

## Collin offers new Clinical Operations Management bachelor's degree



**Collin College is offering a new Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Clinical Operations Management this fall.**

The college received final approval for the BAS in Clinical Operations Management from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in June.

According to President and CEO of the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council W. Stephen Love, this degree is unique because it includes the variety of needed skills in the medical, business, and leadership roles that graduates will pursue upon graduation.

“This is very exciting as the new Bachelor of Applied Science in Clinical Operations Management will prepare students for additional leadership training, risk management, and workforce support that graduates will need for a hospital and clinical setting,” Love said. “The new bachelor’s program will benefit the community by preparing advanced students for medical positions with additional leadership tools and keeping talent within our communities.”

Taught at Collin College’s McKinney Campus, the program is designed for students with associate degrees in allied health/health sciences seeking higher level employment opportunities within healthcare organizations. The BAS in Clinical Operations Management will prepare students for advancement within healthcare organizations by offering leadership and

managerial topics, including business principles, talent management, project management, data analysis, and risk management. All courses are conducted online and may be taken on a part-time or full-time basis.

This is great news for busy professionals like Vivian Dailey, a registered polysomnographic technologist with a certification in clinical sleep health, who works at the Sleep Diagnostic Institute at Medical City Lewisville.

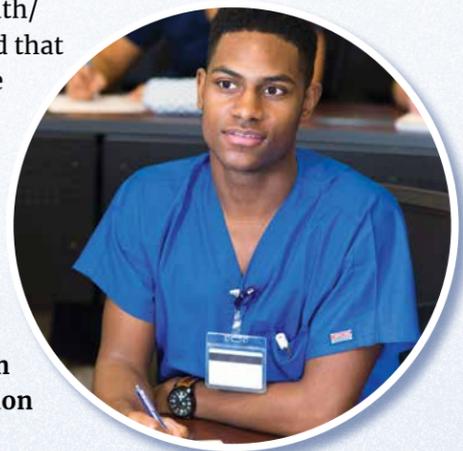
“I feel this degree would provide me with valuable knowledge in my current role as lead sleep technologist,” said Dailey, who earned an Associate Degree in Polysomnography in 2014 from Collin College. “This bachelor’s degree will also allow me the opportunity to grow in my field and increase my value and income. My goal is to expand the program at my hospital, and this is an avenue that will help me accomplish that goal.”

This is the college’s fourth baccalaureate degree. The college’s Bachelor of Science (BSN) in Nursing and Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in Cybersecurity began in Spring 2020, and the BAS in Construction Management began in Fall 2022.

“The Bachelor of Applied Science in Clinical Operations Management will instill managerial competence in our students for rewarding, high-demand careers,” said Dr. Abe Johnson, senior vice president of campus operations. “All graduates of our Nursing and Health Science programs will now have the opportunity to be ready for upward mobility in their chosen fields. Medical and health services management is a rapidly growing field, and we are proud to be able to offer this program, and all of our bachelor’s degrees, at Collin College’s exceptional tuition.”

Admission to the BAS in Clinical Operations Management program requires admission to Collin College, completion of an Associate of Applied Sciences degree in an allied health/health sciences/emergency services field that prepares students for clinical care or the systematic review of clinical care, and completion of an application to the BAS in Clinical Operations Management.

For more information about the program and its requirements to apply, visit [www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MHSM\\_BAS\\_Clinical%20Op%20Mgmt.html](http://www.collin.edu/academics/programs/MHSM_BAS_Clinical%20Op%20Mgmt.html) or contact the Health Sciences and Emergency Services Division Office at 972.548.6678.



## FLEXTech program paves path to success for tech students with innovative apprenticeships

**Collin College’s innovative FLEXTech program is revolutionizing the world of IT and Cybersecurity apprenticeships,** breaking free from traditional molds to create a new pathway to success in the digital realm. This visionary initiative, enabled through a grant authorized by the U.S. Department of Labor, aims to bridge the gap between opportunity and expertise, empowering a new generation of tech enthusiasts to conquer high-demand occupations.

The FLEXTech (Flexible Learning Expressway for Technology) training program, which launched in January 2020, offers flexible apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training experiences for IT and Cybersecurity students. The grant required Collin College to partner with an industry consortium to design and implement apprenticeship programs, document their success, and share the knowledge nationwide.



Shawn Zhang, a virtual desktop engineer, guides a student through the intricacies of computer networking, one of the many tech programs offered at the college.

However, the program faced an unexpected hurdle when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“The lockdowns and work-from-home policies made it challenging to gain traction and engage employers,” said Dr. Tara Lewis, FLEXTech program career coach at Collin College.

Undeterred, Lewis and workforce coach Nadia Khedairy worked tirelessly to keep students engaged during this difficult time. Virtual workshops were organized to enhance students’ job skills, build résumés, and foster career readiness. After several months of meeting with students, Lewis invited industry experts to give virtual talks, enabling students to interact with professionals and gain insights into the evolving industry.

While the initial progress was slow, Lewis’ efforts gradually paid off. Student interest in the program began to surge, and companies

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## Debbie Gomez: Empowering students through collaboration and shared resources

After dedicating herself to being a full-time mom for years, Collin College student Debbie Gomez made a life-altering decision to return to school to pursue her passion for computer networking. Little did she know that her journey would not only transform her own life but also ignite a movement that brings together a community of aspiring IT professionals.

Gomez's reentry into the world of education was marked by a series of intense eight-week courses that she described as "fast, furious, and unforgiving." Eager to catch up and enhance her skills further, she reached out to her neighbors to inquire if they had any spare computing equipment to share. She didn't anticipate the wave of generosity that would wash over her humble abode.

A significant number of her neighbors were seasoned IT professionals who saw an opportunity to support her ambitions. Their donations overflowed her garage, filling it with switches, routers, and other crucial hardware. It was there, amidst the labyrinth of circuits and cables, that Gomez embarked on a hands-on journey of learning, honing her skills by meticulously putting computers back together.

As Gomez's proficiency grew, so did her desire to share her newfound resources with fellow students seeking practical training.

"Seeing an opportunity to share, I invited fellow classmates who also craved hands-on training to join me at my home to practice their skills on all the equipment I had amassed," she said.

Word spread like wildfire across the Frisco Campus, and before she knew it, a group of

passionate individuals began gathering to work on the equipment during their spare time, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The turning point in Gomez's endeavor came when she sought guidance from her professor, Patrick Evans, who is also the discipline lead for Computer Networking. Recognizing her drive and potential, Evans not only provided the advice and assistance she sought but also inspired her to establish a club that could serve as a support system within the college. Hence, the Computer Science and Engineering Club was born.

The club's members organize various activities and games designed to expand students' knowledge of the IT field beyond the confines of the classroom.

"The club serves as a sanctuary for overwhelmed students, fostering a sense of camaraderie and providing them with invaluable learning opportunities," Evans said.

Central to the club's activities is the PC Donation Project, an inventive initiative that received a substantial contribution from an animation company transitioning to remote work. Despite the donated equipment lacking hard drives, Gomez and her team embarked on a quest to source the missing components. Once assembled, the reconstructed computers were donated to students in need, bridging the digital divide and empowering their academic pursuits.

"Debbie has come a long way since she started last year," Evans said. "This is a fast-paced program. It's a lot of information in a short amount of time, so it's easy to get overwhelmed. But Debbie has really been good at setting the example for students who may



Computer Science and Engineering Club Officers, (back row, left to right) Amy Tong and Ian Smith; (front row, left to right) Sydney Rosser, Patrick Evans, Debbie Gomez, Steven Kellmeyer, and Shakera Subedar.

be struggling and giving them a place to meet and network with other students to give each other encouragement."

Gomez said the club offers a platform for mentorship and networking, welcoming students from all backgrounds and nurturing an inclusive environment where success is a shared goal.

"The Computer Science and Engineering Club at Collin College presents a gateway to professional growth and personal empowerment," Gomez said. "Whether it be networking with peers, accessing computer equipment outside of regular classes, or simply finding encouragement during challenging times, this club has become a beacon of hope and progress for aspiring IT professionals."

In the face of daunting obstacles, Gomez has proven that with dedication, resourcefulness, and a supportive community, even the most audacious dreams can become a reality.

If you would like to support the Computer Science and Engineering Club as a corporate sponsor, or connect with the club as a student, contact Debbie Gomez at [dgomez28@collin.edu](mailto:dgomez28@collin.edu); Patrick Evans at [pevans@collin.edu](mailto:pevans@collin.edu); or Robert Morphew at [rmorphew@collin.edu](mailto:rmorphew@collin.edu).

## Collin College Continuing Education draws industry experts

Collin College Continuing Education (CE) students learn from experts with years of experience in their respective fields. CE offers 70 industry-recognized certificate series and certification preparation programs, including noncredit courses such as English as a Second Language (ESL), aerial drone operation, and wine education.

Betty Kiowski has been with Collin College for 20 years, teaching adults ESL. She enjoys seeing the fulfillment that teaching a different language brings.

"I developed many of my teaching methods from my experience at Collin College," Kiowski said. "There is a different sort of art and science in teaching adults than there is to teaching children."



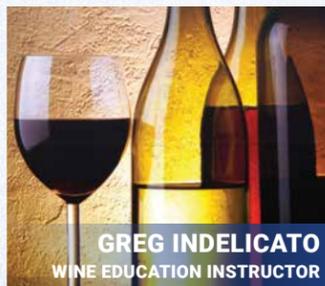
BETTY KIOWSKI  
ESL INSTRUCTOR

According to Kiowski, her job is to provide a comfortable environment to encourage students to let their guard

down and be vulnerable enough to learn a new language. She says the key is to empathize with the student.

"Most of us (ESL instructors) are native speakers, and that is really important in terms of pronunciation," Kiowski said. "What we teach is English and culture, a deep knowledge of the American experience."

Wine instructor Greg Indelicato teaches another kind of culture to his students.



Indelicato, a 10-year instructor with four years at Collin, teaches students how to select great wines from all over the world and feel confident in

their choices. The wine series is called Wine Education: Old and New World Wines. After developing a personal interest, Indelicato obtained certifications from the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and the Society of Wine Educators. He began sharing his knowledge during presentations at private and industry events. As his interest developed into an ongoing career, he began teaching classes.

"My objective is that a student will feel confident walking down the French wine aisle at a store and engaging with the wine specialist," Indelicato said.

Most CE courses do not have entrance or examination requirements; however, some courses require testing if students want to obtain a commercial license. Even if you do not plan to operate drones commercially, Collin's aerial drone classes teach information on drone insurance that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires.

The aerial drone class, FAA Part 107 Exam Prep, is taught by Jonathan Denton, owner and chief executive officer at DW Digital Imagery & Associates. Denton, who has a master's degree in Geographical Information Systems, has been teaching the class for three years.

"While pursuing my master's degree, I learned about aerial mapping with airplanes and helicopters, and that was before the drone came on the scene in 2013. I had already immersed



JONATHAN DENTON  
AERIAL DRONE CLASS INSTRUCTOR

myself in GIS and dealing with satellite imagery and aerial maps when drones came about," Denton said.

The FAA Part 107 Exam Prep class is offered once a month at Collin, and students walk away with the ability to take the exam right after the class.

"The students are provided contact information for the FAA, airport security, air traffic control, and our contact information if they have any questions for us," Denton said. "Even after students finish the class, we still offer free information like an answering hotline, either by phone or email. You are basically a student for life."

To find out more about Continuing Education programs, visit [www.collin.edu/ce/](http://www.collin.edu/ce/).

# Basketball, tennis teams compete on national stage

This past season, the Collin College Women's Basketball team earned a spot at the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division I tournament, capping an unprecedented year for the team and the college. The exceptional season, along with top 10 finishes by the Collin men's and women's tennis teams, highlight the Cougars' tradition of athletic excellence.



Collin College's women's basketball team turned in an astounding 29-3 season and earned its first-ever invitation to the NJCAA national championship tournament. The women's team has played in the regional tournament 14 times and has been named conference champions six times.

The 2022-2023 Lady Cougars basketball team recorded an overall record of 29-3, setting a new mark for most wins at the school and finishing the regular season at No. 7 in the NJCAA coaches' poll. The team was named an at-large selection to the national tournament on the strength of its record and national ranking. The selection was Collin College's first trip to the national tournament by either of its basketball programs.

Freshmen Waiata Jennings and Mackenzie Buss were honored as NJCAA Division I Women's Basketball All-Americans. Jennings, originally from Rotorua, New Zealand, was named a Second Team All-American. Buss, a guard out of Lake Dallas, was named an All-American Honorable Mention.



(Facing camera from left to right) Adamari Waddell, Waiata Jennings, and Mackenzie Buss defend the basket in the Lady Cougars' national championship tournament game.

This year's squad had seven players from Texas, including area hoopsters Buss, Jayden Smallwood from McKinney, and Ebonee Kyle from Plano. Kyle said the chance to play on such a successful team was amazing, and playing at the junior college, or JUCO, level has helped develop her game.

"I feel like it is a place where you can learn about yourself and learn about basketball," Kyle said. "There are a lot of good players in JUCO, and playing them can prepare you for the next level, especially if you have a good coach."

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## Workforce spotlight: Medical Assisting Advanced Practice

Students interested in entering the job market quickly, improving their skills, or changing careers can choose from many of Collin College's workforce programs ranging from animation to welding. These workforce programs will train students for rewarding futures and prepare them to enter the labor force armed with technical skills and knowledge that employers are seeking.

Medical Assisting Advanced Practice is this month's featured program. A medical assistant (MA) is the right-hand person for physicians in an office setting and assists doctors with examinations and procedures. They assist in minor surgeries, pap smears, and EKGs and administer immunizations and draw blood, just to name a few of their responsibilities.

"MAs are performing many of the duties that nurses were assigned in offices 30 years ago, and nurses are mainly employed in hospitals," said Leon Deutsch, Collin College program director of the Medical Assisting Advanced Practice program. "Because MAs gain hands-on training and skills, they are often viewed as stronger candidates when they apply for other health science programs, such as nursing or medical school."

The Medical Assisting Advanced Practice program can be completed in 10 months, and graduates are often hired in less than a year from the time they start school. As a result, they gain patient care experience right away.

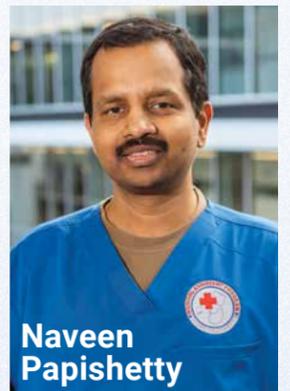
"Nursing school is tough, and a lot of people don't make it through. The MAs that have experience taking care of patients tend to be not only stronger candidates but stronger students in the nursing program," Deutsch said.

Naveen Papishetty, a Collin College Medical Assisting Advanced Practice graduate, shared how he was inspired by the heroic stories of doctors and nurses demonstrating selfless service to patients in hospitals during the pandemic.

"I think saving someone's life is the best service one could do, and this field allows me to perform that service," Papishetty said. "It gives me great satisfaction to think I could make a difference in someone's life while still earning a living."

The "Advanced Practice" in the medical assistant program indicates a distinction between Collin's medical assistant program and other medical assistant programs. According to Deutsch, the advancement is that Collin College students can earn four certifications while other programs may only offer two. These certifications include Registered Medical Assistant (RMA), Registered Phlebotomy Technician (RPT), EKG Technician, and Medical Scribe. The program has a 100% job placement rate, a 100% RMA exam pass rate, and a 100% employer satisfaction rate.

For more information about Collin College's Medical Assisting Advanced Practice program, visit [www.collin.edu/departments/medicalassisting/](http://www.collin.edu/departments/medicalassisting/).



**Naveen Papishetty**

### MEDICAL ASSISTANT

Starting Salary: **\$31,700**

Average Salary: **\$40,000**

Job Growth: **30.9%**

\* Data for Collin County obtained from JobsEQ and O\*Net. Average salary is as of 2023, and job growth is projected from 2022-2029.



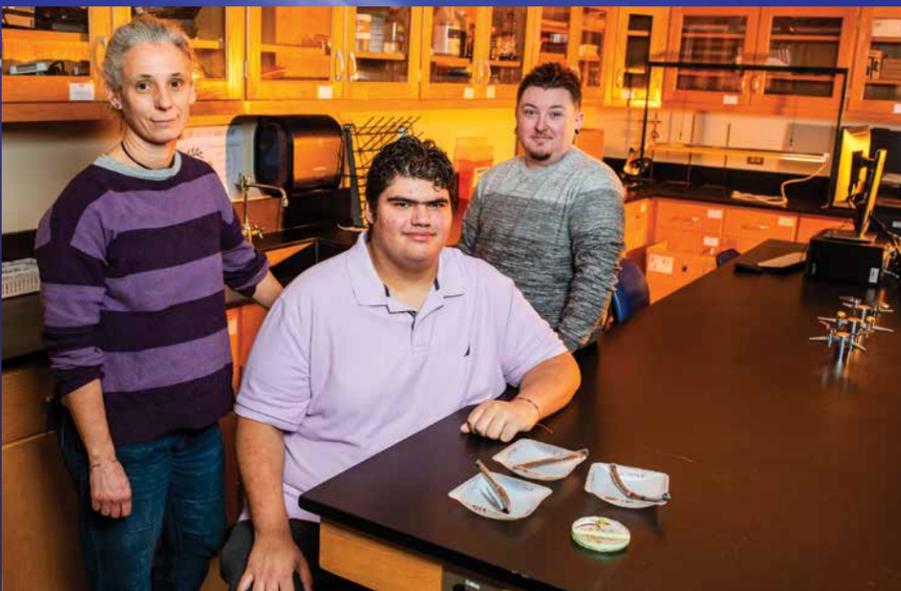
# Education helps students

Collin College students are learning what it takes to make their mark in the world around them. Some students are extending their reach even farther. Check out the following stories of Collin College's efforts to reach for the stars.

## Student experiment will head to space

A microgravity experiment designed by Collin College students has been selected to fly to the International Space Station aboard a SpaceX commercial supply vehicle in December as part of Mission 17 of the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP).

The experiment "Does microgravity affect the formation of symbiotic relationships between soy and rhizobium?" was designed by then-Collin College students Henry Elmendorf of Allen and Stefano Sacripanti of Murphy with the guidance of Dr. Tamara Basham, a professor of Environmental Science at the Plano Campus. It focuses on the process used to increase soybean yield for use as a possible food source and raw materials for bioplastics on long space voyages.



An experiment designed by Collin College students Stefano Sacripanti (seated) and Henry Elmendorf (right) with guidance by Dr. Tamara Basham (left) has been selected to travel to the International Space Station in December.

Sacripanti, who is pursuing a degree in electrical engineering, said the experiment occurred to the pair after reading about soybeans being used to create biodegradable containers. He wondered if that process could be applied to materials used in spaceflight when external resupplies were not an option.

"It's a far-off concept, but it could be a sustainable way to use resources," he said. "Maybe this could be used to repair broken parts or to get those materials in space."

The first step, though, would be to grow the soybeans.

Scientists have long known that soybeans sprout in microgravity, but Sacripanti and Elmendorf wanted to test whether the legumes' reaction to a nitrogen-fixing bacteria called rhizobium would differ in space. Rhizobium increases soybean yield by 66 percent, making the crop much more useful to future astronauts. However, if introducing rhizobium in microgravity affects the way the plant and bacteria interact, that knowledge is essential. That is what the experiment tests.

Elmendorf, who studied Urban Sustainable Agriculture at Collin College, said designing the experiment was an important learning opportunity because it involved collaboration, attention to detail, and producing the best proposal possible.

"We thought through the project thoroughly and made adjustments as needed to fit not only our limited experiment space, but to be as useful in the data we have at the end," he said. "I think we came up with a very relevant experiment that ties in with past and current research being done on the International Space Station that could provide valuable information for future spaceflight missions."

Scientific-minded students from multiple Collin College campuses submitted potential experiments for SSEP Mission 17. Other experiments designed by Collin College students included "Chemical reaction/erosion on a parent rock" and "Galleria mellonella's Polyethyleneases – Pioneers of biodegrading plastic to establish a sustainable space environment."



Artistically inclined students also had an opportunity to participate by designing mission patches like those worn by astronauts. Alayna Samnani, a dual credit student at The Colony High School, and Frisco Campus student Fernando Rodriguez created winning patch designs.

SSEP is a program of the National Center for Earth and Space Science Education (NCESS) in the U.S. and the Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education internationally. It is enabled through a strategic partnership with Nanoracks LLC, which is working with NASA under a Space Act Agreement as part of the utilization of the International Space Station as a National Laboratory.

## Tracking asteroids: Scientists in the making

It may sound like an apocalyptic sci-fi movie, but according to Dr. Christian Aars, Collin College Physics and Astronomy discipline lead, there are about two million asteroids in the solar system that are big enough – larger than approximately 1 kilometer – to cause an existential catastrophe for the human race if they were to hit the earth.

"We need updated observations of hundreds of thousands of asteroids annually just to keep information current," Dr. Aars said. "There aren't enough professional astronomers in the world for that. We must rely on 'citizen astronomers' to begin to make a dent in the lack of knowledge."

That's where Collin College students and the Center for Advanced Studies in Mathematics and Natural Sciences (CASMNS) come in. CASMNS offers students, like Olivia Smith, the opportunity to work with professors in a variety of undergraduate research projects. Smith used a telescope and computers to take images of a general region of the sky to locate two asteroids: Bamberga and Hermione.



Dr. Christian Aars



OLIVIA SMITH

"We used a plate scale of a telescope, which shows sources of light in our star view relative to each other, and compared our XY coordinates for the asteroids to what is listed at the Minor Planet Center at Harvard University," said Smith, who was accepted into the aerospace engineering program at the University of Texas at Arlington. "We calculated Bamberga's location with almost zero error. However, with Hermione we found more error. Our assertion is that our data for Hermione is a little more accurate than what the Minor Planet Center currently has. I had no idea I was going to enjoy the CASMNS project so much, but Dr. Christian Aars and Dr. Greg Sherman are brilliant astronomers and professors."

# reach for the stars

According to Physics Professor Dr. Greg Sherman, in 2010 CASMNS students at the college sent asteroid findings to the Minor Planet Center and were assigned the asteroid discovery 2010-CK12.

“As it turns out, we were actually third in the discovery,” he said. “Eventually, the Minor Planet Center determined that four submissions were the same asteroid. But the observations we made literally advanced scientific knowledge of this asteroid, and the students should be very proud of the work they did.”

The college is working toward becoming an official observatory for the Minor Planet Center. According to Dr. Sherman, an observatory with official status is one that the astronomical community can be confident will provide accurate data.

Learning to accurately track asteroids through the CASMNS program made a difference in alumna Athena Goldsmith’s job interviews.

“It’s a great conversation topic,” said Goldsmith, who earned an associate degree from the college, a bachelor’s degree in biomedical engineering from The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), and is currently a product engineer for a medical device company that produces heart valves.

“I would recommend CASMNS because it is a lot of fun and great research experience. I felt more competent going into my research project at UTD. When you work on asteroid research, you can contribute important data to the scientific community,” said Goldsmith.

For more information about CASMNS, visit [www.collin.edu/academics/casmns/](http://www.collin.edu/academics/casmns/).



Dr. Greg Sherman

Not only was Adamson impressed by low tuition costs at Collin, but his professors made his college experience rewarding. Adamson always had an interest in welding, but after his professors observed his welding skills, they encouraged him to take a class in Advanced Welding in Aerospace Application.

“I was led in the direction of aerospace by Professor Darrel Rochell and Professor Steven Reeves,” Adamson said. “I wasn’t really considering aerospace when I first came here, but after I was able to develop a skillset that’s beneficial to the industry, and with the guidance of my professors, I pretty much set my sight on it and didn’t let off the throttle at all.”

Advanced Welding in Aerospace Application is an introduction to automation in welding. In this course, students learn to operate a robotic arm through Fuji Automatic Numerical Control (FANUC) programming systems.

“There’s code and regulations that come with welding and, if you want to weld at the higher levels, you have to learn how to navigate that code and understand the expectation of the industry,” Adamson said.

In addition to basic welding robotic programming, students are required to take industry standard tests to enter a career in welding. Collin’s Welding Technology program is centered around preparing students for these tests. Adamson passed his first welding test to work at Safran Group the first time he took it and credits his success to the years of experience and education from Collin College.

Adamson’s advice to other welding students, “decide what you want and make a conscious effort toward it every day. What we do isn’t easy. Welders fix things other people can’t, and if you don’t want to be one of the only people who understands the problems that people throw at you, then you probably need to pick a different career path.”

To learn more about the Welding Technology program at the Collin College Technical Campus, visit [www.collin.edu/campuses/technical/](http://www.collin.edu/campuses/technical/).



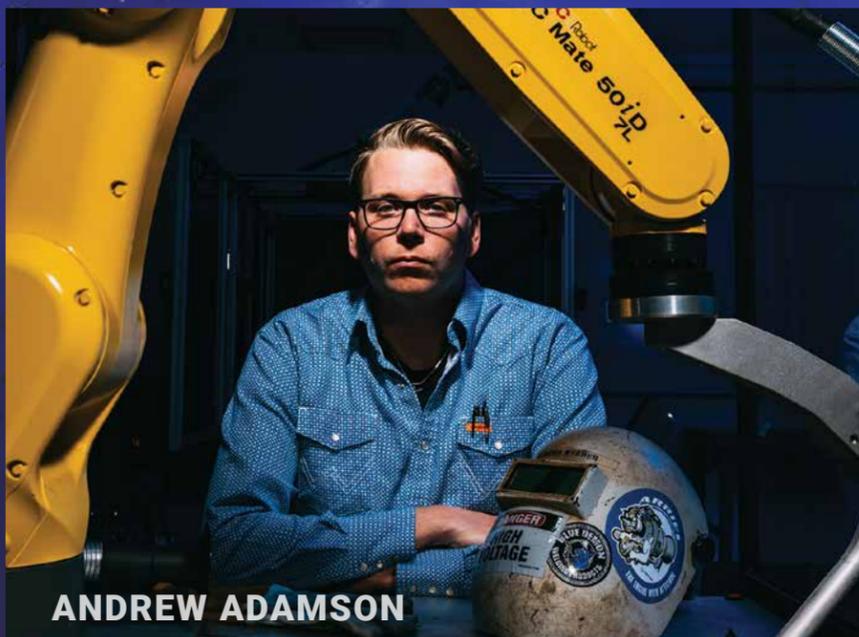
Professor Darrel Rochell



Professor Steven Reeves

## Collin College graduate shares his experience in aerospace welding

“Love at first sight” is how Collin College graduate Andrew Adamson described the first time he held a welding torch. Adamson graduated this past May with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Welding Technology, and because of his experience at the Collin College Technical Campus he was offered an aerospace welding position at Safran Group in Grand Prairie.



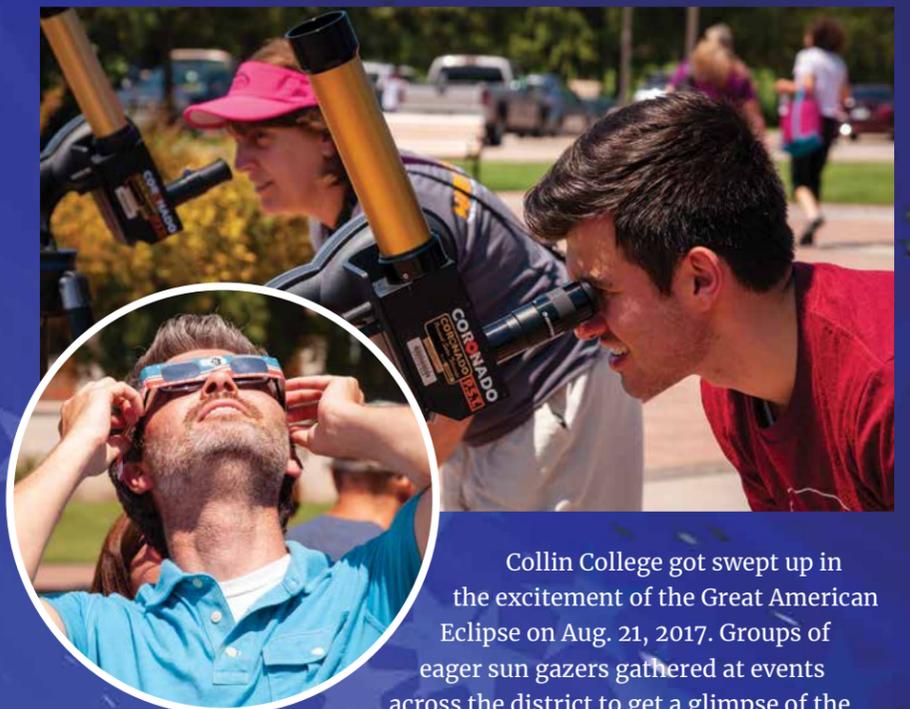
ANDREW ADAMSON

“I knew that this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life,” Adamson said. “I kind of made that conscious decision after my very first time welding.”

A family member who worked at Collin influenced Adamson’s decision to pursue his welding career by attending college first versus on-the-job training. They helped him research information on financial assistance, and once he was approved for Federal Student Aid the college opportunity became a “no brainer.”

“The cost of entry was really low compared to other welding schools, which was kind of a big hurdle that I was wanting to avoid,” Adamson said.

## Great American Eclipse at Collin College



Collin College got swept up in the excitement of the Great American Eclipse on Aug. 21, 2017. Groups of eager sun gazers gathered at events across the district to get a glimpse of the partial solar eclipse visible from North Texas.

A few hundred people were on hand at the Frisco, McKinney, and Plano campuses to sneak a peek through solar telescopes and special glasses. The equipment provided exceptional views of the partially blocked sun without potential eye damage.

Big crowds are expected at similar events on Oct. 14, 2023, and April 8, 2024, when North Texas will be in the path of a partial and full eclipse, respectively. Be sure to check Collin College’s social media channels for information about viewing events.

## Joining forces for sustainability: Partnerships make it possible



It is challenging to describe the construction of the new 12x40-foot greenhouse at the Farmersville Campus without mentioning many partners.

Collin College students, like Ahmed Juma, are proud of this structure because their newfound knowledge was put to the test during its construction.

"We built the trusses which support the roof," said Juma, who also served as a supervisor for the framing of the building.

"Engineers designed them, and instead of using nails or screws we attached them with a hydraulic truss plate press," he said, describing the partnership with Simpson Strong Tie that designed the trusses, donated truss plates, and loaned the truss plate press.

Juma's goal is to complete an associate degree, earn a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Construction Management from the college, and ultimately build a house with a floating staircase.



AHMED JUMA

"When I was a kid I told my mom that I wanted to help people. When you help people it benefits you, too. Students will use the greenhouse to gain knowledge, and that is important," he said.

According to Craig Johnson, director of architecture and construction programs at Collin College, the greenhouse is a shining example of collaboration. The college's facility staff oversaw the project, students put the roof trusses in, and Skanska USA Building, Inc. broke ground and poured the footer.

Skanska Vice President of Operations Joe Lindemann said the newly built greenhouse is more than just a structure.

"It's a resource for nurturing a sustainable future for the next generation and a haven of growth and inspiration," said Lindemann. "Skanska is proud to have partnered with Collin College in their pursuit of providing workforce, economic, and community development initiatives designed for staff and student needs. We hope that this greenhouse will serve as a foundation for cultivating knowledge, innovation, and a greener tomorrow."

According to Collin College Director of Agriculture Anne Thornton, advisory committee members saw the greenhouse as a critical component for students who are developing marketable skills that are sought after by growers.

"Partnership is the reason we were able to get the greenhouse built," Thornton said. "It means our students will have the necessary tools to grow and expand their learning, and we can better serve the community."

Recently, the college's agriculture program partnered with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to host the Northeast Texas Small Acreage and New Landowner Conference. It also partnered with Collin County AgriLife and faculty from Texas A&M-Commerce to install an Earth Kind research garden bed at the Farmersville Campus.

"Our long-range goals are to produce enough excess food crops for students to host a pop-up farmers market on campus and to be able to donate to area food banks and community kitchens," she said.



Collin College construction management student Emily Saldana (leftmost photo) carries scaffolding for the construction of the new greenhouse at the Farmersville Campus.

Under the direction of Professor of Carpentry Gary Stevens (top center), carpentry student Karla Holguin (left) looks on while construction management student Ricky Aguilar (lower center) frames a wall for the greenhouse.

In addition, one goal of the Construction Management program is to make sure that women know about this career field, according to Johnson.

"Close to 20 percent of the students in our program are women. The industry average is 11 percent, and education programs typically range from 13-15 percent female students," he said. "Women are highly sought after because they tend to be detail-oriented and better communicators, and that is what our industry is all about."

Construction Management student Gregorious Moffett couldn't agree more.

"This is an industry where men welcome women and are happy for them to come into the field," said Moffett, who plans to earn a BAS in Construction Management. "I feel strong when I am doing this. I feel powerful when people are expecting a man and a woman walks in."

An aspiring project manager, Moffett said it is an honor to be part of the greenhouse project.

"I cannot wait to bring my kids to see it," she said.

For more information about the Construction Management program, visit [www.collin.edu/department/constructionmanagement/](http://www.collin.edu/department/constructionmanagement/).

For more information about the agriculture program, visit [www.collin.edu/department/agriculture/](http://www.collin.edu/department/agriculture/).



Craig Johnson



Joe Lindemann



Anne Thornton



# Basketball, tennis teams compete on national stage

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Larissa Giraldi Correa, who ranked No. 10 in junior college tennis nationally, shows off her backhand early in the season.

Lady Cougars Coach Jeff Allen was named Two-Year College National Coach of the Year by the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) after the 2022–2023 season.

Collin’s tennis team is no stranger to the national spotlight. The men’s and women’s teams have brought home nine national championships and produced 89 NJCAA Tennis All-Americans in the program’s 33-year history.

The 2022–2023 teams ranked No. 5 for men and No. 8 for women in national coaches’ polls. Larissa Giraldi Correa of Sao Paulo, Brazil was ranked No. 10 in the nation in singles play in the same poll.

The teams finished No. 5 and No. 7, respectively, at their national tournaments. The men’s tournament was hosted by Collin College and had two individual players and a doubles team battling their way to the semifinal round before elimination. Collin College has also been approved to host the 2023–2024 national championship.

Basketball and tennis are the two sports that Collin College currently participates in at the NJCAA level. Still, athletics play an important role in providing students with a well-rounded college experience, according to Dr. Albert Tezeno, vice president of Student and Enrollment Services and athletic director.

“Collin College has been fortunate to have so many wonderful student athletes who are achieving in the classroom and in competition,” Dr. Tezeno said. “They are a great source of pride for all of us, and it is a joy to cheer them on.”

Visit <http://athletics.collin.edu> for more information about Collin College sports.



Men’s and women’s tennis teams at Collin College continued to impress in 2022–2023 with invitations to their respective NJCAA national championship tournaments. Like many of Collin’s teams before them, this year’s teams were ranked in the Top 10 nationwide.



Coach Jeff Allen



Dr. Albert Tezeno

# FLEXTech program paves path to success for tech students

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also started showing enthusiasm. By prioritizing student training and increasing participation, FLEXTech attracted more partnerships with companies eager to create apprenticeships.

Dr. Brenden Mesch, Collin College Technical Campus provost and FLEXTech principal investigator, emphasized the program’s unique approach to apprenticeships.

“FlexTech’s agility and responsiveness to employers’ needs make it an appealing option for companies that traditionally shy away from apprenticeships due to administrative complexities,” he said.

The program’s success is bolstered by comprehensive career coaching and professional development. Students in the FLEXTech program receive in-depth guidance, ensuring they enter the profession with strong technical and relational skills.

Dr. Nora Hernandez, the program’s data coordinator at Collin College, plays a vital role in collecting and analyzing data to showcase the program’s accomplishments.

“More than 100 students have secured employment through internships, co-ops, and job opportunities facilitated by the program,” Dr. Hernandez said.

FLEXTech has formed partnerships with more than 30 employers, creating a robust network of support and opportunity.

“For employers, there is a terrific pool of students in the Information Technology and Cybersecurity programs at Collin College who are job-ready and have the skills needed to be immediately impactful on the job,” Dr. Mesch said. “We are looking for partners who will help transition students into permanent positions with on-the-job training and mentoring.”

Dr. Mesch added that FLEXTech has helped many North Texas IT and cybersecurity companies rethink the need for recruiting four-year students for positions.

“It is great to get feedback from our industry partners about how successful students are from the programs at Collin College,” he said. “Moreover, many of the support mechanisms and resources that have been innovated through FLEXTech have been applied to programs outside of the scope of this grant so other students and employers can benefit.”

With its nimble and forward-thinking approach, FLEXTech is paving the way for the future of apprenticeships in the IT and cybersecurity industries. By providing students with real-world experience and preparing them as top candidates, Collin College’s FLEXTech program opens doors to endless career opportunities in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.



Dr. Brenden Mesch



FLEXTech

For more information on Collin College’s FLEXTech program, contact Dr. Tara Lewis at [tnlewis@collin.edu](mailto:tnlewis@collin.edu).

### Dual Credit

Save time and money! Students can earn high school credit AND college credit through dual credit classes. Learn more: [www.collin.edu/express/dualcredit/](http://www.collin.edu/express/dualcredit/)



# Did you know?

**Did you know that Collin College has a robust dual credit program offered at 41 public, private, and charter schools?**



High school students can take Collin College courses and simultaneously earn credit for both their high school diplomas and their college degrees. Students may also be eligible to obtain college credit through Collin College's concurrent credit program. This process allows a high school student to enroll in college-level academic or technical courses while still enrolled in high school and receive college credit without receiving high school credit for courses. Both options are only available with high school/homeschool official approval.

All courses are taught by Collin College professors at a student's high school campus or a Collin College campus. With the second lowest tax rate in Texas among community colleges, students can take advantage of these opportunities at a low cost. Tuition rates will be determined by residency and number of enrolled credit hours.

**Interested in learning more about these options to earn college credit and the opportunity to graduate high school with a college degree?**

**Visit [www.collin.edu/express/dualcredit](http://www.collin.edu/express/dualcredit) for more information.**

## Collin College welcomes newly elected trustees



At the June 27 Board meeting, (from left) Trustee Megan Wallace, Board Vice Chair Jay Saad, and Trustee Cathie Alexander take their oaths of office to serve for the next six years.

Three newly elected Board members, including one incumbent, were sworn into office at the regular Collin College Board of Trustees meeting on June 27.

**Megan Wallace**, newly elected to Place 1, is a Collin College student in the paralegal studies program.

A McKinney resident, Wallace's career experience includes employment as a substitute teacher, basketball coach, notary public, and chief financial officer for a digital media company. She is a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants, the Dallas Area Paralegal Association, the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, and the Texas State Bar Paralegal Division. She's also an active community volunteer in the PTA, the Community Food Pantry of McKinney, Legal Aid, and Aggie Moms of Collin County.

**Jay Saad** was reelected to Place 2 and currently serves as the vice chair of the Collin College Board of Trustees and chair of the Campus Facilities and Construction Committee. He has worked in the North Texas health care insurance field for 35 years. During that time, he served as president of the Texas Association of Business and participated in numerous community organizations. Currently, he serves on the Baylor Scott & White Medical Center – Plano board. A Plano resident, Saad is actively involved with the Collin County chapter of the University of North Texas Alumni Association.

**Cathie Alexander**, newly elected to Collin College Board of Trustees, Place 3, is a resident of Plano. Her higher education experience includes serving The University of Texas at Austin as an academic advisor and a faculty member of the McCombs School of Business. She also served as assistant dean of undergraduate education at The University of Texas at Dallas. An entrepreneur, she owned the event planning enterprise, EventPro, and served as the marketing director of Business Research Network. She has served on Plano Boards and Commissions, and recently Collin County Judge Chris Hill placed her on a regional board to serve Collin County.

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to officially welcome our new members of the Board," said Andrew Hardin, chair of the Collin College Board of Trustees. "We will benefit from their experience in higher education, business, and community service, and we look forward to working together to make Collin College a national leader in higher education."

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