

OPPORTUNITY

NEWS



2 News From
Your College

3 How a Crash Steered
John Tran

5 Kidd Returns
to San Jac

NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

Biotechnology program wins STAR Award

San Jacinto College's biomanufacturing training program has been named a 2025 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Star Award recipient, recognizing its innovative, workforce-aligned approach to education.

The award honors institutions that create strong pathways from classroom to career across Texas.

Developed with industry leaders and in partnership with the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training, the biomanufacturing program offers stackable credentials, dual credit opportunities, and customizable corporate training at the College's Center for Biotechnology.

Since launching in 2024, the program has helped students secure jobs before graduation, delivered more than 1,000 hours of incumbent-worker training, and attracted significant state and federal investment, positioning Texas as a leader in biomanufacturing.

San Jacinto College was one of six institutions selected, with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board highlighting the program as a model for aligning education with industry demand.

CDL program expands through new partnership

San Jacinto College is expanding access to high-demand workforce training through a new partnership with FleetForce, which will help deliver the College's commercial driver's license truck driving program.

The FleetForce partnership will provide industry-aligned training that leads to employment in essential fields across the region. Not only will students gain the skills and credentials to enter the workforce

quickly, but they will join a critical industry that supports supply chains, infrastructure, and economic growth.

The CDL program is designed for access and affordability, aligning with workforce funding sources and career pathway programs that support adult learners, incumbent workers, and individuals transitioning into new careers.

The partnership also expands opportunities for veterans and transitioning service members seeking to enter the commercial driving profession.

To learn more about the CDL program, visit sanjac.edu.

Mind Trekkers celebrates 50,000+ students reached

The awe on sixth graders' faces spoke volumes. San Jacinto College's 10th Mind Trekkers event in early March allowed students to experience STEM with all five senses – from walking barefoot on oobleck and witnessing a liquid nitrogen explosion to piercing balloons with skewers.

Held at the Central Campus, the STEM outreach event has reached more than 51,000 youth since it started in 2015.

According to San Jac vice chancellor for strategic initiatives Dr. Allatia Harris, Mind Trekkers is “the largest, most highly anticipated STEM event” the College hosts annually to introduce youth to various STEM fields.

More than 100 experiments and activities happened thanks to a crew of San Jac employee and student volunteers, industry sponsors, and school district partners.

“Things are coming full circle now,” Harris said. “Some of our own San Jac students tell us they attended Mind Trekkers as sixth graders, and now they are volunteering as experiment facilitators.”

Participating in the daytime activities this year were approximately 4,200 sixth graders from Pasadena, Deer

Park, La Porte, Clear Creek, Sheldon, Channelview, and Humble independent school districts, along with private schools. A family night drew about 300 children and family members.

The 2026 event sponsors included LyondellBasell, OxyChem, Dow, Chevron

Phillips Chemical Company, The Kaneka Foundation, Arkema, Chevron Pasadena Refinery, INEOS, and Coastal Ice and Water.

Scan the QR code to view the **Mind Trekkers photo album**.



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

HOW A CRASH STEERED JOHN TRAN TOWARD HIS CALLING

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

John Tran planned to pursue medicine because it was his family's dream.

But it took a bicycle accident in 2025 for that dream to become his own.

Rounding a corner, Tran spied a dog, hit a curb, and flew off his bike. Minutes later, he sat up in the street, his bicycle crumpled beside him and blood trickling from his head.

"In that moment, I realized I had taken my life for granted," he said.

Though he recovered without medical help, the experience shifted his perspective. Many people in worse situations can't afford care. Tran doesn't expect to solve every gap in the system, but he hopes to make a difference someday, possibly as a physician.

At 17, the Pasadena Memorial Early College High School student is already on that path. This May, he will graduate with his associate degree from San Jacinto College — and a full-ride scholarship to Yale University.

Built for opportunity

Tran grew up in Houston with a single mom and younger sister and brother. He chose the early college high school program because it offered opportunity — a chance to earn college credit early and have his San Jac associate degree covered 100%.

"The professors here are experts in their fields," he said. "They're passionate about their topics and care about students. They want you to succeed."

Tran's first class at Central Campus was with biology professor Dr. Touran Zarrabi.

"She is dedicated to making sure students

stay engaged in class," he said. "There wasn't a single class where she didn't call on students to make sure they understood the content and that they weren't falling behind."

Zarrabi said Tran stands out for his thirst to learn and willingness to help his peers.

"I am absolutely proud of him, and I am sure that he will be a pioneer in his field of study," she said.

Speaking up, standing out

Tran used to avoid speaking up in class or connecting with others. But that changed with envisioning the person he wanted to be, then taking leaps of confidence.

"Being able to find the voice inside me allowed me to take command in leadership situations or speak up when it mattered," he said.

In his San Jac classes, Tran sat on the front row next to adult students and struck up conversations. Initially nervous about the age difference, he bridged the gap through collaboration.

"The age didn't matter because we were working toward the same goal of succeeding," he said.

From volunteering at Chick-fil-A family events to taking on leadership roles across student organizations, Tran chased all opportunities to maximize his time.

"I've been able to plan events and shape my school in a way that's inclusive for all students — for people to share interests and passions," he said.

And the growth shows. Tran has placed first in state Academic Decathlon competitions in both interview and impromptu speech.

Taking the leap

Even with these personal achievements, Tran felt nervous applying to top-tier schools.

As the anticipated valedictorian of his class, he expected admission to Texas universities. What he got instead was admission to an Ivy League school.

When Tran saw the Yale University acceptance letter last fall, he couldn't believe it. He rushed out of chemistry class

so he could verify the news with his friend and a teacher.

"My efforts throughout high school and the early college program culminated in acceptance into a school I could only dream of," he said.

The future Yale plans to pursue either a biology or a psychology major. After completing his bachelor's degree, he may pursue medical school in Texas.

Looking back, moving forward

What would Tran tell his younger self? "Learn to be more confident and social," he said. "Putting yourself out there is how you'll find more opportunities."

As a first-generation college student, Tran thanks his teachers and professors for mentoring him and his high school counselor for preparing him every step of the way. Most of all, he thanks his mom, grandma, and entire family for sacrificing to support his success.

"I wouldn't have been able to do the things I'm doing today without their support," he said.



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

FREE EVENT

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LIBERTY SETS RECORD STRAIGHT ON LAW AND LEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM

By **Neesha Hosein**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Paralegals play a critical role in the legal process, conducting research, interviewing clients and witnesses, drafting documents, organizing case files, and helping attorneys prepare for hearings, trials, and transactions.

San Jacinto College's law and legal studies program prepares graduates for a career that puts them at the forefront of a competitive workforce. The American Bar Association-approved program trains students in legal and interpersonal skills.

"We are always available to help with coursework and offer career guidance and individualized degree planning," said Jeanette E. Liberty, Esq., legal studies program director. "We focus on practical training and emphasize hands-on learning, including drafting legal documents, analyzing case law, and working through real-world legal scenarios."

By maintaining strong connections with Greater Houston's legal community, the program helps students obtain meaningful internships, build professional networks, and find employment opportunities after graduation.

Not the same as attorneys

While often the backbone of the law office, paralegals are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice or represent clients in court.

One misconception is that becoming a paralegal is simply a steppingstone to becoming a lawyer.

"Some students eventually go on to law school, but that is not the purpose of the profession," Liberty said. "Paralegal work is its own career with its own ethical standards and professional identity."

Paralegals are specially trained to work in many areas — from litigation to corporate compliance. Their skills are transferable across the legal field and beyond, making paralegal work a strong option for students who want experience before committing time and money to law school.

Is it the right fit?

Liberty believes organized and detail-oriented people are the best candidates for this program.

"Paralegals must enjoy research, writing, and problem-solving," she said. "They should also have strong communication skills and the ability to manage multiple tasks at once. People who love puzzles, critical thinking, and brainteasers excel in the legal field!"

Another misconception is that the work is easy or primarily administrative. To the contrary, it requires significant analytical thinking, attention to detail, and responsibility.

"Working in the legal field is nothing like Suits, How to Get Away with Murder, or Law & Order," Liberty said. "Cases don't get resolved in an hour. There are very few dramatic revelations during

trials, and judges don't make snap decisions in their chambers."

Hands-on training

Students are matched with opportunities for practical experience through internships with law firms, corporate legal departments, and government agencies, observing the daily operations of legal offices. Assisting practicing attorneys with preparing cases and drafting legal documents is often part of the experience.

Internship possibilities include:

- Harris County District Attorney's Office or the Office of the Public Defender
- Non-profit groups like Beacon Law and the NAACP
- Solo practitioners like Sam Adamo or Eddie Cortez
- Small private law firms like Hinojosa & Salinas
- Growing firms like Johnson Garcia, Slate Family Law, or the Law Office of John K. Zaid
- Large firms like Smith and Hassler

Other career opportunities

Most paralegals work in law firms, but employment opportunities exist outside the legal field.

"Paralegals are often hired by corporate legal departments, government agencies, insurance companies, title companies, compliance departments, and nonprofit organizations," Liberty said. "In the Houston area, industries such as

energy, health care, and finance frequently employ paralegals to support regulatory compliance, contract management, and internal investigations."

Students practice specialized skills like research, writing, analysis, and compliance knowledge, which are valuable in many career fields. Compliance, contract administration, legal operations, risk management, or government service are other options for graduates. Some also pursue careers in human resources, real estate, or regulatory affairs.

Based on current job listings, Liberty recognizes that career opportunities for

bilingual paralegals are almost unlimited — "probably the most sought-after skill I see in job postings."

"So many of our students had a personal experience with the legal system, either in the family court, the immigration system, or a criminal case," she said. "By becoming a member of the legal team, they can help people going through things they went through, contributing to the justice system by giving back."

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **law and legal studies program.**



Photo courtesy of Jeanette Liberty

KIDD RETURNS TO SAN JAC TO BUILD EAST HARRIS COUNTY LOGISTICS PIPELINE

By **Melissa Trevizo**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

When Margaret Kidd walked back onto the San Jacinto College North Campus last fall, she wasn't just filling a position. She was completing a circle that began in her own backyard.

Now a recognized authority in trade and maritime logistics, Kidd has returned to her roots to lead the college's new Bachelor of Applied Technology in logistics and supply chain management.

As a renowned leader in supply chain, maritime ports, and trade, she is cited regularly by media outlets around the world, and her reach exceeded 3.1 billion people across 455 outlets in 2024 alone.

Through her roles on many external boards and committees, she brings a network of industry partners directly to San Jac students.

From Wall Street to the classroom

Kidd's connection to the region runs deep. Growing up in Seabrook, she took summer classes at San Jac before earning a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Houston-Clear Lake in 1985.

That foundation launched a powerhouse career. She first headed to Wall Street, starting as a broker's assistant before entering a training program at Smith Barney. This began a 15-year career in financial services and six years on the executive leadership team of a privately held real estate management company.

Kidd later returned to school — not out of necessity but curiosity. She earned

a Master of Arts in cross-cultural studies from UHCL in 2008 and completed 60 doctoral credits in urban planning and environmental policy at Texas Southern University, focusing on port-city interface, sustainability, and economic development.

Academia found her unexpectedly through an emergency opening in TSU's geography department.

"I'd never taught a class in my life with the exception of Sunday school, nor had I considered academia," she said. "But I fell into it and cannot imagine doing anything else except paying it forward for the workforce of the future."

Experience in action

Kidd's first chapter at San Jac ran from 2014 to 2017, directing the college's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant, a federal initiative that helped trade-displaced workers gain high-skill credentials.

Kidd then spent nearly nine years at the University of Houston, building its supply chain program into one of the region's largest and most respected. Before returning to San Jac, she served as president of the Houston Maritime Center and Museum and was responsible for launching the institution at its new home in the East River development.

"I'm glad to be back at San Jac for this phase of my career because it's such a nurturing, happy place where people care about each other," she said.

Preparing the next generation

The logistics bachelor's program launches at a moment of urgency. Port

Houston — ranked No. 13 among 159 global ports by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — has seen container volumes surge 33.6% since 2020, according to Kidd. Demand for skilled supply chain professionals continues to outpace the existing pipeline.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a "much faster than average" job outlook for logisticians, with a projected growth of 17% from 2024 to 2034.

The logistics and supply chain management program addresses that gap with a distinctive focus on import and export principles that many university programs do not offer.

"I think that prepares them for some interesting jobs in trade compliance and a better understanding even as an

analyst," she said.

For Kidd, the work is personal. She recalls a nontraditional student in her early 30s who competed fiercely and won scholarships and research competitions.

"I was so happy for her because earning her degree made a difference in her life," Kidd said. "She still calls me for advice. Knowing you can impact someone's life like that — that's what it's all about."

San Jac students are now positioned to benefit from that same commitment.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **logistics program**.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
May 8	Spring commencement ceremonies	Varies	Learn more at sanjac.edu/support/commencement Grace Church
May 22	Spill the Beans	8:30-10 a.m.	Center for Entrepreneurship networking event for community Generation Park Campus
May 25	Memorial Day	Closed	All campuses and online
June 1	Summer classes begin		
June 1-July 31	Summer camps	Varies	Register youth at sanjac.edu/summer-camps

All times and event schedules listed are subject to change. For more information, visit sanjac.edu/calendar.

CYBERSECURITY PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENT FOR IT CAREER GROWTH

By **Neesha Hosein**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

When Henry Thomas II took an information technology class in high school, he realized he had a knack for technology.

“The class piqued my interest, and I excelled,” Thomas said. “My peers asked me questions, and that’s when I noticed I had a solid grasp on the subject. Currently, as an IT services manager with 20 years of experience in the field, my goal is to deepen my expertise and expand opportunities for the next generation of technology professionals.”

Why San Jac?

With an associate degree in computer technology, Thomas researched his next move and landed on San Jacinto College’s Bachelor of Applied Technology in IT cybersecurity, which he began in spring 2025.

Thomas was inspired to push forward after Rizwan Virani, the senior director of cybersecurity programs, confirmed his transfer credits.

He soon discovered that David “DJ” Thomas, computer information technology professor, had a passion for IT that matched his own and taught one of his favorite classes — information technology security. It opened his eyes to the importance of protecting digital information in an increasingly connected world.

“This course strengthened my understanding of cybersecurity and reinforced my desire to help organizations and individuals protect themselves in an increasingly digital world,” he said.

The distance learning experience

“I’ve learned that cybersecurity is just like locking your phone and being careful about what you share online,” Thomas said. “Protecting your identity on social media and avoiding scams

is crucial, as cybercrime can affect anyone. It’s about staying vigilant and practicing good habits to keep your personal information safe every day.”

Although being a student and working full time has been challenging, Thomas has managed to find a work-life-education balance. Thomas credits his success to staying organized, maintaining a structured routine, and remaining committed to continuous growth.

“Being a distance-learning student has been a great experience, fostering greater independence, discipline, and self-motivation,” Thomas said. “Unlike traditional classroom settings, where instruction is guided and structured, remote learning requires me to take full responsibility for managing my time and staying on top of assignments, which has improved my self-discipline.”

He enjoys the flexibility of online learning, despite the faster pace, and tries to maximize the experience by seeking out additional resources, staying organized, and engaging regularly with instructors and peers.

“Professor DJ once told me, ‘Henry, you are just learning what you already know,’ which was a transformative moment for me,” Thomas said. “His insight taught me the importance of confidence in my skills and the value of lifelong learning, inspiring me to approach challenges with both humility and assurance, a lesson that has profoundly shaped my approach to my career and continuous development.”

Thomas considered adjunct instructor Nevin Coco’s detailed feedback on a lab assignment a pivotal moment in his academic journey.

“She explained precisely where I went wrong and offered constructive criticism,” he said. “This experience taught me the importance of embracing feedback as a tool for growth, and it inspired me to approach every challenge

with a mindset of continuous learning, which has helped me maintain my 4.0 GPA as an honors student and member of Phi Theta Kappa and stay on track toward my academic and professional goals.”

Taking it to the next level

Thomas anticipates a fall 2029 graduation, hoping to grow into executive leadership roles in information technology and cybersecurity.

It’s important to him to share his extensive knowledge by mentoring emerging IT professionals, helping

create opportunities for others entering the field.

“It makes me proud to know I’ll soon be an alumnus of San Jacinto College, a top-ranked, nationally recognized school,” Thomas said. “I want my story to show others that it is never too late to continue learning, grow as a leader, and pursue the next level of your career.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **cybersecurity program**.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

THIS MONTH *IN* SOCIAL MEDIA



ADVENTURES IN STEM FAMILY NIGHT

POE-ENTINE'S DAY CARDS

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March 23-27 | Houston, USA

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wpc.spglobal.com

Facebook

Don't miss this opportunity to experience Adventures in STEM Family Night! Mind Trekkers will be held on Thursday, March 5, from 6-8 p.m. at Central Campus in the CPET building. Join us this year with your family!



66 Reactions | 0 Comments

102,579 Impressions | 1,692 Engagements

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♥ Poe-entine's Day Cards are here. ♥

Hey, Ravens. It's Poe, bringing you the perfect Valentine's Day surprise. Save it, print it, cut it, and write a sweet, or friendly, note. Then share it with someone you love. Easy, raven-tastic, and unforgettable. Spread the love with a Poe-entine's Card.

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SAN JACINTO COLLEGESM

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CENTRAL CAMPUS

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SOUTH CAMPUS

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MARITIME CAMPUS

3700 Old Hwy. 146, La Porte, TX 77571

GENERATION PARK CAMPUS

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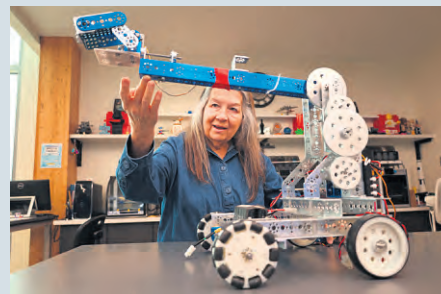
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VISION & MISSION



Vision — Together with our community members and business and industry partners, San Jacinto College sets the standard for educational excellence, economic growth, and social mobility characterized by innovation and responsiveness.

Mission — We change lives through education, community engagement, and partnerships.

SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS



A gift to the San Jacinto College Foundation transforms lives, enriches our community, and provides tomorrow's community leaders. For more than 25 years, the Foundation has helped thousands of students reach their goals. Our former students and graduates have filled vital roles in hospitals, classrooms, executive offices, manufacturing plants, and laboratories across our region and beyond. They have also won the World Series and NBA championships, starred in major motion pictures, and created major theatrical productions. Help our students today with the gift of education. Contact the San Jacinto College Foundation at 281-998-6104 or visit sanjac.edu/foundation.

COMMUNITY IMPACT



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 ranked second in the nation among more than 1,100 community colleges, as designated by the Aspen Institute and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020 and 2026. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution that spans five campuses, plus an online college, San Jacinto College serves approximately 45,000 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.

