



CONNECTION



WINTER 2025

Expanding access to health science education creates opportunities for students, communities



A nationwide nursing and skilled healthcare worker shortage has put a spotlight on the need for more health science education.

Collin College is answering that challenge by expanding its health science education sites throughout its service area with new facilities and partnerships with local ISDs.

From dual credit Health Professions in Anna ISD and Rockwall ISD and Vocational Nursing at the Celina Campus to Emergency Medical Services at the Wylie Campus, today more students than at any point in the college's history have access to training in vitally needed healthcare professions.

"We know there is a real demand in the community," said Dr. Neil Matkin, Collin College district president. "Our students, beginning with many in high school dual credit, understand that a career in healthcare is one way for a secure future in an ever-expanding field. Our challenge as a college — one that we are meeting well with new facilities, programs, and partnerships — is to create pathways for our students to pursue those careers in an achievable and cost-effective way."

Kevin Greene, president of Cook Children's Medical Center in Prosper, agrees that access to higher education is one way to meet the need for new workers and believes the new Health Sciences



Kevin Greene

Center under construction at the Collin College Frisco Campus could be the key to filling those roles.

"Strong partnerships with high-quality higher education institutions, such as Collin College, are a prime example of how we bridge this gap," Greene said. "This expansion provides a direct pathway for students to receive a quality education and then seamlessly transition into vital roles within leading healthcare systems like Cook Children's. It's about cultivating local talent to serve local communities."

The Health Sciences Center, a 120,000-square-foot, three-story, \$70 million facility, will provide space for and access to growing health science programs, including LVN-to-RN Nursing, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Physical Therapist Assistant, and others. The center will also create learning spaces for new imaging and diagnostics programs currently in development that Greene believes will be a "significant stride in addressing the growing demands of our healthcare landscape."

Dr. Diana Hopes, provost of the Frisco and Celina campuses, is excited to welcome more healthcare students when the new facility opens in Spring 2027.

"The Health Sciences Center will expand and complement the allied health



Dr. Diana Hopes

and nursing programs already offered at the McKinney Campus. It will also open up new programs that our local hospitals need and that students will greatly benefit from," Dr. Hopes said.

Access to healthcare programs is growing at the Plano Campus, too. The campus recently renovated a significant section of its main building to accommodate the Vocational Nursing, Health Professions, Respiratory Care, and Medical Assisting Advanced Practice programs. While Collin College has long partnered with Plano ISD through its dual credit Health Sciences Academy, the renovations mean that other area students now have greater access to these programs.

To learn more about all the programs offered by Collin College, including those in health sciences, visit www.collin.edu/academics/programs.



Construction of the new Health Sciences Center is underway at the Frisco Campus.

"We know there is a real demand in the community. Our students, beginning with many in high school dual credit, understand that a career in healthcare is one way for a secure future in an ever-expanding field. Our challenge as a college — one that we are meeting well with new facilities, programs, and partnerships — is to create pathways for our students to pursue those careers in an achievable and cost-effective way."

Dr. Neil Matkin
Collin College District President

Collin College announces new Board chair

Collin College’s ongoing construction projects are not the only developments happening in the district. In May, the college’s Board of Trustees elected a new chair, Jay Saad. Saad has served as a member of the Board for the past six years and is honored to take on this new role.

“The Board of Trustees has established an environment of collaboration,” Chair Saad said. “We have nine members, and I want to encourage everyone to participate as much as possible. I’m a team player, so the Board decisions will be open, and all viewpoints will be considered.”

By fostering strong, unified relationships, Chair Saad believes that the Board will stay engaged and focus on what matters most: the students, faculty, and community.

“One thing I realize as a Board member is the value of the college to Collin County,” Chair Saad said. “Over the last few years, we’ve had tremendous growth – new students, new buildings, new facilities – and Collin College’s growth is helping our communities’ development. As North Texas continues to grow, we will need an educated workforce. That’s what we need to stay focused on.

“Collin residents can get an outstanding higher education at one of the most reasonably priced institutions. And I want us to continue to have that in the future.”



Chair Saad (left), and Tamia Pauleus, Student Employee of the Year winner.

“Get involved with the Board because that’s what builds this college. We grow with a diverse Board and people who want to participate.”

When asked what he hopes his legacy as chair will be, Chair Saad said it’s not about *his* legacy – it’s about the legacy of the collaboration between the community and the college.

“I would like to see a stronger pipeline of community leaders or individuals getting involved,” Chair Saad said. “Get involved with the Board because that’s what builds this college. We grow with a diverse Board and people who want to participate. I know running for an election is very difficult, but the value you give back to your community is awesome.”

In addition to a new chair, the Board welcomed two new members and one returning member. Chair Saad advises them to “invest their time early, ask many questions, and keep the students front and center whenever they make decisions on behalf of the Board.”

To learn more about the newly elected Board members, read Collin College’s Summer 2025 Connection publication at www.collin.edu/pr/publications.

For more information about Collin College, visit www.collin.edu.



Jay Saad
Board of Trustees Chair

Chair Saad ensures that the Board will work to preserve the college’s comprehensive programs. He believes diversified programs are vital in making Collin a welcoming environment.

“Ensuring that our college continues to provide a wide range of educational opportunities for our students is essential,” Chair Saad said. “We have high school students earning dual credit; technicians working on your car who may have been trained at our Technical Campus; and nurses with bachelor’s degrees ready to work in our local hospitals. All these students may have received their training from Collin College. We will continue to stay diversified because not everybody is looking for the same type of education.”

New Collin College Alumni Network features alumna who lands dream job

When Crystal Martinez decided to pursue journalism she had no idea her future would include interviewing Dolly Parton and Travis Kelce as an anchor/reporter for Fox 4 Kansas City.

“Dolly Parton is so personable,” said Martinez, who interviewed the country music icon about Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library which honors her dad. “I felt like I had known her my whole life. Both she and Travis didn’t act like big celebrities. She sends books to kids as ‘Aunt Dolly,’ and she cares so much about her work and keeping her father’s legacy alive.”

Martinez was strategic with her questions to Kelce, a star football player for the Kansas City Chiefs, about his Kelce Jam music festival.

“Everyone was asking him about Taylor Swift, but I asked him about how music has influenced his career,” she said. “Travis said music brings us together and pumps us up. It gives us a way to express ourselves when words can’t.”

Martinez is one of more than 550,000 Collin College alumni who are now part of the new Collin College Alumni Network, which hosts in-person and virtual meetings throughout the year, including alumni sports nights, career fairs, community volunteering, networking and social events, and more.

“The Collin College Alumni Network is designed for those who have earned a credential at Collin College and who are active members of the workforce and the broader community,”

said Liz Howard, director of Alumni Relations. “We have a strong, supportive network where members can reach out to one

another for collaboration and guidance and foster meaningful connections both within the college and with the external Collin County community.”

After earning an associate degree from Collin College, Martinez earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Texas.

“I decided to attend Collin College to get the university feel with the opportunity to be involved in organizations and the community at affordable tuition rates,” said Martinez, who was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and a student orientation leader and ambassador.

“I have recommended Collin College to so many people,” she said. “The first two years of college are really important. That’s when you are trying to figure things out. At Collin, you receive a great education, you’re not just another student, and the smaller classes feel more personable.”

For more information about the Collin College Alumni Network, or to sign up to receive a digital newsletter, visit www.collin.edu/alumni.



Liz Howard



Crystal Martinez



As an anchor/reporter for Fox 4 Kansas City, Collin College alumna Crystal Martinez has the opportunity to interview celebrities such as Dolly Parton and Travis Kelce.

Concurrent Enrollment

UNT at Frisco

and

Collin College

www.collin.edu/academics/concurrent-enrollment

Alumni Spotlight: Cristian Rangel

Cristian Rangel started as a temporary employee at Encore Wire in 2013. For seven years, he worked as a machine operator scrapping wire. When he decided he wanted to get married, start a family, and explore educational options, he was encouraged from the start.

“My mentor at Encore was Troy Skidmore,” said Rangel, who served as a Learning and Development manager at Encore Wire. “I talked about my life and what I wanted to do. He said, ‘If you want to go back to school, Encore Wire will sponsor you.’”

Taking advantage of that opportunity and empowered by his mentor, Rangel earned a certificate in Human Resources and an Associate of Applied Science in Human Resources and Organizational Management from Collin College.

Knowledge + Opportunity = Professional Growth

As soon as Rangel enrolled at Collin College, he began receiving new opportunities at work. Every semester, he reviewed the topics he learned and how they could be applied at the company.

The knowledge Rangel gleaned from his classes aligned with growth at the company. In class he learned how the workforce has evolved and the need for employers to be creative to attract and retain quality employees.

“I developed a training program for onboarding employees and helped expand training in different areas of Encore Wire,” he said.

Reflecting on his career trajectory, Rangel smiles as he shares that he has had the opportunity to coach others who were considering attending college.

“I told them that Collin College has flexible hours and various resources,” he said. “It’s local, affordable, and has an inclusive culture with friendly professors, staff, and students.”

Rangel went on to earn a Bachelor of Applied Science in Organizational Development from the University of North Texas.

Though he completed his degree at Collin College, Rangel’s relationship with the college continued to flourish.

“It was so great to be a part of creating a partnership with Encore Wire and the Collin College Construction Technology - Electrical program. We were able to help ensure students had the best products to learn with to be successful upon graduation.”

Rangel’s efforts did not end there. He is an active participant of the Collin College Alumni Network where he loves to share the impact of his time at Collin.

“I’m really grateful and honored to be where I am today,” Rangel said. “My wife and I discuss this all the time. Imagine if I didn’t go back to school. What would our lives be like? We didn’t have much growing up. Now our family has everything, and it feels really good.”

If you, too, are a Collin College alum, we would love to hear your story. Visit www.collin.edu/alumni to share your journey today.

Cristian Rangel



Partnering for the future

Encore Wire has partnered with Collin College on Skills Development grants, which provide training for their employees and the apprenticeship program which is helping bring talent to their company. In addition, the company recently provided funds for a naming rights gift.

According to Laura Madden, executive director of the Collin College Foundation, the college began its naming initiatives in 2009 to recognize valued partners and provide long-term support for student and program excellence.

“It was an honor to celebrate the naming of the Encore Wire Electrical Lab at Collin College’s Technical Campus,” Madden said. “This community-minded company has contributed to student success at Collin for more than 15 years, including the establishment of two scholarship endowments honoring Encore Wire founders Donald Spurgin and Vincent Rego. Students will benefit from Encore Wire’s generosity and engagement for years to come.”



Laura Madden



Dr. Brenden Mesch (provost of Collin College Technical Campus); Dr. Neil Matkin (district president of Collin College); Terrence Caston (Collin College); Aaron Wright (Encore); Cristian Rangel (Collin College alumnus); Troy Skidmore (Encore); and Matt Ford (Encore, retired, and Collin College Foundation Board Member) celebrate the recent naming of the Encore Wire Electrical Lab.

IT'S

GROW



The Frisco Campus will be home to the new Health Sciences Center, a student- and community-centered facility designed to support an innovative learning environment. Expected to open and serve students by January 2027, the center will offer hands-on simulation technology, provide additional labs, and house programs such as Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Physical Therapist Assistant, and other allied health programs.*



The first floor of the 120,000-square-foot center will be used to expand imaging-related programming and house a Diagnostic Center of Innovation. The second floor will focus on expanding learning environments for allied health programs, including Nursing, Medical Technology, Health Professions, and more. The third and final floor will be reserved as shell space designed for future programs that will be developed over the next five to 10 years.



The Collin Higher Education Center (CHEC), located in McKinney, is the central headquarters of the college district. Here, office spacing will be reimaged to better accommodate our administrative staff and leadership. As the home to most district administrative offices, the new CHEC layout will provide additional space for the iCollin Virtual Campus, Collin College Foundation, Collin College Alumni Network, and other important districtwide services that benefit our students and community members.



*Pending approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

Dual Credit

Save time and money! Students can earn high school credit AND college credit through Dual Credit classes. Learn more: www.collin.edu/dual-credit

TIME! FOR COLLIN COLLEGE



COURTYARD CENTER

Completely reconceptualized, the Courtyard Center located in Plano will undergo a total refurbishment to provide space for instruction in a number of beauty and wellness programs, including Medical Massage Therapy, Esthetician, and additional related programs that are currently in development. The popular Scholars Active in Learning (SAIL) program will also call Courtyard Center its home, along with the district's police department headquarters.



PLANO campus

As one of our older campuses established in 1989, only a few years after the creation of the Collin College district, the Plano Campus will receive much needed refurbishing both internally and externally. As part of those plans, 212,000 square-feet of roofing will be replaced, and the current advising office will be upgraded to a new welcome center with a one-stop-shop dedicated to student services. Classroom and lab updates will support allied health and nursing programs joining the Plano Campus. A full hall on the south end of the campus was converted into a health sciences wing housing these growing programs.



Updates to student-serving areas will also be prioritized at the Plano Campus. Renovations are planned for the food service and preparation areas, as well as minor updates and reconfigurations to administration areas, common spaces, and classrooms.

The Black Box and John Anthony theatres at the Plano Campus are undergoing extensive renovations. Both theater spaces are being updated to improve guest experiences and continue offering great productions for students and the community.



WYLIE campus

Exciting changes are on the horizon for the Wylie Campus! A new, state-of-the-art Career and Technical Education (CTE) facility is set to open in Fall 2027. The 59,000-square-foot building will house programs such as HVAC, Welding, Health Professions, and Electronic Engineering Technology. This will expand opportunities for students to gain hands-on training in high-demand fields.





Marco Trombetta

Workforce: Cybersecurity graduate finds purpose and career through Collin College

Collin College's Cybersecurity program continues to make an impact by equipping students with the skills needed to succeed in high-demand careers. One recent success story is Marco Trombetta, a graduate of the Cybersecurity workforce program who now serves as a communications specialist with the Collin College Police Department.

Trombetta earned his bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity from Collin College, gaining both technical knowledge and valuable hands-on experience that set him apart. His journey included an internship with the North Texas Fusion Center in McKinney, a regional intelligence

agency that supports public safety through real-time information sharing.

"That internship really opened my eyes to how cybersecurity plays a role in law enforcement and public safety," Trombetta said. "It gave me a better understanding of how agencies work together and how important communication is in keeping communities safe."

Now working as a dispatcher, Trombetta helps manage emergency calls and supports campus police operations – responsibilities that align closely with the skills he developed during his time as a student.

"My role now may not be what most people picture when they think of cybersecurity, but it absolutely uses what I learned in the program," he said. "There's a lot of technical knowledge involved, from managing communication systems to staying alert to potential digital threats."

Trombetta credits Collin College with giving him the foundation to build a successful and meaningful career.

"Collin gave me the tools I needed, everything from practical skills to real-world experiences," he said. "The support I received from faculty and staff also made a big difference. I wouldn't be where I am today without it."

Collin College's Cybersecurity program is one of several workforce initiatives designed to provide students with direct pathways into the job market. Through internships, industry-aligned instruction, and career-focused degrees, students like Trombetta find jobs, purpose, and opportunities.

For information about Collin College's Cybersecurity program options, visit www.collin.edu/academics/programs/cybersecurity-overview.

"Collin gave me the tools I needed, everything from practical skills to real-world experiences."

Collin College Construction Safety: A blended program that can save lives

Eleazar Chavez Jr. remembers being removed from school at nine years old to help his mother take his father to the emergency room. Earlier that day, his father, who worked in construction at a waterproofing company, walked onto an unsecured scaffold that tipped over, causing him to fall three stories. As a result of the fall, his father suffered life-altering injuries.

"My life was drastically affected after the accident," Chavez said. "My mom became the only working parent, and I had to step up and help more with the family due to my father's disability."

Although the accident caused a strain on the family, it sparked ambition in this young child. Twenty years later, Chavez, a

Manhattan Construction Safety director, is pursuing an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Construction Safety at the Collin College Technical Campus.

"My life's mission has been to influence and educate those in the construction industry," Chavez said. "I want to help them by sharing my knowledge. I don't want them to be unprepared like my father."

In 2021, Collin did not have a dedicated program for construction safety and only offered a few courses in the subject. Tammy Bennett, a 26-year construction veteran and Collin College professor, was hired to teach the classes and write the course content.

"I realized that there were limited educational opportunities for construction safety," Bennett said. "There were Occupational Safety degrees; however, if you look at most Occupational Safety degree programs, they only offer one semester of construction safety, which I feel puts students at a disadvantage if they go into the construction industry."



Tammy Bennett

The Collin College Construction Safety program, which was established in 2022, was designed to train students like Chavez in material handling, construction site safety, safety engineering, and many other safety precautions.

The program includes certifications and an AAS in Construction Safety. It started as an in-person program and has been changed to a blended format which combines mostly online and some in-person instruction.

"In a discussion with industry leaders on the advisory committee, Collin leadership, and many more individuals, we felt we could reach more working-class individuals by offering a blended class setting," Bennett said.

The program has succeeded according to industry partners who have hired graduates. Sean M. Blakemore, safety director at Southern Region McCarthy Building Companies, Inc., shared his company's experience working with a Collin College graduate.

"We brought on a Collin College student for an internship in the summer of 2024," Blakemore said. "We were extremely impressed with this individual and decided to extend the internship through the fall semester. The individual continued to perform exceptionally well, and we were thrilled to offer this student a full-time role prior to graduation."



Eleazar Chavez Jr.

To learn more about the Construction Safety program and how to register, visit www.collin.edu/departments/constructionmanagement/constructionsafety.



Collin College SkillsUSA students excel in service and design

Students from Collin College's SkillsUSA chapters demonstrated excellence in both community service and creative achievement.

In March, the Collin College SkillsUSA Welding Team offered their time and skills to assist the Collin County Animal Shelter. The students repaired and reinforced stockyard pens, helping to ensure the animals were safely contained and cared for in a more secure environment.



Landon LaRocque

"This is a perfect example of how our students take what they learn in the classroom and apply it in real-world, meaningful ways," said Landon LaRocque, Welding program lead at Collin College. "Community service projects like this not only sharpen their skills but also build character and compassion."

In addition to community outreach, Collin College also celebrated individual student success. Andrea Molina, a Communication Design graduate, won the prestigious SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference Pin Design Challenge. Her design was selected from entries submitted by students across the nation and was featured at the national conference.



Dr. Brenden Mesch

"We are incredibly proud of Andrea's accomplishment," said Dr. Brenden Mesch, provost of the Collin College Technical Campus. "Her achievement reflects both the quality of students we have and the caliber of instruction they receive at Collin College."

For Molina, the award is more than just a recognition. "Winning this competition showed me that all the hours I put into refining my design skills really paid off," she said. "It means a lot to know my work represents SkillsUSA at the national level."

Collin College's ongoing participation in SkillsUSA provides students with opportunities to compete, serve, and grow professionally. Through a combination of teamwork, technical training, and leadership development, students are preparing to enter the workforce with confidence and purpose.

To learn more about all the programs offered by Collin College, including those mentioned in this article, visit www.collin.edu/academics/programs.



Above: Collin College students gain real-world experience as they practice welding techniques on a metal gate. Below: A Collin student uses a power grinder to smooth the edges of a metal gate under the guidance of an instructor.

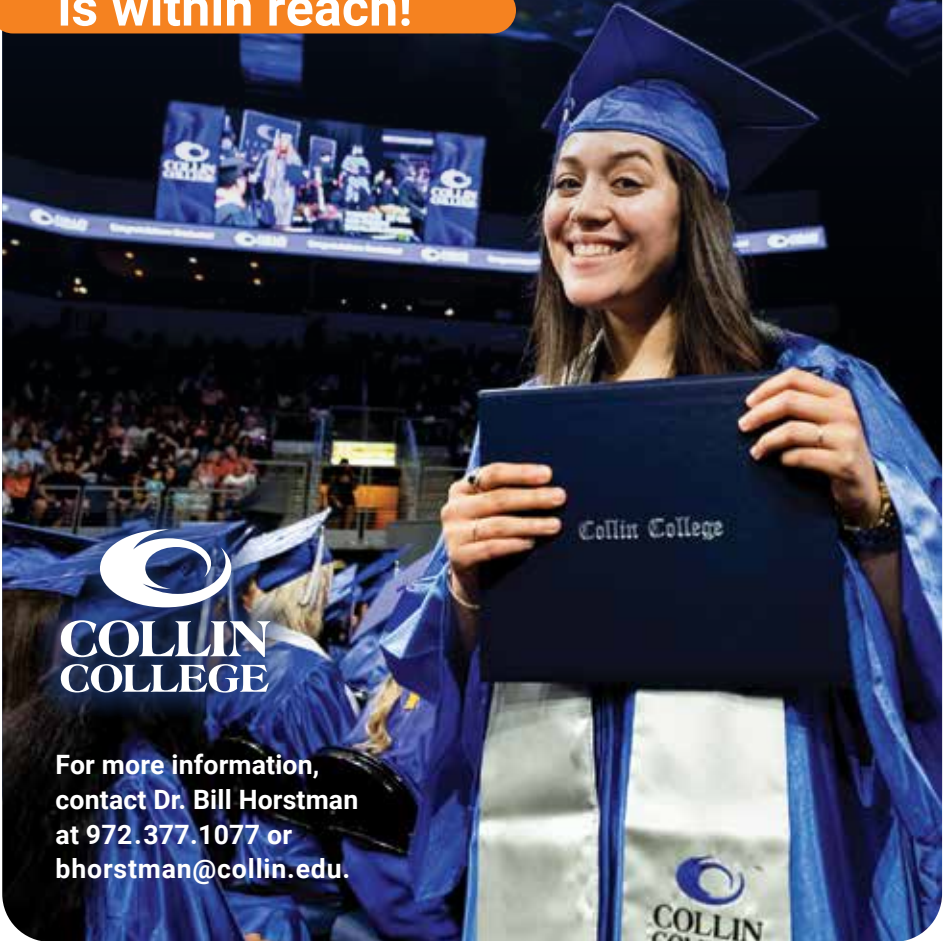


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Scholarships are now available to help you finish what you started.

Your Collin College degree is within reach!



For more information, contact Dr. Bill Horstman at 972.377.1077 or bhorstman@collin.edu.

Have you heard?

For the first time in its history, this fall Collin College is serving more than

40,000 credit students

in a single semester.



For information on how to apply to Collin College, visit www.collin.edu/apply.



Did YOU know?

Collin College offers a variety of services that are available to the community. We invite you to explore the exciting amenities located at a campus near you.



The Red Room FRISCO CAMPUS

Enjoy mouth-watering cuisine prepared and served by students at The Red Room, a working educational lab which provides culinary students hands-on experience in menu creation and execution, restaurant management, and front- and back-of-house practice.

Learn more at www.collin.edu/community/redroom.



Dental Services McKINNEY CAMPUS

Schedule a free screening at our dental hygiene clinic in McKinney. We also offer teeth cleanings and sealants at a reduced cost. Schedule your appointment at www.collin.edu/dentalhygiene/dentalhygieneclinic.



Collin College Career Centers DISTRICTWIDE

Navigate your future here. From career advising to job fairs and everything in between, our staff is ready to assist at a campus near you.

Learn more at www.collin.edu/studentresources/career.



Libraries DISTRICTWIDE

Our seven campus libraries provide services and resources that support the academic, research, and informational needs of students, faculty, staff, and community members.

Learn more at www.collin.edu/library.



Fine Arts Venues PLANO CAMPUS

Prepare to be entertained! Check out exhibitions, performances, concerts, and plays at the John Anthony Theatre, the Black Box Theatre, and a few smaller performance spaces. Take a stroll inside The Art Gallery to view student, faculty, and guest exhibitions and works from professional artists. View the Fine Arts events calendar at www.collin.edu/finearts.



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