industries.

Career opportunities include exporting, freight forwarding, government jobs, importing, trade compliance, and more.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **global logistics and supply chain management program**.



the importance of grabbing opportunities and forging connections.

"You never know who you will sit next to in class," Morales said. "It might be your next boss." ■



ART AND INSPIRATION

Q&A WITH PROFESSOR NAOMI LEMUS

| By Melissa Trevizo

San Jacinto College North Campus professor and program alumna Naomi Lemus is a talented artist and educator. She shares about her journey, which has embodied resilience, determination, and a passion for both art and education.

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: I was born and raised in Galena Park. My mom still lives five minutes from the North Campus. Growing up as a first-generation Mexican American forced me to weave through multicultural environments and spaces, and that reflects who I am today.

Q: What is your San Jac story?

A: I came to San Jac because I didn't know where else to go or my college options.

I am a first-generation college student, and all of this was new to me. I started with core classes and instantly became overwhelmed. My mom encouraged me to lessen my course load and look at things I enjoyed doing. That's when I enrolled in painting and drawing classes with Joe Clark, a wonderful mentor. I didn't even know then that being an art major was an option.

Q: What was life like after San Jac?

A: I enrolled at the University of Houston and earned my bachelor's degree in painting. And then I thought, "What now?"

I applied to several graduate schools and was denied to all but one. Temple University in Philadelphia put me on the waitlist. I didn't know if I would get in,

but I remained hopeful. In May, I got a call that a spot opened. I didn't even think before saying yes.

It was the first time I left home and spread my wings. While at Temple, I learned to stand in my voice. I thought I didn't have the "right words" to talk about art, but my professors reminded me there is no right way to perceive art, and I had something to offer.

I've been fortunate with the professors at San Jac, the University of Houston, and Temple — people who have mentored and guided me through my journey gracefully.

Q: Why did you become an educator?

A: A few months before my graduate program's end, I sent Joe Clark a message and said, "Hey, I'm ready to come back." Luckily, there was an opening, and in August 2022 I became a full-time faculty member.

I didn't necessarily pursue art education, but it found me. I wanted to give back like many mentors had done for me. This career is perfect for where I am right now. I offer my students a unique point of view because it wasn't long ago that I was in their shoes, feeling self-doubt and questioning if I was good enough to belong. I need to encourage and validate my students' experiences as much as their artistic ability.

Q: Talk about your artistic journey and what inspires you.

A: My work looks to comprehend generational narratives of trauma through

the lens of empathy, acknowledgment, mending, and forward movement.

My search for emotional healing is a personal and artistic practice that focuses on forms of assemblage installation. These installations pull from family archives, such as handwritten letters, family photos, and personal and borrowed memories. I work alongside family members to recreate memories that have shaped us and our perspective of loved ones.

These works draw from the "rasquachismo" art movement. Chicano curator and author Amalia Mesa-Bains explains that "in its broadest sense, 'rasquachismo' is a combination of resistant and resilient attitudes devised to allow the Chicano to survive and persevere with a sense of dignity." "Domesticana" is a form of feminist "rasquachismo" — to undo the wounds of patriarchy and colonization.

Q: Additional thoughts?

A: I am consciously grateful every day for my experiences. I am lucky to be a full-time professor at my age, and I don't take that for granted. I've left myself open to opportunities, and that's been rewarding. I hope to instill that into my students as well. ■

See Lemus' work with fellow artist Victoria Ravelo at victoriaravelo.com/work/murmuration.



Photo courtesy of Megan Zecchin

HOW TO SUCCEED AS AN ADULT STUDENT

| By Courtney Morris

“Goal setting comes down to prioritizing — the ability to say ‘no’ and be realistic. Have an honest conversation with your support network about your academic pursuits and the sacrifices needed.”

—Adam Rogers,
program advisor coordinator

If you're an adult student coming to San Jacinto College for a new degree or enrolling for the first time, you've taken the most important step: You've stopped waiting and started doing.

Whether you're 25 or 85, San Jac experts share how to step back into the classroom with confidence.

SETTING GOALS

Q: How can I set clear academic and personal goals?

Adam Rogers, program advisor coordinator: Goal setting comes down to prioritizing — the ability to say “no” and be realistic. Have an honest conversation with your support network about your academic pursuits and the sacrifices needed.

Make sure your long-term goals are reinforced by shorter ones. For example, if your long-term goal is to earn your degree, there should be shorter-term goals for the year, semester, month, and week that will make the long-term goal more attainable. Don't be discouraged if the two don't mesh. This may be the perfect time to let some outdated life scripts go!

MANAGING TIME

Q: How do I juggle all my responsibilities?

Dr. Joanie DeForest, college prep department chair: If you take more classes than you can handle, you may end up failing or dropping a class, which costs money and time. Figure out how much time needs to be dedicated to study, family, and work. If this adds up to more than 24 hours in a day, adjust your schedule. If

taking two classes is out of the question, take one and focus on doing well.

Dr. Kimberly Thomas, college prep department chair: Create a strong support system of family, friends, classmates, and coworkers who support your goals and will help you succeed. This may mean having someone take care of dinner or cooking meals ahead during heavy assignment times or nights you have class. Establish boundaries and expectations with those around you.

NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY

Q: What if I'm not tech savvy?

Roselle Helms, director of technology effectiveness: Start with the student portal and your student email, as San Jac's

information technology services shares technology-related announcements there.

The technology support page offers helpful tools like applying for the student loaner laptop program. Or visit our new campus service desks if you're unsure where to start. We can help meet your technology needs, whether it's connecting to the Wi-Fi or verifying system updates are current. Learn more about the service desks at sanjac.edu/support/technology-support.

FINDING SUPPORT

Q: How can I build a support network?

Ginnette Ruelas, student engagement/support specialist: Participating in activities and events on campus will improve your social connections. If you see an event happening on campus, stop and strike up a conversation with people. Additionally, look for a student organization that fits your needs. This is a great way to network with people who share similar interests — and help you stay motivated throughout your academic journey.

FUNDING COLLEGE

Q: What costs should I consider when returning to college? What aid is available?

Dr. JoEllen Price, dean of financial aid and scholarships: You should consider directly billed tuition (based on residency status) and indirect costs (books, supplies, travel expenses, food, housing, and personal expenses). It's essential to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which determines your eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid programs. You can also apply for San Jacinto College Foundation scholarships at sjcd.academicworks.com.

Federal, state, and institutional aid is awarded based on your total cost of attendance. Depending on eligibility and available funds, you may receive aid for basic living expenses that go beyond directly billed costs. These funds are refunded to you while attending classes to assist with books, supplies, travel, food, and housing.

STUDYING

Q: What study techniques can help me retain what I'm learning?

Erika Hernandez, Student Success Center director: Try these things:

- **Form a study group:** Peers can offer different perspectives and study tips. It also creates more opportunities for collaborative learning.
- **Make a study schedule:** Navigating college and everyday life can get hectic. Scheduling time to study and work on assignments may help you feel less overwhelmed.
- **Take notes:** Pay attention to the class and study material and take notes as you go. If you don't understand something, ask questions before, during, or after class.
- **Visit the Student Success Center:** We offer face-to-face and online tutoring services and areas to study individually or with your group.

STAYING HEALTHY

Q: How can I prioritize my health while keeping up with classes?

Robert Murray, director of mental health counseling: Going to school, working, and managing personal relationships can feel overwhelming. Self-care is paramount to your wellness. This could include taking a bath, walking the dogs, or even grocery shopping without the kids. It's important to notice when the stress is too much ... when you need to step away from whatever you're doing, regather your thoughts, then return to the activity with a clear head.

If you're having difficulty with your class, reach out to your professor. If you're experiencing depression, anxiety, consistent stress, etc., please reach out to a mental health counselor in the welcome centers at South, Central, and North Campuses.

EXPLORING CAREERS

Q: How can I transition into a new career?

Jennifer Cerda, career and transfer coordinator: Reflect on your interests, passions, and skills. Research industries and careers that interest you. Look into job market trends, required skills, and potential growth opportunities.

Identify the transferable skills you've acquired throughout your education and previous work that can be applied to your new career. Consider if you need more education or training to bridge any knowledge or skill gaps for your new career.

Lastly, consider starting with part-time or freelance work, internships, or volunteer opportunities in your new career field.

CONCLUSION

Finally, don't forget to celebrate you. Once you've earned that certificate or degree, walk across the commencement stage to accept your diploma! ■



Photos by Courtney Morris

FROM NEWBIES TO PROS, PHARMACY TECH PROGRAM OFFERS TARGETED TRAINING

| By Courtney Morris

When Irene Villatoro graduated from San Jacinto College's pharmacy technician program, she never imagined what would happen 22 years later.

Now directing the North Campus program, she'd celebrate her daughter, Jacquelyn, completing the training too.

More than a family affair, though, the pharmacy technician program has prepared countless graduates for an essential health care field and may soon give pharmacy professionals more training options.

Behind-the-scenes health care career

If you thought all patient care is hands-on, think again. Working under a pharmacist's supervision, pharmacy technicians prepare and distribute medication with minimal patient interaction.

If you excel in math and science and are detail-oriented, you could pursue this essential health care role that combines both medicine and technology.

Available at the North and South Campuses, San Jac's pharmacy technician program offers a one-year certificate of technology and two-year Associate of Applied Science degree. Both prepare you to take the national certification exam and include real-world experience through

clinical rotations at retail, hospital, and specialty pharmacies.

"This program is a one-stop shop for all future pharmacy technicians," said Sara Byars, South Campus program director. "We start with the basics, then build from there. You learn everything you need to know to perform any role in the pharmacy suited for technicians nationwide."

Beyond traditional pharmacies, you'll find pharmacy technicians in hospitals, nursing homes, home health, insurance settings, and government health agencies.

The pharmacy technician program is a great entry point to health care, becoming a lasting career you can build on or supporting you as you further your education in the pharmacy field or another area.

Continuing education resources

In 2023, San Jac became an Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education provider — one of only two Houston-area colleges to hold this accreditation. This allows the pharmacy technician program to offer continuing education credit for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists.

Currently, San Jac students can take an embedded sterile compounding course on campus rather than paying more than \$900 from an outside entity. Eventually,

pharmacy professionals can pursue the 40-hour continuing education credit at San Jac.

"In the future, we also aim to provide stackable certificates for alumni and employed technicians wishing to advance their level of practice," Byars said.

Industry-standard training

San Jac trains future pharmacy technicians using industry-standard equipment like the Pyxis™ medication dispensing station. Students enter the patient's information into a computer, and the machine checks the dosage, timing, and other important details before dispensing the correct amount.

Another useful training piece is the iPack® prescription unit dose packager, which individually wraps and labels pills for distribution at places like hospitals.

"With this equipment and training, our graduates can go into the field and immediately jump in and do the work," Irene Villatoro said.

While doing her clinical rotation at Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital, Jacquelyn Villatoro found the real-life work and equipment mirrored the hands-on simulations she'd done in the on-campus lab.

"Overall, the program has given me confidence, independence, and clarity regarding my future endeavors," she said.

After taking her national certification exam this summer, she plans to apply for a hospital pharmacy technician position.

Family footsteps

Jacquelyn Villatoro cites her decision to pursue the pharmacy field to the power of storytelling. Her mother shared stories about the ins and outs of working as a young pharmacy technician in a hospital, and Jacquelyn could see herself there too.

This May, when Jacquelyn Villatoro crossed the commencement stage on the NRG Stadium floor, she walked in both parents' footsteps, as her father is also a San Jac alumnus.

"While my decision to attend San Jac wasn't solely influenced by my mom, her positive experiences during her studies at the same age played a significant role," she said. "San Jac's reputation and both my parents' success solidified my decision. I'm eager to follow in their footsteps and contribute to our community." ■

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **pharmacy technician program**.



Photo by Courtney Morris

DANCE PROGRAMS

TAKE THE LEAD

Discover the rhythm of your dreams with **San Jacinto College's dance programs**. Whether you aspire to become a performer, teacher, or choreographer, our expert faculty will guide you to unlock your full potential.



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NEW CENTRAL CAMPUS ART GALLERY

UNVEILING CREATIVITY

The new Central Campus art gallery allows students to learn about different art types, enjoy touring exhibits, and participate in student exhibits as they progress through their art degree program.



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ALUMNA DISCOVERS CAREER PATH IN PUERTO RICO

By Courtney Morris

Normally composed, Keyla Ramirez felt excitement bursting inside her. She had made it into a new year-long research program in Puerto Rico that would start immediately after she finished her bachelor's degree.

The only problem: How would she break the news to her parents?

She could already hear their questions: "Aren't there opportunities like that here? Why Puerto Rico?"



Home is where the start is

Staying local was easy for Ramirez, a first-generation college student born and raised in Houston. After discovering her science bent in high school chemistry, she enrolled in San Jacinto College's life science program in 2018.

San Jac was not only close and affordable but also the best foundation for her future. Under biology professor Dr. Tyler Olivier, she participated in service learning at Sheldon Lake State Park, where she surveyed birds and shoveled earth to make room for new prairie grasses.

Olivier called Ramirez a natural scientist — "curious, intelligent, and highly determined."

"She always asked questions, sought answers, and proposed hypotheses in class," he said. "I can't recall a time when I passed Keyla's lab bench and she and I didn't engage in a biology conversation. I remember thinking, 'Wow, she may be soft-spoken, but when she speaks, it's relevant.'"

Ramirez also served as a chemistry lab assistant, setting up equipment, making reagents, and preparing labs for students. Thanks to plenty of hands-on lab skills, she felt ready for the next step.

To D.C. and beyond

In fall 2020, Ramirez started the University of Houston's biochemical and biophysical sciences program. While San Jac had laid a solid foundation, she felt less ready for 100% online classes because of the pandemic. She missed talking to

professors one-on-one and meeting her classmates.

When face-to-face classes finally returned, Ramirez pushed herself to make up for what she'd lost.

"I was way more extroverted than I usually am," she said. "I made some friends in my classes, and I would form a little study group: 'Let's help each other with this.'"

In summer 2021, Ramirez participated in Rice University's nanotechnology research experience for undergraduates, working alongside a researcher in a Rice lab.

Almost two years later, despite feeling nervous, she presented at the Emerging Researchers National Conference in STEM in Washington, D.C. There, she learned about RaMP-UP, the Research and Mentoring for Post-baccalaureates in Biological Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Should she go after it?

"It was a big change moving from Texas to Puerto Rico," Ramirez said. "I decided to apply ... to see what would happen. The worst they could say was no, and then I could move on to something else."

Instead, she soon found herself boarding a plane to Puerto Rico.

Change of scenery

From June 2023 to May 2024, Ramirez numbered among 10 Bachelor of Science graduates in RaMP-UP's first cohort, pursuing paid research experience that would translate to graduate programs and STEM careers.

Although not her first pick, Ramirez worked in the breast cancer lab. From maintaining and growing cells to doing computational analysis, she studied the role estradiol plays in the p38 MAPK pathway in triple-negative inflammatory breast cancer.

She deepened her data analysis, critical thinking, and even communication skills as she presented to audiences without any cancer research background.

"I was able to explain everything so they could follow the thought process of my research," she said. "That made me feel empowered. I knew what I was talking about."

Ramirez never pictured doing cancer research in Puerto Rico, but this experience has sparked a different career plan — "creating new therapeutic advancements to combat cancer."

Chasing the future

Why Puerto Rico? Ramirez can answer that now.

RaMP-UP not only stretched her independence but also gave her a new vision. Once, she had imagined becoming a medical doctor. Thanks to starting local at San Jac and chasing distant opportunities in Puerto Rico, she has learned how much she enjoys behind-the-scenes research. After working for a year, she may pursue a Ph.D. in cell biology.

Sometimes you have to travel far to discover what's around the corner.

"I'm glad I took this opportunity to see what could happen," Ramirez said. ■



ALUMNUS MAKES HIS CAREER HISTORY

By Neesha Hosein

T Tyler White, San Jacinto College alumnus, was raised to revere history, sparking a lifelong fascination.

“Tyler’s appetite for history began with growing up in Deer Park, so close to so much Texas history,” said John White, Tyler’s dad and criminal justice professor at the Central Campus. “He took an interest in history and archeology at a very young age. He was also blessed with grandparents who would often share stories with him on ancestral and historical events.”

After graduating from Deer Park High School as a dual credit student in 2012, White joined the Texas Army National Guard while continuing his studies at San Jac. But becoming a young dad meant all bets were off.

Choosing a practical path

Balancing National Guard duties, college, family, and work proved overwhelming. White took a break from college and found industry work as a boilermaker and pipefitter.

He eventually returned to San Jac and completed the engineering design graphics certificate of technology in 2015.

“It’s OK to try things until you figure out your path,” he said. “Engineering design graphics just wasn’t the field for me. I got laid off twice, and then it was back to the drawing board. The experience was valuable.”

The rest is history

Done with the concept of “just having a job,” White decided to pursue a career as a history teacher.

Professor Marcus Turner’s honors Texas history class was the challenge he needed. The course’s main project was a comprehensive research paper, and he wrote about Deer Park. During the process, he interviewed Wayne Riddle, former Deer Park mayor; Barbara Weidig, city historian; and Lisa Struthers, San Jacinto Museum and Battlefield librarian.

History professor Joseph Stromberg helped White edit and submit his paper to a Texas State Historical Association writing contest. The paper won second place in the Caldwell Memorial Award for Excellence in History lower division. He continued to present his research at conferences, where he crossed paths with Dr. Abbie Grubb and Dr. Eddie Weller from San Jac’s honors program — both of whom he considered “a wealth of knowledge and inspiration.” Grubb gave him an opportunity to study abroad.

“I went from being unsure I had the drive to pursue anything to finding myself in Europe studying World War I, my favorite historical topic,” White said.

He graduated from San Jac with a social and behavioral science degree in 2018, then transferred to the University of Houston-Clear Lake the same year.

White completed an internship at Santa Fe High School in fall 2020, trying to learn the traditional ropes while the classroom was transitioning to an online format.

“Life went from doing lots of cool stuff, conferences, Europe — then suddenly I’m a professional in the school district in the pandemic era,” he said.

He graduated in 2021 with a bachelor’s degree and teaching certification in history and taught Advanced Placement history at Santa Fe High School from 2020 until fall 2023.

From San Jacinto College to monument

Although not planning to leave teaching, White started exploring new opportunities.

“I’d bonded with the kids and liked what I was doing,” he said. “I just thought it wasn’t bad to start looking beyond.”

When he found a position open at the San Jacinto Museum and Battlefield, his inner voice said to take the leap. His diversity of experience made him an ideal candidate. In January 2024, he accepted the position as assistant site manager — now assistant museum director — at the San Jacinto Museum and Battlefield with the Texas Historical Commission.

He manages the public service staff, assists guests, and oversees the gift shop. He loves chatting with guests about Texas history and museum artifacts.

His job duties don’t end there.

“I went from being unsure I had the drive to pursue anything to finding myself in Europe studying World War I, my favorite historical topic.”

— Tyler White,
San Jacinto College alumnus

“Not every day is the same,” he said. “One day I’m thinking of maps and T-shirt designs, drawing up concepts. Another day I’ll be firing cannons and muskets and helping out with event tours.”

White finally feels settled. He enjoys his work, spending time with family, and strumming his guitars.

“I hope my story shows students hard work does pay off, and it’s possible to find an enjoyable career,” he said. “I owe a lot of my success to San Jac.” ■

GLITZ, GLAM FOR GOOD CAUSE

By Courtney Morris
Photos by Public Relations Team

Lights, camera, action! Students got top billing at the San Jacinto College and LyondellBasell Hollywood Nights Gala presented by the Sinor Family May 17.

The gala raised more than \$650,000 for the Promise @ San Jac Scholarship, which ensures high school graduates living in the College's taxing district can earn a certificate or associate degree debt-free.

"We are grateful to LyondellBasell for their title sponsorship and the Sinor Family for being our presenting sponsor, along with many other companies, organizations, and individuals who have committed their support to our Promise Scholars," said Robert Cage, San Jacinto College Foundation executive director.

During the event, the College also presented its Legacy Award to LyondellBasell for supporting students, staff, and workforce education.

The Promise @ San Jac Scholarship is open to all in-district high school seniors, regardless of high school GPA or family income. The scholarship covers tuition, books, and supplies so students can focus on their studies.

View gala photos at bit.ly/SJC-Hollywood-Nights-Gala. ■



Scan the QR code to learn more about the **Promise @ San Jac Scholarship**.







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Art, Humanities, Communication, and Design

- Art and Design
- Audio Engineering
- Communications
- Dance
- English
- Interior Design
- Modern Languages
- Music
- Speech
- Theatre and Film

Career Opportunities

*(some may require bachelor's or master's degree)**

Art, Drama, and Music Teachers (Postsecondary)	\$79,766
Broadcast Technicians.....	\$44,591
Choreographers.....	\$53,216
Editors.....	\$60,170
English Language and Literature Teachers (Postsecondary)	\$79,269
Film and Video Editors	\$52,529
Graphic Designers	\$51,158
Interior Designers	\$60,519
Interpreters and Translators.....	\$46,033
Lighting Technicians.....	\$62,805
Media and Communication Equipment Workers.....	\$45,418
Music Directors and Composers	\$84,731
News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists	\$58,295
Producers and Directors.....	\$62,376
Proofreaders and Copy Markers	\$39,379
Public Relations Specialists.....	\$60,015
Sound Engineering Technicians	\$55,065
Special Effects Artists and Animators	\$80,512
Technical Writers	\$78,024



Business

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Business Management
- Business Office Systems and Support
- Economics
- Entrepreneur
- Long Term Care Administration
- Paralegal
- Real Estate

Career Opportunities

*(some may require bachelor's or master's degree)**

Accountants and Auditors.....	\$80,671
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks.....	\$45,586
Budget Analysts.....	\$86,251
Credit Analysts.....	\$75,771
Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants.....	\$76,495
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers.....	\$45,011
Human Resources Specialists	\$61,962
Insurance Underwriters.....	\$67,279
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	\$58,341
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks.....	\$50,002
Project Management Specialists	\$94,834
Real Estate Brokers	\$59,675
Real Estate Sales Agents	\$62,447



Construction, Industry, Manufacturing, and Transportation

- Air Conditioning Technology (HVAC)
- Automotive Technology
- Autonomous Vehicle
- Biomedical Clinical Equipment Technician
- Construction Management Technology
- Diesel Technology
- Electrical Technology
- Electronics Technology
- Environmental Health and Safety Technology
- Global Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Heavy Diesel Equipment/Crane Technician
- Instrumentation
- Maritime Transportation
- Non-destructive Testing
- Pipefitting
- Plumbing Technology
- Process Technology
- Welding Technology

Career Opportunities

*(some may require bachelor's or master's degree)**

API Inspectors.....	\$150,703**
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	\$47,718
Autonomous Vehicle Technicians	\$37,440***
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists.....	\$55,754
Captains, Mates, and Pilots of Water Vessels	\$104,581
Certified Welding Inspectors	\$124,797**
Chemical Plant and System Operators	\$101,005
Construction Managers.....	\$99,366
Crane and Tower Operators.....	\$71,285
Electricians	\$59,249
Environmental Science and Protection Technicians (Including Health).....	\$46,636
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$49,474
Medical Equipment Repairers.....	\$49,511
NDT Technicians Level I.....	\$74,392**
NDT Technicians Level II.....	\$104,931**
NDT Technicians Level III	\$130,096**
Occupational Health and Safety Technicians.....	\$64,859
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	\$59,798
Sailors and Marine Oilers.....	\$74,988
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers.....	\$51,454



Education

Child Development / Early Childhood Studies
Teaching

Career Opportunities

*(some may require a bachelor's or master's degree)**

Career/Technical Education	
Teachers (Secondary).....	\$63,328
Child Care Workers	\$23,106
Education and Child Care	
Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	\$48,485
Elementary School Teachers	
(Except Special Ed).....	\$62,409
Preschool Teachers (Except Special Ed).....	\$29,560
Secondary School Teachers	
(Except Special Ed and CTE).....	\$62,398
Substitute Teachers (Short-term)	\$30,123
Teaching Assistants (Except Postsecondary)	\$27,230



Health Sciences

Cancer Data Management
Diagnostic Medical Sonography
Emergency Medical Services
Eye Care Technology
Health Information Technology
Medical Assisting
Medical Billing
Medical Coding
Medical Laboratory Assistant/Technology
Medical Radiography
Mental Health Services
Nursing
Occupational Therapy Assistant
Personal Trainer
Pharmacy Technician
Physical Therapist Assistant
Respiratory Care
Surgical Technician

Career Opportunities

*(some may require a bachelor's or master's degree)**

Cancer Registrars/Abstractors.....	\$60,644 [^]
Certified Ophthalmic Assistants.....	\$42,500 ^{^^}
Certified Ophthalmic Technicians	\$51,733 ^{^^}
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	
Technicians	\$50,271
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	\$79,257
Emergency Medical Technicians	\$36,114
Exercise Trainers and	
Group Fitness Instructors.....	\$47,607
Health Information Technologists and	
Medical Registrars.....	\$71,812
Licensed Practical and	
Licensed Vocational Nurses.....	\$54,209
Medical Assistants	\$37,619
Medical Records Specialists.....	\$39,838
Occupational Therapy Assistants	\$76,651
Opticians, Dispensing.....	\$34,710
Paramedics.....	\$48,785
Pharmacy Technicians.....	\$39,651
Physical Therapist Assistants	\$77,043
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	\$75,318
Registered Nurses.....	\$82,223
Respiratory Therapists	\$76,660
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and	
Mental Health Counselors.....	\$49,124
Surgical Technologists	\$59,576



Public Safety and Human/Consumer Services

Chef Training
Cosmetology
Criminal Justice
Fire Protection Technology
Massage Therapy
Pastry Chef
Restaurant Management

Career Opportunities

*(some may require a bachelor's or master's degree)**

Bakers	\$29,963
Chefs and Head Cooks	
(Including Pastry Chefs).....	\$47,974
Firefighters.....	\$49,864
Food Service Managers.....	\$64,952
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and	
Cosmetologists.....	\$26,578
Massage Therapists	\$48,448
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers.....	\$64,705
Private Detectives and Investigators	\$52,030
Probation Officers and	
Correctional Treatment Specialists	\$49,915
Skin Care Specialists (Estheticians)	\$36,019



Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

- Applications/Programming
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Cloud Computing
- Computer Science
- Computer Simulation and Game Design
- Cybersecurity
- Desktop Support and Network Administration
- Engineering
- Engineering Design Graphics
- Engineering Technology
- Environmental Science
- Geology
- Mathematics
- Microsoft and CISCO
- Physics
- Web Design

Career Opportunities

*(some may require a bachelor's or master's degree)**

Agricultural Engineers.....	\$102,548	(statewide)
Agricultural Technicians	\$37,506	(statewide)
Architectural and Civil Drafters.....	\$59,650	
Chemical Engineers.....	\$133,677	
Chemical Technicians.....	\$60,480	
Civil Engineering Technologists and Technicians	\$69,485	
Civil Engineers	\$91,956	
Computer Network Support Specialists.....	\$64,551	
Computer Programmers.....	\$85,725	
Computer User Support Specialists.....	\$52,207	
Database Administrators.....	\$104,625	
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians.....	\$65,093	
Environmental Engineering Technologists and Technicians.....	\$48,124	
Environmental Engineers.....	\$121,950	
Food Science Technicians	\$65,406	
Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians.....	\$75,730	
Industrial Engineers.....	\$103,655	
Information Security Analysts	\$110,512	
Mechanical Drafters.....	\$64,750	
Mechanical Engineering Technologists and Technicians.....	\$63,089	
Mechanical Engineers.....	\$104,177	
Software Developers.....	\$117,158	
Web and Digital Interface Designers.....	\$83,364	
Web Developers	\$74,004	



Social and Behavioral Science

- Anthropology
- Government
- History
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Sociology

Career Opportunities

*(some may require a bachelor's or master's degree)**

Anthropologists and Archeologists	\$53,521	
Clergy	\$50,407	
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	\$81,622	
Museum Technicians and Conservators	\$48,398	
Philosophy and Religion Teachers (Postsecondary)	\$79,215	
Political Scientists	\$98,883	(statewide)
Psychologists (All Other).....	\$119,662	
School Psychologists	\$79,729	
Social Science Research Assistants	\$60,201	
Sociology Teachers (Postsecondary).....	\$81,281	

* Unless otherwise noted, source: texaswages.com, Gulf Coast Region, 2022 annual WDA median wages

** Source: PQNDT 2019 Salary Survey

*** Source: Nuro, estimated starting salary

^ Source: National Cancer Registrars Association, 2022

^^ Source: Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology

Noncredit Classes for Professional and Life Long Learners

Whether you're preparing for a career or picking up a new hobby, San Jacinto College Continuing and Professional Development offers a variety of noncredit courses for workforce training and lifelong learning. Workforce courses keep employees up to date on the latest industry technology and are available through contract training, open enrollment, and grant funding. You can also pick up new skills you've been eager to learn. CPD offers lifelong learning courses to promote leisure learning and to help you extend your horizons. Learn more at sanjac.edu/continuing-education.

Workforce Development and Job Training

- Applied Technology and Trades
- Business and Professions
- Computers, IT, CNC, PLC, and Robotics
- Health Occupations
- Maritime

Corporate Training and Consulting

- Task/Job/Organizational Performance Analysis
- Training Needs/Gap Analysis
- Measuring Training Effectiveness and ROI
- Implementing Effective On-the-Job Training
- Apprenticeships
- Transitioning Training from a Functional Unit to a Business Unit
- Train-the-Trainer for Regulatory Compliance
- Strategies for Selecting, Training, and Qualifying Shift/Relief Supervisors
- Approaches to Team Training and Diagnostics
- Organizational and Human Performance Needs Assessments

Community Programs

- Aerospace Education and Workforce Education
- Life Long Learning
- Youth Programs

Grants

- Adult Education and Literacy
- Health Career Pathways Partnership Grant
- TPEG
- TWC Business Funding Opportunities

SAN JAC AND INTUITIVE MACHINES FORGE PATHWAYS TO AEROSPACE CAREERS

| By Melissa Trevizo

The collaborative journey between the San Jacinto College EDGE Center and Intuitive Machines began in 2019, coinciding with both institutions' entry into the Houston Spaceport. Intuitive Machines has played a multifaceted role in enhancing the College's aerospace technician programs.

"Intuitive Machines assists our programs in many ways" said Dr. Sarah Janes, continuing and professional development associate vice chancellor. "From guiding our curriculum to hiring our students to work on integral projects like the lunar lander, it proves that we provide a quality education and that skilled technicians are needed in aerospace."

Through Intuitive Machines internships and employment opportunities, San Jac students have gained invaluable experience while benefiting from up-to-date curriculum, fostering a seamless transition from education to the workforce.

Intuitive Machines' involvement has extended beyond mere advisory roles, actively engaging with EDGE Center students and providing internships and eventual full-time employment. About 10% of Intuitive Machines' workforce responsible for constructing the Nova-C lunar lander received San Jac training.

"Between the lander's engine, carbon composites, software, and electronics required to build a Nova-C lunar lander,

it takes an incredible amount of touch labor to get to the launch pad," said Steve Altemus, Intuitive Machines CEO. "We work closely with San Jacinto College to foster certification courses for technicians to complete training, intern, and full-time hire into our lunar program."

This collaboration models how industry and education together equip students with the skills and experience to thrive in today's competitive job market. By providing students with hands-on experience alongside their academic studies, San Jac and Intuitive Machines are empowering the next generation of leaders in the aerospace and space exploration sectors.

Oscar Gil, Intuitive Machines composites technician, knows this all too well.

In 2017, Gil was an engineering student at the University of Houston. Unfortunately, a low GPA led to his suspension from the program, causing a chain of academic setbacks. Desperate to stay connected to engineering, he discovered San Jac's Toyota T-TEN program, which provided a gateway into automotive technology and an invaluable internship as a master technician apprentice.

Determined to earn his bachelor's degree, he returned to UH, switching to math with a physics minor. Securing an engineering job after graduation was challenging, prompting him to explore

aviation mechanics. This led him back to San Jac, where the aerospace technician program at the EDGE Center offered a flexible, affordable online option.

"At times, it was hard to rely on myself to keep going," Gil said. "I persisted by drawing strength from a lot of prayer and faith."

A few months into his training, a chance encounter with Intuitive Machines representatives, facilitated by former San Jac aerospace education director Dr. Janis Fowler, led to an unexpected job offer, eventually evolving into a full-time position.

"Reflecting on my journey, I realize every setback, from academic struggles to career transitions, laid the groundwork for my current role at Intuitive Machines," Gil said. "As I mark two years with the company, the initial thrill has transformed into a sense of purpose, reinforced by the pride of my family and the meaningful impact of our work." ■



Model-Based Systems Engineering Course

Model-based systems engineering, or MBSE, supports the requirements, design, analysis, verification, and validation associated with developing complex systems. In a digital modeling environment, MBSE provides advantages that document-based systems engineering cannot offer.

The EDGE Center now proudly offers a two-part, eight-hour MBSE course for managers. The first half provides industry use context, terminology, and application, emphasizing benefits and challenges for organizations wanting to apply MBSE efficiently. The second half covers approaches to MBSE implementation, including systems modeling language within existing systems engineering processes for modelers and system engineers. In addition to the eight-hour class, the center will offer an advanced 40-hour MBSE course in the future.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the EDGE Center.





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