

OPPORTUNITY

NEWS



2 News From Your College

3 San Jac Alumna Turns the Page

4 Smith Shapes the future of Process Technology

NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

San Jac awarded grant to expand workforce training

San Jacinto College has received a \$189,987 Jobs and Education for Texans grant from the Texas Workforce Commission to purchase training equipment for its engineering technology programs. The funding will help prepare students for high-demand careers as engineering technologists and technicians.

The award is part of more than \$14 million in Jobs and Education for Texans grant funding announced by Gov. Greg Abbott to expand workforce programs aligned with Texas' growing industries. The grant will train approximately 110 students at San Jac for well-paying jobs that support the Gulf Coast economy.

Funded by the Texas Legislature, this grant program helps colleges and school districts purchase equipment for career and technical education programs that prepare students for high-demand occupations in fields such as manufacturing, engineering, and health care.

San Jac also received Jobs and Education for Texans grant funding in 2024 to support its radiologic technology program.

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac's **engineering program**.



Photo by San Jacinto College



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

College names 2026 Minnie Stevens Piper nominee

David Carpenter, information technology assistant professor, has been named the San Jacinto College 2026 nominee for the Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award. The annual recognition honors outstanding educators statewide who demonstrate exceptional teaching, dedication to student success, and a sustained commitment to academic excellence.

Carpenter's classroom model blends discussion, hands-on practice, formative check-ins, and summative assessments that prioritize a student's ability to demonstrate true understanding.

His contributions to San Jac also include playing a critical

role in creating and launching the Bachelor of Applied Technology in cybersecurity and supporting the College's designation as a Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense by the National Security Agency.

San Jac also recognizes its 2025-2026 Excellence Award recipients. Faculty Excellence Award recipients include...

- Haley Ford, Bachelor of Applied Science in education professor
- Mary Lindsay, consumer/business technical services department chair
- Cheryl Mallant, Bachelor of Applied Science in education professor

Staff Excellence Award recipients include...

- Khenley Harvell, emergency management business continuity coordinator
- Mary Ellen Laurel, Bachelor of Applied Science in education

- division operations coordinator
- Carey Martinez, financial aid specialist, financial aid systems and application processing
- Jose Nicolas, veteran services coordinator

The Administrator Excellence Award went to Jeff Tambrella, vice president of technical support, and Niki Whiteside, chief online learning and innovation officer, instructional innovation and support.

San Jac receives workforce readiness grant for student success

San Jacinto College has received a \$500,000 grant from Houston Endowment to strengthen academic programs and student support services as the College implements Texas House Bill 8 and Senate Bill 1786. The investment will help more students complete credentials of value, transfer successfully, and enter high-demand, high-wage careers aligned with Texas workforce needs.

San Jac is one of nine Gulf Coast community colleges selected for the grant. The funding will help the College build tools and systems to meet new state requirements, including improvements to program design, data and advising services, and workforce-aligned training.

Serving the Greater Houston region, San Jac offers academic transfer pathways, workforce training, and innovative programs to meet employer demand. Houston Endowment has previously supported the College, including a \$1.5 million grant to launch a bachelor's degree in early childhood education to help address the teacher shortage.

TURNING THE PAGE: FORMER SAN JAC STUDENT FINDS HER WAY TO HEART OF INDIE BOOKSTORE

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

“Ahem.”

Brazos Bookstore general manager Randi Null looked up to find a 20-something woman leaning against the counter, red creeping up her face. She waited until her date, a regular customer, disappeared around the corner.

“I’ve never read a book before,” she confessed. “Can you help me figure out where to start?”

Null smiled. For the former San Jacinto College student who has built her life one chapter at a time, helping someone begin is the whole point.

Raised on stories

Null barely remembers a time without a book in her hands. At 4, she memorized “Green Eggs and Ham,” convincing her parents she could read it cover to cover.

Her aunt, a voice artist for books for the blind, helped turn curiosity into devotion.

“When you have someone who can do all the fun voices ... and get you your first library card, it’s very influential,” she said.

From childhood through her teen years, Null was always skimming a page, whether perching in her front yard oak



Photos by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

tree with a Baby-Sitters Club book or shelving library books.

San Jac chapter

Despite loving literature, Null wasn’t committed to any career by high school graduation, but she did want a degree.

A first-generation student without college savings, she started at San Jac in 2008 to save money. With strong math skills, she considered teaching math.

From waiting tables to substitute teaching, she juggled up to four jobs to avoid student loans. Her San Jac instructors understood and respected the balancing act.

“I didn’t have professors who talked down to me,” she said.

Today, as a manager, she draws on that same peer-to-peer approach she experienced at San Jac. Almost zero student loan debt — along with smaller classes and personal attention — is why she still recommends the College.

After nearly completing her associate degree, Null transferred to the University of Houston-Clear Lake, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in communications and graphic design.

Curveball

Null started her career in sports marketing, working with the Astros and Texans and Minor League Baseball teams. She later earned her alternative teacher’s certification and taught college readiness and math skills.

By 2023, she had spent six years teaching and completed a master’s degree in business administration. Still, something felt unfinished.

Reflecting on her passions, Null kept returning to books. That reflection led her to Brazos Bookstore in the Rice area, where she paused in front of the sparse staff picks wall.

“Any chance you’re hiring?” she asked.

Not only was the bookstore hiring, but it was looking for a new general manager. Although Null had no independent bookstore experience, she

trusted her background and adaptability would speak for themselves.

“I learned a lot of flexibility and creativity from sports marketing,” she said. “There’s no control over what happens on the field. At the bookstore, we [also] play with what we’re handed.”

A place to belong

Null joined Brazos Bookstore in November 2023, determined to honor the store’s 50-year history while bringing it into a new era.

“We had a reputation for being a store for serious readers,” she said. “[Today,] I hope everyone feels they’ll find a book at Brazos.”

Brazos Bookstore doesn’t follow the Amazon algorithm. Instead, it’s a destination for works in translation, small-press releases, and connection.

The store now hosts a romance book club, poetry open mic nights, and community events from puppy adoptions to eyeglasses recycling.

“People don’t want just a place to shop but a place where they belong,” Null said.



Page turner

Null recalls the embarrassed woman on the date. That’s exactly the reader she hopes walks into Brazos Bookstore.

“We’re not going to judge you or your reading habits,” she said. “We just want you to read.”

For newcomers, try the staff favorites wall or, for a mood boost, the children’s section. (No judgment if you sit crisscross applesauce on the floor with a picture book.) For instant gratification, pick up a short story, poetry, or essay collection.

Stuck? Your Netflix history or Spotify playlist can help.

“If you haven’t been reading, you’ve been watching,” Null said. “Tell us about shows, movies, and music you like. We’ll have the time of our life matching you with something.”

Everyone starts somewhere. For Null, that beginning took shape in San Jac classrooms. Now, she helps others find theirs — one book, one brave question, and one turned page at a time.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S OPERATORS: SMITH SHAPES FUTURE OF PROCESS TECHNOLOGY

By **Melissa Trevizo**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Greg Smith stands in the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology at San Jacinto College, watching students huddle around control panels, competing to produce the most on-spec isopropyl alcohol.

Every ounce they make earns them \$1,000 in imaginary profit — and very real bragging rights.

“The morning class gets grilled by the afternoon class about how much they produced,” Smith said. “And if somebody on the team is messing up, I don’t have to get involved because they are checking each other.”

This blend of competition and real-world simulation defines Smith’s teaching philosophy, shaped by nearly two decades in the petrochemical industry.

Born in Houston and raised in Pasadena, Smith earned a bachelor’s

degree in industrial distribution from Texas A&M University in 1982. After working odd jobs during an economic downturn, he landed a position with ARCO Chemical in 1992.

“I was one of 2,000 people tested and 200 interviewed for 20 spots,” Smith said.

He spent years working four-on, four-off shifts in the utilities unit before moving into logistics when LyondellBasell acquired ARCO in 1998. Later, he managed the Coastal Chemical Company facility in Pasadena but quickly discovered management wasn’t his calling.

“I’m too nice for management,” he said. “I was going to work knowing I wouldn’t get everything done, and I was unhappy.”

In fall 2008, Smith started teaching in San Jac’s process technology program, drawing on his previous experience as a substitute teacher.

Now, 17 years later, Smith teaches systems and equipment courses and serves as the on-site subject matter

expert on the glass distillation unit at the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology. The glass lab is a scaled model plant designed as a hands-on training tool, allowing students to see the inner workings of the distillation process.

“It’s number one of one,” he said. “They were smart to put an observation deck in here, because it draws a crowd every tour.”

Smith deliberately requests to teach the operations class — the final course before graduation — because he wants to see students when it all comes together.

“They all of a sudden become a little bit more serious,” he said. “You see the light bulbs go off for them.”

His favorite day at work?

Graduation.

“Watching our students graduate with their families, slinging hats, and going ‘woohoo,’” he said. “As instructors, we’re out there doing the same thing.”

Decades after starting in the industry himself, Smith now guides the next generation toward the same opportunities that once changed his life.

“It’s funny how things work out,” he said. “Now I get to help them find their start.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **programs at the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology.**



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College



BACHELOR'S DEGREES

REAL OPPORTUNITIES

Take your career higher at a lower cost with bachelor's degrees from San Jacinto College:

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Bachelor of Applied Technology in IT with Emphasis in Cybersecurity
- Bachelor of Applied Science in Education with Emphasis in Early Childhood Education
- Bachelor of Applied Technology in Logistics and Supply Chain Management



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO LEARN MORE

SAN JACINTO
COLLEGE

An Equal Opportunity Institution
sanjac.edu/accreditation

FRED KREBS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP TO EXPAND ACCESS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

By Jacquelynn Conger
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Nearly 30 years ago, Fred Krebs and his wife, Kaye, began a conversation that would shape a legacy: how best to use the resources they built over a lifetime to make a meaningful difference.

Without children of their own, the couple agreed that investing in education, particularly community college education,

offered the greatest opportunity to strengthen communities and help solve society's most pressing challenges.

Today, that shared vision lives on through the newly established Fred Krebs Endowed Scholarship, created through the San Jacinto College Foundation to support San Jac students who might otherwise lack the financial means to pursue higher education.

A retired engineer, Krebs has long believed that community colleges represent

the best value in higher education, combining affordability, accessibility, and workforce-aligned programs that open doors for students from all backgrounds.

While Kaye later passed away after a battle with cancer, Krebs has continued the philanthropic mission they set together, establishing scholarships at community colleges across Texas over the past several years. San Jacinto College is one of several institutions he selected as part of his

commitment to expanding educational access statewide.

"Community colleges make that opportunity possible for students who are willing to work hard but may not have the financial resources to get started," said Krebs. "Supporting students through scholarships is a way to continue something Kaye and I both believed in."

The endowed scholarship will help students enrolled in any academic program at San Jac, removing economic barriers and allowing recipients to focus on their studies and future goals.

"Fred's commitment to education and student success is truly inspiring," said Amanda Fenwick, Foundation interim executive director. "Endowed scholarships like this ensure not only that students have access to higher education today but that future generations will continue to benefit from Fred's generosity for years to come."

Krebs was especially impressed with the San Jacinto College Foundation's stewardship and dedication to students, reinforcing his confidence that the scholarship will have a lasting impact.

Scan the QR code to learn more about **establishing a scholarship through the San Jacinto College Foundation.**



Photo courtesy of Fred Krebs

SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
Through March 5	"ECHO: A Visual Reverberation" Art Exhibit	TBA	Free North Campus Gallery, Grant Fine Arts Center (N1)
Through March 7	"Click Bait" Multimedia and Digital Art Exhibit	Mon-Thurs, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.	Free South Campus Gallery, Flickinger Fine Arts Center (S15.143)
March 5-7	"The Secret Menu"	Varies	Tickets: \$10 (sjcstheatreilm.ludus.com) South Campus, Flickinger Fine Arts Center, Proscenium Theatre (S15.151)
March 9-15	Spring Break	Closed	All campuses and online
March 27	Spill the Beans	8:30-10 a.m.	Center for Entrepreneurship networking event for community Generation Park Campus
March 28	Softball Tailgate	10 a.m.-2 p.m.	Free family fun before softball game South Campus, Softball Field (S25)
April 3	Spring Holiday	Closed	All campuses and online

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

FROM SAN JAC ALUMNA TO OFFICER OF THE YEAR

By **Neesha Hosein**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Since childhood, Liliana Garcia dreamed of working in law enforcement.

While attending Dr. Kirk Lewis Career and Technical High School, she focused on another interest, graduating in 2020 with a diploma and a structural welding certificate. She then pursued work at refineries, but when the pandemic botched those plans, she started college instead.

“I thought to myself, ‘Who’s working right now? Law enforcement and medical,’” Garcia said. “I started off my degree plan wanting to major in forensic science. But after taking a biology class, I realized that wasn’t for me.”

Seeing is believing

Garcia got just the nudge she needed after witnessing officers chase an armed suspect, make an arrest, and secure a crime scene near her home.

“Right after that happened, I told my mom, ‘I’m going to be a police officer,’ and I changed my degree that same night,” Garcia said.

San Jacinto College was a natural choice for Garcia. Her sister, the first in their family to attend college, enrolled there, and Garcia had heard great things about the College’s criminal justice program.

Shaping the future

“San Jac instructors, especially Mr. [John] White and Dr. [Robyn] Ring, prepared me for the real world by always keeping it as realistic as possible,” Garcia said. “I started with mostly online classes because of COVID. The second year is when I took the use of force and traffic classes in person. We learned about techniques for arresting people and used the simulator.”

She enjoyed training scenarios like

how to pull someone over during a traffic stop and how to handle the situation if the person refuses to cooperate.

Garcia graduated in fall 2022 with an associate degree in criminal justice. She graduated from the police academy in December 2023 and was officially a sworn-in police officer the next month.

“A lot of people think it’s really easy graduating and getting hired right away,” Garcia said. “Well, it’s a long process, and sometimes you have to apply for different jobs to get your foot in the door.”

Garcia first applied for a dispatcher position at a local police department and was not hired. The same thing happened with another precinct. Discouraged, she started to doubt whether she’d made the right career choice.

Fate intervened

In February 2024, Garcia submitted an application to the Pasadena Independent School District. By March, a Pasadena ISD police sergeant contacted her for an interview, stating he was very impressed by her cover letter.

“This ties back to San Jac,” she said. “Dr. Ring always said be professional, try to stand out, and be as unique as possible. I remembered that when writing my cover letter, and sure enough, it landed me an interview.”

Garcia currently works as a patrol officer for the Pasadena ISD Police Department.

“I’m considered a rover unit, and I respond to a wide range of calls across the entire district,” she said. “I also conduct campus walkthroughs and occasionally work traffic and pull people over for speeding in the school zone.”

Garcia has built relationships with students and staff across the district.

“I had a student who walked off an intermediate school campus, and it turned out she just needed somebody to listen to her,” Garcia said. “She was having family issues and broke down crying. I just let her talk and was there for her.”

Making a difference matters most

Garcia was awarded the Dr. Rod Paige Award after she and another officer intervened to help a student having a mental health crisis. She was also recognized for her prompt response to a shooting near Pasadena Memorial High School.

The Pasadena ISD Police Department named Garcia the 2025 Officer of the

Year, making her the youngest to ever receive the honor.

While she was delighted and surprised to achieve this so early in her career, her priority will always be helping others.

“What I enjoy the most is the idea that these are our future generations,” Garcia said. “If I can positively impact just one kid today and one kid tomorrow, maybe it will pay off and motivate these kids to be successful.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac’s **criminal justice programs**.



Photo courtesy of Liliana Garcia

THIS MONTH *IN* SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook

Any high school senior attending one of these schools and graduating between Dec. 1, 2025, and Aug. 15, 2026, qualifies for the Promise @ San Jac Scholarship. Take the pledge today – the deadline is Feb. 28, 2026!



63 Reactions | 9 Comments

27,754 Impressions | 1,843 Engagements



Instagram

#graduation #classof2025 #sanjacintocollege #collegegrad #trending
Are you excited you graduated?



448 Likes | 8,730 Impressions | 488 Engagements



LinkedIn

Joseph Russell, a San Jacinto College instrumentation student, has traded late-night study sessions for real-world problem solving. His journey, from repairing a \$200 Camry to exploring hands-on labs and securing an apprenticeship, shows how experience, curiosity, and determination can reshape a career.

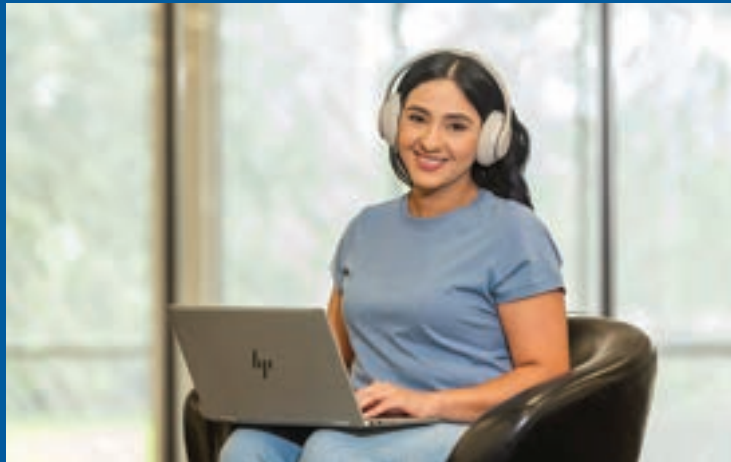


50 Reactions | 133 Post Link Clicks

6,256 Impressions | 186 Engagements



YOUR GOALS. YOUR COLLEGE.



SAN JACINTOSM
COLLEGE

NORTH CAMPUS

5800 Uvalde Rd., Houston, TX 77049

CENTRAL CAMPUS

8060 Spencer Hwy., Pasadena, TX 77505

SOUTH CAMPUS

13735 Beamer Rd., Houston, TX 77089

MARITIME CAMPUS

3700 Old Hwy. 146, La Porte, TX 77571

GENERATION PARK CAMPUS

13455 Lockwood Rd., Houston, TX 77044

ONLINE

sanjac.edu/online

Join San Jacinto College in achieving
excellence in higher education.

Find your next career:
sanjac.edu • 281-998-6150

Connect with us on



An Equal Opportunity Institution | sanjac.edu/accreditation

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. 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.

