



2023 MAYOR'S HISPANIC HERITAGE AWARDS

Recognizing Outstanding
Volunteer Service
In the City of Houston

Deadline for Nominations:

Must be postmarked or electronically received by Friday, August 4, 2023

Return via U.S. Mail To:

City of Houston

Attn: Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey (MHHA)

901 Bagby, 3rd floor

Houston, Texas 77002

Or

E-mail: Jackie.schuessler-kimsey@houstontx.gov

Nomination Application About the Awards

PURPOSE

The Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards (MHHA) Committee seeks to recognize exemplary Hispanics who have made outstanding contributions toward improving the quality of life within the Houston Hispanic community.

The MHHA Committee will review nomination entries and select the most outstanding nominees to receive the 2023 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards. Mayor Sylvester Turner and City Council will salute the winners at Council session every Tuesday during Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15). All winners will be presented an award at the kick-off celebration.

2023 AWARD CATEGORIES

Arts in the Community – recognizes the contribution of an individual whose outstanding efforts have enriched and nurtured the creativity in the Hispanic community through Art programs. Art programs may include visual, music, dance, theatre and quilting/embroidery. In addition to an application, nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the services rendered by the nominee for which this award is to be presented.

Community Activist - recognizes the outstanding volunteer efforts of an individual dedicated toward improving and educating the Hispanic community thru public and community service. In addition to an application, nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the services rendered by the nominee for which this award is to be presented.

Education in the Community - recognizes an individual who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to increasing educational opportunities in academic, healthy living, and sportsmanship, in the Hispanic community. In addition to an application, nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the services rendered by the nominee for which this award is to be presented.

Healthcare - Recognizes an outstanding person who has increased awareness of healthcare issues affecting Hispanics in Houston and implemented specific projects leading to improvements. Nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the service provided by the nominee.

Youth Activist - recognizes a young Hispanic between the ages of 15—25 for outstanding work in the community through volunteerism. All community projects must demonstrate leadership qualities that inspire our youth to become the future leaders in the Hispanic community. In addition to an application, nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the services rendered by the nominee for which this award is to be presented.

Lifetime Achievement - recognizes community leaders who have led a lifetime of community service in the Hispanic community. In addition to an application, nominations for this award must include a biography highlighting the services rendered by the nominee for which this award is to be presented.

NOMINATION CRITERIA

- An individual currently engaged in **volunteer service** that improves the quality of life for Houstonians.
- Contribution and/or activity must have been performed in the city of Houston area for a minimum of one calendar year.
- Nominees are subject to background checks.
- Incomplete nominations will not be considered.
- Award recipients will be asked to attend a recognition event during Hispanic Heritage month at Houston's City Hall.
- Award recipients may be asked to do media interviews
- Elected officials may not be nominated
- **Nominees must live inside Houston city limits and be eligible to vote in Houston municipal elections**

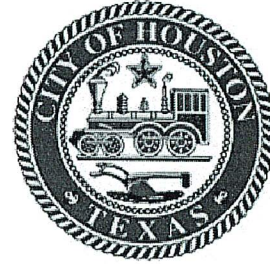
DEADLINE

Nominations must be emailed or postmarked no later than Friday, August 4, 2023 for consideration.

Website: <https://www.houstontx.gov/specialevents/hispanicheritage.html>

2023 NOMINATION

Please print clearly or type in the spaces below.



Category (choose only one)

- Arts in the Community
- Community Activist
- Education In the Community
- Healthcare
- Youth Activist
- Lifetime Achievement

INDIVIDUAL NOMINEE

(must live inside Houston city limits and be eligible to vote in Houston municipal elections)

Name: Dr. Cruz Casiano

Cell Phone: 956-309-0209 Other Phone: _____

Home Address: 22206 Grand Majestic Dr

City: Houston State: Texas Zip: 77073

E-mail: Cruz.Casiano@lonestar.edu

NOMINATOR

Name: Dr. DeShanna Reed

Cell Phone: 210-771-7056 Other Phone: _____

Address: 14926 Royal Birkdale St

City: Houston State: Texas Zip: 77095

E-mail: dreedcca@gmail.com

Submit via U.S. Mail or email the completed

- Nomination form (mandatory)
- Narrative statement or Letter of Recommendation (mandatory)
- Resume/Bio (mandatory)
- Other Supporting materials

All mandatory materials must be submitted, to be considered.

E-mail questions to:
Jackie.Schuessler-Kimsey@houstontx.gov

Mail to:
City of Houston
Attn: Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey (MHHA)
901 Bagby, 3rd floor
Houston, Texas 77002

Deadline: Postmarked by **August 4, 2023**

Or complete online at:
<https://www.houstontx.gov/specialevents/hispanicheritage.html>



August 4, 2023

To Whom It May Concern;

It is an honor and a privilege to nominate Dr. Cruz Casiano for the 2023 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award 2023. Her dedication, passion, and contributions to students in the Great Houston community are as inspirational as her personal story as a former classroom educator for middle school students, Career and Technical Education instructor and supervisor, and director of a program serving at-risk youth in the Rio Grande Valley. She now continues her passion for educating students as the Director of Career and Applied Technology at Lone Star College - North Harris Campus. I believe without equivocation that you would be hard-pressed to find a better and more deserving recipient of this award than Dr. Casiano.

Dr. Casiano has served as a sought-after expert in developing Career and Technical Education programs in higher education for two decades. She regularly partners with industry leaders in high-skilled, in-demand career fields such as HVAC, mechatronics, welding, and manufacturing. She has diligently stewarded symbiotic relationships between Lone Star College - North Harris and corporations such as National Oilwell Varco and Johnson Controls. Dr. Casiano has also worked with the Project Grad program, Upward Bound, UH STEM, BridgeYear, SERJobs, and others. As you can see, Dr. Casiano has the professional knowledge and expertise that set her head and shoulders above the rest.

In addition to her professional work, Dr. Casiano has contributed to the philanthropic landscape of the Greater Houston Area as the Executive Director of the MFF Foundation, an advisory board member for Kid's Lives Matter International, and a volunteer for the Houston Food Bank, to name a few. She is deeply passionate about enhancing the lives of community members and strongly believes that it is the duty of us all to give of ourselves in acts of service to others in our community. She regularly commits her time and resources to serving all students as if they were her own. I believe it is of note that Dr. Casiano has given of herself and been a leader in higher education while raising two now college-aged children as a single mother.



Her passion, generosity, and tenacity have allowed her to be strong and courageous as she balances her home life and career responsibilities with poise, grace, and seeming effortlessness.

Using the same dedication and determination she instilled in her students and her children, Dr. Casiano proudly earned her Doctorate in Education from the University of Houston. Her research focused on improving post-secondary credential completion rates at two-year public institutions. This work was the culmination of her decades of experience in education, her work with industry professionals, and her passion for seeing students succeed. Since then she has continued to consult with local school district officials, campus CTE teachers, and students to ensure that programs not only meet the needs of stakeholders in the short run but provide them with bright and viable futures.

The description of the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award states that it seeks to recognize exemplary Hispanics who have made outstanding contributions toward improving the quality of life within the Houston Hispanic Community. Her decades of work in secondary and higher education, collaboration with leaders in the corporate sector, philanthropic work, and research make Dr. Cruz Casiano the best and most deserving recipient of this incredible award.

Sincerely,

Dr. DeShanna Reed
Founder and Managing Director
D. Reed Coaching, Consulting & Advocacy, LLC
www.dreedcca.com
dreedcca@gmail.com

July 31, 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

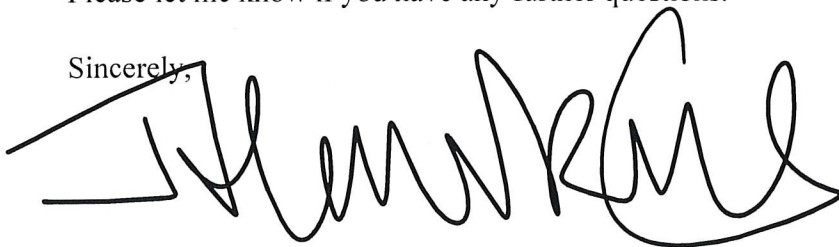
I am writing to provide the strongest possible nomination for Dr. Cruz Casiano. I am the Special Populations Ed.D. Program Lead in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Houston. I worked as Cruz's doctoral thesis chair while she was in the Ed.D. program. In my time collaborating with her, I saw her great passion for education, justice, and equity both in her professional work and in her research. In May 2023, Dr. Casiano completed her doctoral work and submitted her doctoral thesis entitled: *Workforce Talent Pipeline: Examining the Improvement of Postsecondary Workforce Credential Completion at a Large Two-year Public College in Texas*

When I first met Cruz, she was running a support program for students who sought industry certificates in community colleges. She was interested in the ways to support students financially, academically, and in their careers. As her career evolved, she decided to investigate career and technology education and the different aspects of various pathways at different institutions. After working together to review what type of data was available to analyze, Cruz obtained national, state-wide and local data that shed light on which students were successful with which certificates in which organizations. She learned who attended CTE programs, how likely they were to earn their certificate, and which organizations could be highlighted to support improvements in future work. Her insights from the program improvements in organizations, classroom and community college experiences, along with her ability to think broadly and critically about systems change is an asset to any program or organization.

Cruz thrives when moving between the realms of classroom practice, policy, and advocacy. She is brilliant and dedicated, and a true leader - and she is also fun to be around. Her perspectives from her research, facilitation, and policy and community experience will be a great fit for being recognized for the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award. I have no reservations in recommending her for an award or in hiring her for a position - I only wish that we had one and that she would consider returning to the University of Houston!

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jacqueline Hawkins
Program Director, EdD Professional Leadership – Special Populations
Program Director, EdD Professional Leadership – K-12 Administration



2700 W.W. Thorne Drive
Houston, TX 77073-3499
281.618.5400

Dear Committee:

It is my great pleasure recommending Cruz Casiano. Cruz is an amazing individual, who recently completed her doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with a focus in Special Populations. All this being accomplished while Director of Career and Applied Technology Division at Lone Star College-North Harris.

Cruz is an exceptional team member who has proven herself academically and professionally, as well as a role model and leader in her division and college. I can state that her commitment to serving students at LSC-North Harris is not only exemplary but noble. Her dedication to our students serves as her motivation to succeed. Cruz displays excellent motivation and leadership qualities in her current role providing support for nine workforce programs at Lone Star College.

As Vice President at LSC-North Harris, I can attest to her commitment and work ethic. Cruz truly exemplifies a "well-rounded" individual who is a role model to not only her family and colleagues, but to hundreds of students she serves daily at our college.

I am aware of how difficult and competitive this award is, and I truly believe that Cruz is well deserving of this opportunity. Cruz has our full support. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me directly (281)618-5427 or email me at Michael.B.Burns@lonestar.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Burns", written over a horizontal line.

Michael Burns, Ph. D.
Vice President of Instruction
2700 W.W. Thorne Drive
Houston, TX 77073
281.618.5427
Michael.B.Burns@lonestar.edu



I am writing this letter on behalf of Ms. Cruz Casiano, whom I have had the pleasure of knowing since January 2013. As the Program Coordinator in Child Development at Houston Community College and former Chair of the Department of Education, I was responsible for hiring, mentoring, and evaluating Ms. Casiano, a former adjunct faculty member in our Teacher Education and Child Development programs. We have been friends and colleagues since that time.

It is with great confidence and high regard that I recommend Ms. Casiano. Ms. Casiano is a highly skilled educator, respected by students and colleagues alike. She regarded her role in the classroom as that of facilitator, creating a learner-centered environment with high expectations and engaging students with challenging questions and projects on pertinent topics in education. Her teaching incorporates a variety of methods, providing numerous opportunities for students to engage with both theory and practice; she also included a variety of guest speakers to further enhance classroom instruction. Ms. Casiano is organized, affable, diligent, and completed required paperwork in a punctual and professional manner. She was an asset to our program and institution.

In her position as the Executive Director of the Marvy Finger Family Foundation Scholarship, Ms. Casiano displayed leadership and keen administrative skills in promoting and readily increasing the number of Houston Independent School District scholarship recipients seeking either a two-year degree or certification program in high-demand Career and Technical careers. She displays confidence and mature judgment in the position, readily seeking guidance from mentors regarding policy and student success matters. She is a self-reflective practitioner who holds herself to high professional standards and knows her areas of strength. Ms. Casiano is dedicated to her student scholars and to quality instruction and is motivated by the opportunity to enhance the learning opportunities for Houston students.

Please feel free to contact me via email, Katherine.Abba@hccs.edu, or by office phone, 713.718.5471, for any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Katherine A. Abba, PhD.

Child Development Program Coordinator/Faculty and Teacher Education Faculty

Houston Community College



August 4, 2023

Dear Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards (MHHA) Committee,

My name is Catherine Smith, and I am the Executive Director of two(2) non-profits, Power4Life Ministries and Kids Lives Matter International. I am also an adjunct college professor at Houston Community College.

I have known *Dr. Cruz Casiano* for ten years and it brings me great pleasure to provide a professional nomination for the outstanding contributions she has made toward improving the quality of life within the Houston Hispanic Community.

Dr. Casiano is a current Advisory Board member and has volunteered for both non-profits referenced above since 2010. Both nonprofits provide meals, clothing, personal care items, new beds, STEM Education, and a host of other items for vulnerable populations and underserved communities both locally in Houston Texas, AND abroad internationally. She also hosts and contributes to many resources to the success of Community College Initiative (CCI) Hispanic international students that attend our local colleges. She was the former College Scholarship Director for the Finger Foundation, where she provides oversight to the foundation's Scholarship Team. Her leadership skills are impeccable, as she motivates and empowers students to not only pursue higher education, but she also pushes students to matriculate through their college courses until they successfully complete their studies and gain career placement.

She is also a former Houston Independent School District Educator, former Instructor at Houston Community College and current Director of the Career and Applied Technology Division at Lone Star College. *Dr. Casiano* has a vast wealth of experience in Career and Technical Education, Early Childhood Education, Teacher Education, Health Sciences and many other academic and workforce programs always ensuring that students and our community have accessibility to the educational opportunities available.

It gives me great pleasure to highly nominate *Dr. Cruz Casiano* for the prestigious Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award that she is so deserving of, for her etched passion, empathy, and relentless drive for excellence in the students, families, and community she serves. She has inspired so many students and even parents to continue their pursuit of a higher education degree. If you have questions, please contact me at 832-483-8372 or Catherine.smith@hccs.edu.

Respectfully,

Catherine Smith

Founder & Executive Director Kids Lives Matter International
Information Systems Technology Professor, Houston Community College

August 4, 2023

Dear Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award,

My name is Tierra Harris, and it is my pleasure to nominate Dr. Cruz Casiano, which whom I've worked with for almost a decade. Our relationship has grown from me being her Teacher Education student at Austin High School and Houston Community College, to now working together for a nonprofit organization, Kids Lives Matter International.

During our time together, Dr. Casiano has poured into her students by encouraging them to attend college and providing opportunities to afford it. Throughout high school, Dr. Casiano took the time to not only coach me into being an exceptional teacher, but she also mentored me and offered leadership opportunities outside of the classroom. Because of her investment, I completed a vast amount of community service hours and developed leadership skills that I've been able to apply in my career. She also helped me secure a full tuition scholarship to attend University of Houston to become a Houston ISD teacher. Thanks to her coaching in her dual credit teaching program, dedication, and commitment. I've been teaching for 4 years and have been awarded Teacher of the Year twice. This is a reflection of the foundation she provided me and all the students she has worked with since 2003.

Dr. Cruz Casiano desire to provide students with the tools to be successful doesn't stop in an educational setting, she also contributes her time with her community service work with a nonprofit organization named "Kids Lives Matter International (KLM)". KLM is an organization determined to help support students and their families in underserved communities with not just basic necessities, but they also aim to spark the minds of our next generation for a better future through STEM and educational opportunities.

I am confident that Dr. Cruz Casiano would be the most excellent choice for this award. She has impacted my life and many other students who have crossed paths with her. She has even had a former student win the Mayor's Youth Activist award. Dr. Casiano is resilient, passionate, inspiring, dedicated and will be very deserving of this great honor.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Best,
Tierra Harris-Former Student from 2012
ESL Teacher
Pilgrim Academy-Houston ISD
713-927-7532
Tierra.harrisp1@gmail.com

Bittersweet passage



ALEX JONES | AJONES@THEMONITOR.COM

>> **UTPA student Cruz Casiano graduates months after cancer claims her parents.**

By SEAN GAFFNEY
SGAFFNEY@THEMONITOR.COM

McALLEN — The ghosts of her parents ushered Cruz Casiano across the stage to

receive her diploma.

Her vibrant smile turned to a mournful repose when a speaker urged the recent University of Texas-Pan American graduates to turn

around and wave to their parents, who packed the McAllen Convention Center on Saturday for the afternoon commencement ceremony.

Beneath her black cap, the 30-year-old Casiano tried not to cry.

See GRAD | 12B

UTPA graduate student Cruz Casiano smiles during commencement Saturday at the McAllen Convention Center. Casiano received her master's degree in early childhood education.

Her parents, who babysat her children so she could attend classes and refused to quit even when their cancer made simple tasks difficult, did not live long enough to see their daughter receive her master's degree in early childhood education.

Clara Silva, passed away in March. Her husband, Basilio Silva died in May.

"I know that they have to be here," Casiano said, pausing to wipe tears from her cheeks. "Spiritually, I know that they're here."

It was a difficult but triumphant day for Casiano. She and some 686 other graduating UTPA students walked across the stage as part of the university's summer commencement ceremonies.

Casiano wanted to walk in May, before her father's death, but the university denied the request. Instead, she emerged from Saturday's ceremony into the arms of her sister and about half a dozen other relatives.

She hopes to inspire her children, 4-year-old Isiah Garza and 5-year-old Raylin Garza, and her pupils to

overcome their own obstacles, she said.

Hector Ochoa, dean of the College of Education, reflected on a similar theme of giving back in his speech near the start of the ceremony. Having reached a milestone in their own educations, it was now the graduates' turn to produce another generation of college students.

"I was taught by graduates of UTPA," Ochoa said. "And I challenge you to do the same."

For 23-year-old Sofia Torres, Saturday's ceremonies marked her first college degree but likely not her last. After five years and several majors, she graduated with a bachelor's in journalism; next year she plans to start pursuing her master's, probably in the field of communications.

Like Casiano's parents, Torres' valued education and pressed their daughter.

"I was very much pushed," Torres said. "I could do anything that I wanted to do as long as I earned a degree."

The university also marked a milestone Friday, graduating its 1000th engineering student, Jose Andres Camacho, 23, who earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Though the graduates must wait a little while longer to receive their real diplomas, Casiano grasped her ceremonial version of the document tightly as she walked off stage. Her smile and gracious poise seemed unshackled from her grief. Perhaps she wasn't alone.

"I'm the first in my family (to go to college)," she said. "It meant a lot for my parents to push me."

Sean Gaffney covers law enforcement and general assignments for *The Monitor*. He can be reached at (956) 683-4434.



Cruz Casiano Ed.D.

📍 Houston, TX 77073

📞 (956) 309-0209

✉️ cruz.casiano@lonestar.edu

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Versatile Director providing positive transformational leadership regarding student services, instructor support, grants, dual credit, college, and career readiness for higher education institutions. Recognized for successfully collaborating with school districts, community colleges, universities, employers, and nonprofit organizations to develop initiatives to drive impact and improve high school to college transition and college to career success for postsecondary students.

SKILLS

- Excellent Work Ethic
- Student Support/Success
- Strategic Planning and Execution
- Faculty Development
- Institutional Leadership
- Community Outreach
- Innovative and Visionary
- Relationship and Team Building

WORK HISTORY

DIRECTOR OF CAREER AND APPLIED TECHNOLOGY 03/22 to Present Lone Star College-North Harris | Houston, TX

- Cultivate a **positive culture** and collaborative experience working with **Admissions, Advising, Financial Aid, Outreach, Recruitment, Student Life, Accessibility Services** and **Wraparound Resources** in our Student Success Department to provide holistic support for students.
- Collaborate with a **multitude of departments systemwide** to develop college/career/dual credit programs for high school and college students. (Student Services, Academic/Workforce Instruction/Workforce Development/Corporate College)
- Drive **improvement of matriculation strategically** from secondary to postsecondary programs.
- Manage **global employer partnerships, federal grants, and special projects** for students.
- **Execute all marketing, recruitment, program information, admissions and enrollment sessions** for Career and Applied Technology Division.
- Oversee **Dual Credit Instructors and Student Transition** at various high schools for Aldine ISD, Klein ISD, and Spring ISD.
- **Collaborate and Support Instructors and Directors** for nine career and applied technology programs.
- Serve on the **LSC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee**.
- Serve as the **LSC-NH Campus Facilitator for Student Advisory Council, Systemwide Initiative**.
- Serve on Advisory Boards for Construction, Electrical, HVAC, Diesel and Automotive **Advisory Boards with employers and nonprofit organizations**.
- **Search (HR) Committee** Chair and member for hiring new staff.

- Foster **Employer Partnerships-Scholarship Funding, Learn and Earn Model, and Career Placement.**
- Promote our college programs and **represent Lone Star College at high school, college, and community events.**
- Evaluate **data trends** in certificate and associate awards completion.
- Presented “**Improving Two-Year College Completion**” at the **Texas Association of College Technical Educators** Conference.
- Selected for **National Council (NCWE) Leadership Academy.**
- Instructor for **EDUC 1300 Learning Framework**, providing **First Time in College** (FTIC) student support and success.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 07/2018 to 07/2021

Marvy Finger Family Foundation | Houston, TX

- **Increased Student Success Rate from 50% to nearly 90%** for students of diverse backgrounds pursuing **postsecondary success.**
- Improved student performance in **Certificate/Degree Completion** by implementing a holistic student support approach for academic advising, mentoring, tutoring, career placement and wraparound services.
- Drove strategic **quality improvement plans to enhance student success** with a Houston Food Bank Scholarship, Houston Methodist Paid Internship, and other community organizations.
- Established **collaborations** with **Lone Star College** (Presidents, Vice Chancellors, Deans, Directors under Student Success Division) San Jacinto College, Houston Community College, Non-Profit Organizations and Major Employers to ensure the success of all students.
- **Engaged with key leaders** to develop and add depth to scholarship programming and initiatives to benefit high school and college students.
- Oversee **all operational areas**, including human resources, information technology, vendor purchases, marketing, rebranding, and finances.
- Administered and implemented a **Financial Aid Initiative** that provided scholarship recipients extra funding.
- Customized and implemented the scholarship program through a **new online platform on WizeHive** to streamline processes virtually.
- Created the Finger Scholarship **Website with a college and career focus** for students in mind. www.mffscholarship.com
- Increased **recruitment and retention** through various initiatives and collaborations to support inclusivity of **special population students** (Gifted & Talented, Special Education/504, Low Socioeconomic, English Language Learners).
- Increased support with advising, prerequisites, applications, admission requirements, and interviews to gain **admissions** into various **college programs.**
- **Increased equity and diversity** of all demographics in our student population.

PROFESSOR, VAST/STUDENT SUCCESS/EDUCATION 08/2012-03/2022

Houston Community College | Houston, TX

- Defined and articulated learning outcomes, including measurements, performance metrics and changes to improve student learning for the **Student Success and Teacher Education** Programs.
- Demonstrated as a **Highly Effective Professor** for 10 years with high school and undergraduate students of diverse academic, socio-economic, cultural backgrounds and special population students. Evidenced by HCC's Evaluation for Greater Learning Student Survey System Results, EGLS3.
- **Recruitment, enrollment, and advisement** of High School and Undergraduate students to pursuing **Teacher Education** Programs at 2-year colleges and 4-year Universities.
- **TSI Academic Coach** providing reading and writing skills for students to be successful for the **Texas Student Initiative**. TSI Preparation Boot Camps for Houston East End High Schools.
- HCC Teacher Education Pathway Instructor for **Project Grad** in partnership with Houston ISD
- Provided **guidance, career advice, and course selection** to First-Year students.
- Used variety of learning modalities and support materials to facilitate learning process and accentuate presentations.

CTE/TEACHING PROFESSIONS DEPARTMENT CHAIR 08/2012 to 08/2018

Austin High School/Houston ISD | Houston, TX

- Developed and implemented **student performance improvement plans** for the Teaching Professions Dual Credit Magnet Program and Career and Technical Dual Credit and Non-Dual Credit Programs
- Created Teacher Education **Curriculum and Instruction** materials for the district.
- Provided Career and Technical Education (CTE) and **Dual Credit** education and training for teachers and administrators.
- **Created the First Dual Credit Initiative (2012)** for Teacher Education/Child Development with Houston ISD/HCC.
- Created **Business and Education partnerships** in our community such as Cage Elementary, His Place Child Care Center, Port of Houston, East End Chamber of Commerce, TeachHouston program, IEducate, University of Houston College of Education/UH STEM, and Texas Tech University.
- Served as a **Mentor for New Teachers** by assisting in the coordination of planning and instruction of state and district mandated curriculum, lesson planning, and creation of appropriate student assessments. Teachers have won beginning teachers of the year through my mentorship.

- Analyze and assess **student performance** of Texas State Curriculum Objectives and Course Learning Standards for **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools** for Dual Credit and College courses.
- Recruit, educate and produce scholarly students who have won the prestigious **Teach Forward, Houston Rodeo and other scholarships**.
- Led students to win the **Super Bowl Houston Community Project 51** for community service projects implemented in the Magnet Program.

CTE-EDUCATION/TRAINING DEPARTMENT CHAIR/DUAL CREDIT 08/2008 to 08/2012

McAllen ISD/South Texas College | McAllen, TX

- Utilized variety of learning modalities and support materials to facilitate learning process and accentuate presentations, including **visual, cognitive, social and emotional learning** modalities for all students.
- Provided effective advising to **prevent student dropouts** by motivating students to be engaged participants of the college learning process.
- Created **curriculum and instruction** in compliance with state and college standards.
- **Increased enrollment** and student interest for CTE Dual Credit Programs.

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION-ACT 08/2005 to 08/2008

McAllen ISD | McAllen, TX

- Designed and developed an **academic compliance training program** to support the success of 6th-8th grade students identified At-Risk.
- Cultivated connections and strong rapport to **foster student engagement**, which developed students' physical, **social-emotional learning** and personal growth for **At-Risk students** and **students with disabilities** to become successful.
- Modeled appropriate teaching and leadership for **positive interaction** with staff, students, families, and community.
- Provided students with knowledge and skills in all **core subjects**.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE EDUCATOR 08/2003 to 08/2005

McAllen ISD | McAllen, TX

- Demonstrate learning activities for all age groups and focus on the types of human and growth development, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical.
- Design developmentally appropriate activities and lesson plans and integrate state curriculum standards for **7th and 8th grade, 6th ESL, and Life Skills students**.
- Provide students with lessons on consumer laws & rights, nutrition and wellness, human growth and development, and teacher education.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education | Educational Leadership & Policy Studies 05/2022
Carnegie Foundation-Improvement Science
University of Houston, Houston, TX

- **Master of Education** | Curriculum and Instruction 08/2008
University of Texas-RGV, Edinburg, TX
- **Bachelor of Science** | Family and Consumer Sciences Education 08/2002
Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

- ***Peer Reviewed Publication:** Casiano, C. and Reed, D. (2023, October 15). Ready for the World? Increasing Effective Post-Secondary Readiness for Students in Special Education Based on Educator and Practitioner Points-of-View. Journal for the American Association of Special Education Professionals.
- ***Dissertation** (2023) Workforce Talent Pipeline: Examining the Improvement of Postsecondary Workforce Credential Completion at a Large Two-Year Public College in Texas
- ***National Council for Workforce Education Conference** (2022) Selected as 1 out of 15 Workforce Leaders in the nation for the NCWE Leadership Academy. Portland, Oregon
- ***Texas Association of College Technical Conference** (2022) Making the Connection: College to Career Pipeline. Improving the completion rate for post-secondary certificates and associate degrees that lead to favorable employment outcomes. Austin, Texas
- ***Kids' Lives Matter Youth Leader/Advisory Board Member** (2016- Present) Nonprofit organization providing health, nutrition, academic services to equip students and families in underserved communities.
- ***District Instructional Materials Review Committee Member** (2016, 2017) As the only Educator for Teacher Education Dual Credit in the Houston Area, made decisions in curriculum and instruction for the district.
- ***Shared Decision-Making Committee** (2015-2018)) Making decisions regarding student achievement, teacher support, community involvement and all logistics concerning Austin High School.
- ***Project Advisory Team** (2014 to 2018) Committee member input of the construction and design (Bond Project) of Austin High School at Houston ISD.
- ***Curriculum Development** (2011) Course design for first Undergraduate degree for Early Childhood Education. Assistant to Dr. Medrano UTPA, Edinburg, Texas
- ***Striving to Thrive: Fifth Annual New Teacher Conference** (2011) The Impact of Graduate Studies on Teacher decisions about the Teaching and Learning Process; The University of Texas –Pan American, Edinburg, TX
- ***Teaching Early Literacy: Making the connection in Middle Schools** (2007) Mary Hoge Academy, Weslaco, TX.

REFERENCES

1. Linda Leto Head
Sr. Associate Vice Chancellor
External and Employer Relations
Lone Star College
Office: (832) 813-6816
Email: LHead@lonestar.edu

2. Michael Burns, PhD.
Vice President of Instruction
Lone Star College- North Harris
Office: (281) 618-5541
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Dr. Cruz Casiano Biography

Dr. Cruz Casiano is the Director of Career and Applied Technology Division. The division consists of nine (9) credit workforce programs: Automotive, Construction, Industrial Diesel, Electrical Technology, HVAC/R, Inspection Technology, Machining, Robotics and Welding. She oversees all facets from student success support, dual credit, scholarships, grant funding, employer and school district partnerships, and workforce recruitment and enrollment events.

Prior to this role, she served as an Executive Director for the MFF Foundation. Her role was expansive and wide ranging, and it entailed managing a multi-million-dollar scholarship program that provided tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and equipment to underrepresented students in need, who were pursuing credit workforce programs at three large community colleges in Houston. She went to 44 high schools at Houston ISD to advocate to students about higher education opportunities. She wanted to make sure students all over Houston knew that college was an option for them regardless of their zip code, race or socioeconomic status.

With 20 years of Secondary and Postsecondary experience, Dr. Casiano is a leader in specializing in CTE, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Populations, and Partnerships for Academic and Workforce programs. She has honed her skills in providing wraparound resources to support student success at school districts and community colleges in the Rio Grande Valley, Houston, and surrounding areas in Texas. This led to an increase in enrollment, persistence, retention, and postsecondary completion for the students she served.

A few of her notable accomplishments since Dr. Casiano has made her home in Houston includes starting the first Houston ISD-HCC Teacher Education Dual Credit Program in 2012, established monthly food security for college students in partnership with the Houston Food Bank in 2019, and secured million-dollar endowments with Houston Methodist for students to attend health science paid internship programs in 2021. As of date, she works with employer partnerships to fully fund students in workforce and engineering programs. Most recently, she has created a College to Career Framework with embedded Holistic Student Support as part of doctorate research that was evidence based on the work, she has done mentoring, providing case management, and wraparound resources for ALL students to be successful.

Dr. Cruz Casiano is a daughter of parents who passed early in her life. They didn't get the opportunity to pursue an education after 9th grade and they instilled in Dr. Casiano, the value of an education. She is a first-generation Doctorate graduate and knows firsthand how important education is in changing the trajectory of lives and communities. She has helped her two children attend Lone Star College and pursue HVAC and Nursing programs just like she helps students in the community. She received her Bachelor's in Family and Consumer Science and a minor in Business from Texas State University, a Master's in Early Childhood Education from University of Texas-RGV, and her Doctorate in Professional Leadership, specializing in Special Populations from the University of Houston.

She is actively involved in her community by volunteering for several nonprofits. She is a social host and mentor through Kids Lives Matter International, a nonprofit that supports Community College Initiative (CCI), international foreign exchange students from multiple continents who attend college in Houston. Kids Lives Matter International, provides resources for underserved students in Houston and internationally. She also serves on their Advisory Board. Dr. Casiano and her children enjoy delivery meals through Glory Meals & Cakes, a catering nonprofit that provides fresh cooked meals for students, their families, and seniors in the need year-round.



HCC EASTSIDE CAMPUS HAPPENINGS

JUNE 2015

Student Awards Ceremony

The annual Southeast College Student Awards Ceremony was held in early May, where a combination of over thirty students and faculty advisors were honored for their outstanding academic achievements and service projects for this year. Eight of the academic award winners also have a 4.0 GPA, including Lauren Anderson, a retired Houston Ballet dancer who was the first African American principal ballerina with a major dance company. Special recognition goes to Vickie Kight, President of the Black Student Association. She not only has a 4.0 GPA, but was recognized for both academics and as Student Leader of the Year. Attendees included students, their families, faculty and staff, along with Dr. Rudy Soliz, Interim President of Southeast College and HCC Trustee, Eve Loreda.



First Middle College High School Graduates

The Middle College High School (MCHS) at Felix Fraga Campus had two students who earned their high school diplomas in commencement ceremonies held at the Houston Community College West Loop campus on May 30, 2015. Valedictorian, Elizabeth Manjarrez has been accepted at the University of Houston-Downtown where she will major in History and Fine Arts and Luisa Olvera Retana will attend Houston Community College. December 2014 graduates



included, Verner Potts, transferring from HCC to Sam Houston State University in the fall, Nataly Ramon and Selena Hernandez, both working moms who plan to attend HCC and finally, Jennifer Baltazar who has been accepted into the Honors Program, also at HCC. Their success can be credited to their hard work and the support they received from the teachers and staff at the Middle College High School.

Austin High School Teacher Education Cohort

Austin High School and Houston Community College's Teacher Education initiative has produced the first Teacher Education cohort with 53 students earning 15 college credits each in Education. This group was recognized at the Teaching Professions Magnet Banquet held on May 21, 2015 at the Felix Fraga campus. When Yadira Banuelos, 2015 Valedictorian, first joined the program she worked with children from Cage Elementary and was inspired to change her major from health science to education. Congratulations to the students, Cruz Casiano, Austin High School and HCC instructor and Selena Flowers, chair of the SE College English Studies and Teacher Education department for reaching this milestone.



Vickie Kight – Achieving Her Dreams

A dream becomes reality for Vickie Kight who has been accepted into the University of Texas at Austin and will major in history with a minor in African-American studies. Additionally, Ms. Kight was selected as Student Leader and Academic Student of 2015, made the Dean's List and Honors List, served as president of the Black Student Association and as a member of Phi Theta Kappa, while at Southeast College. We are proud of your hard work and dedication during your studies at Houston Community College, congratulations.



Parent Academy and Express Theatre

Talented minds from the East Early College High School student body and the professional performers from The Express Theatre delighted the audience of school children with the bilingual children's play, "Frida's Fiesta" at the Felix Fraga campus on April 30, 2015. The HCC Parent Academy arranged for over 80 students from Raul Yzaguirre Elementary and Ninfa Laurezo Early Childhood Center to visit and have fun learning about Frida and her brave journey to save her mother. The students from EECHS prepared four activity centers that helped to reinforce the educational concepts presented in the play, such as having the children identify the main character, plot and setting and having them retell the play in their own words.



JPMorgan Chase/Project GRAD Event

On June 15th a JPMorgan Chase College and Career Institute will begin at Houston Community College Southeast. This exciting institute offers students a glimpse into high-demand careers and the workforce certificates or degrees required to obtain them. Students have an opportunity to receive hands-on exposure in skilled services such as HVAC, Machining and Welding. They will receive guidance in preparing for interviews and hear from leaders in these fields. The group of 125 students and 20-30 volunteers will be on campus for two weeks, and then they will travel to Central and Northwest, each for two weeks. Not only are we setting the standard, but we are also providing a first



UPCOMING EVENTS

TASFA AWARENESS WORKSHOP

June 17 -18, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. & 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
6815 Rustic St., Houston, TX 77087
Learning Hub Building, Room 203

PRIDE MONTH

Movie screening of VITO: The Life of Gay Rights Activist Vito Russo
Monday, June 22, 2015
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. in the Angela Morales Lecture Hall / Room 102
Discussion following film
Food and refreshments provided

THE STOCK MARKET GAME

June 20, 27, 2015
Registration starts at 9:00 a.m. Event is 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
6815 Rustic St., Houston, TX 77087
Workforce Building, Room 316

HCC EASTSIDE CAMPUS BLOOD DRIVE

Every single person that attempts to donate will receive a FREE \$5 Starbucks gift card!
Wednesday, June 24, 2015
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. in the Student Lounge
Sign up at: www.giveblood.org with sponsor code: B851

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GAME CHANGERS

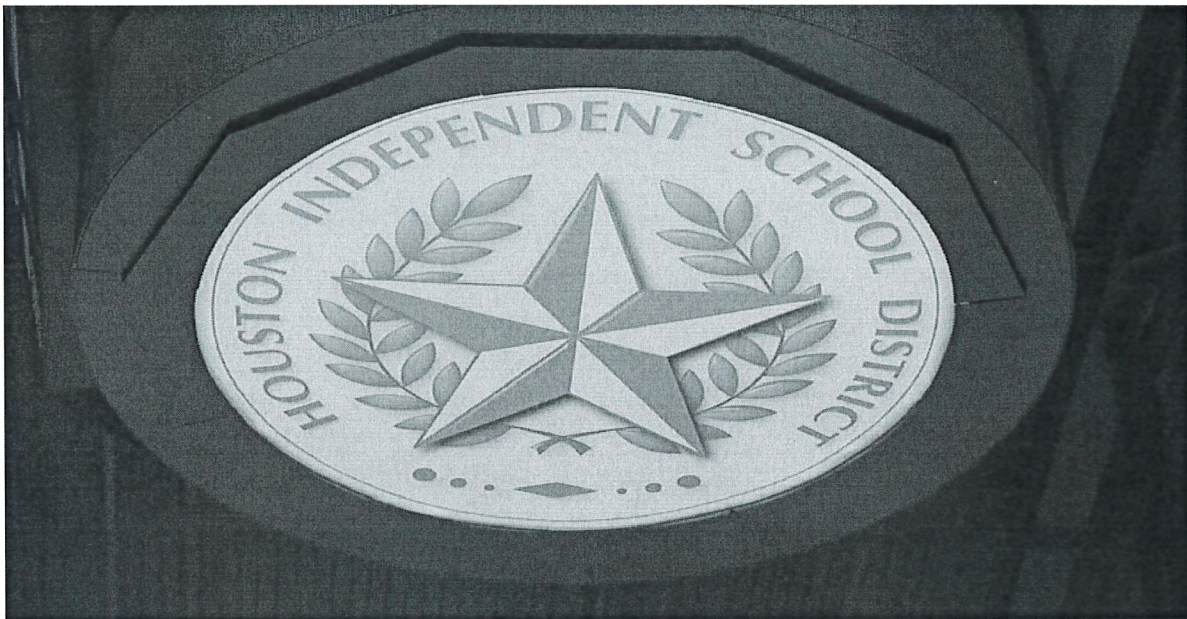
Teen first in family to go to college among recipients of full-ride scholarship in Houston



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MORE VIDEOS

HISD teen gets full-ride scholarship as 1st in family to go to college | Local mogul makes it happen

HOUSTON, Texas (KTRK) -- A Houston real estate legend is opening doors for high school students who never thought they would be able to go to college.

The Marvy Finger Family Scholarship Foundation awarded a record 65 scholarships to students in Houston ISD in an emotional ceremony at Delmar Stadium Field House.

"I'm basically the first person to go to college in my immediate family," said scholarship recipient Juan Velazquez, a senior at HISD's Houston Academy for International Studies. "It's really a passion of mine to work in the automotive industry. This is a full ride to any community college in the Houston area."

The scholarships will help students pursue a two-year degree or a certification program in vocational fields. Westbury High School graduate Michael Quimbao, who was awarded a Finger Family Foundation scholarship in 2014, returned to watch HISD graduates receive their scholarships.

"The scholarship allowed me to graduate from college and pursue my passion for the automotive industry," said Michael Quimbao, a past scholarship recipient. "I currently work at Tesla Motors as a lead service technician. I wouldn't have been able to receive this opportunity without Marvy Finger's Foundation."

over 60 years. He first started his scholarship program in 2013.

"Over the years, I've given to lots of different charities, but wow," said Finger. "To be able to give some resources and allow these kids to have the opportunity to get this education, it makes me feel really wonderful. I get emotional."

"We help the student from the beginning of their college program until the end and we don't stop there," said Cruz Casiano, executive director of the Marvy Finger Family Scholarship Foundation. "We make sure that they find a job afterwards, because career placement is success."

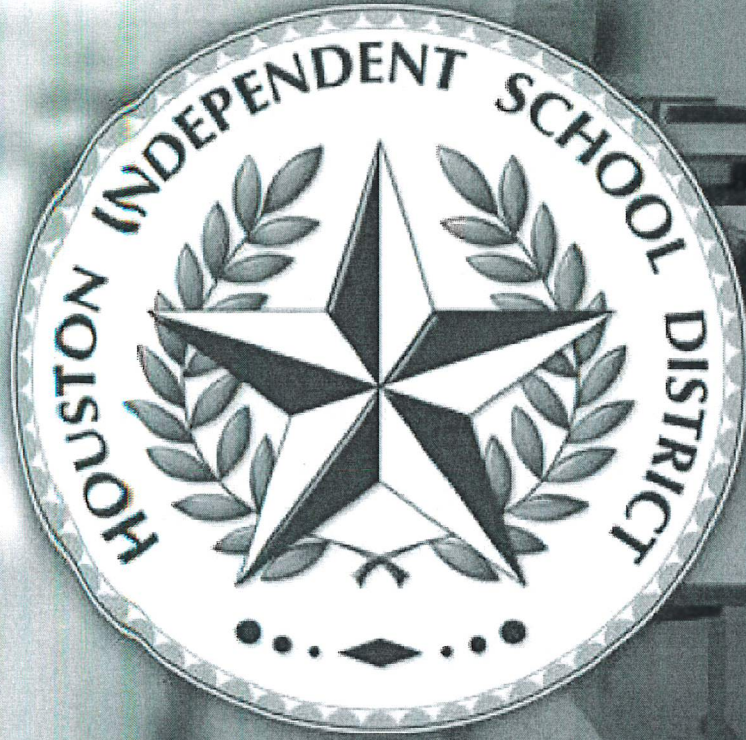
ABC13 caught up with Marvy Finger in the video above to hear how his scholarship program is unlike any other.

A record number of HISD graduates received full scholarships to pursue certificates and associate's degrees

Briana Edwards, Digital Contributor

Published: June 12, 2020 at 4:13 PM

Tags: Local, Houston, HISD, Marvy Finger Family Foundation, Education, Cities



HISD COVID-19 closures

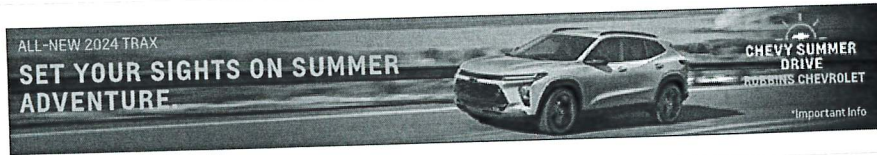


A record number of 84 Houston Independent School District graduates have been awarded full scholarships from the Marvy Finger Family Foundation.

The scholarships create the opportunity for each student to attend a two-year college to pursue Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificates or associate's degrees.

According to **HISD**, scholarship recipients were required to pursue a career and technical program; on top of maintaining a minimum 2.0 GPA, being involved in school activities, and displaying a financial need.

"The generosity of the Finger family is well known when it comes to funding post-high school career training and higher education for our graduates, but they have surpassed themselves this year," HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. "These scholarships are extremely timely and appreciated right now because many of our graduates and their families are experiencing hardships due to COVID-19."



The full scholarships cover tuition to any local two-year college, tools, equipment and supplies for HISD students.

Additionally, the foundation also provides mentoring and food scholarships in partnership with the Houston Food Bank that provides 60 pounds of food twice a month while the students are in college.

"The students are so excited when we tell them they have been selected," Scholarship Director Cruz Casiano said. "What we do is so rewarding. The financial assistance the foundation is able to offer these students is instrumental in helping them build rewarding careers."

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From the Houston Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2023/02/14/lone-star-college-nov-partnership.html>

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Education

Lone Star College and NOV's partnership aims to strengthen machining industry's workforce




Lone Star College and National Oilwell Varco partnered to train and strengthen the workforce for the next generation of machinists.

LONE STAR COLLEGE



By Sofia Gonzalez – Reporter, Houston Business Journal
Feb 14, 2023

 Listen to this article 4 min



Lone Star College has partnered with Houston-based NOV Inc. (NYSE: NOV), the oil and gas equipment and services provider formerly known as National Oilwell Varco, to help strengthen the future workforce in the machining industry.

The partnership aims to recruit first-generation college students from underserved, low-income backgrounds, helping them “connect the dots” for a smoother transition to the workforce. Starting back in fall 2022, five graduates from Aldine Independent School District began the partnership’s first machining cohort at LSC-North Harris.

The cohort is enrolled in LSC-North Harris’ Associate of Applied Science Computer Numeric Control Machining Program. Through LSC’s program, students are trained to create mechanical parts, tools for engines and other automated products with power-operated machines. Students also review blueprints and specifications, assess planning and troubleshooting in the production process, and ensure accuracy of finished products.

The students are expected to enroll full-time in the fall and spring semesters in the college before being given a part-time position with NOV. After attending classes in the morning, the students work in an NOV machine shop in the afternoons Mondays through

NOV pays for tuition, books, shirts and other needed equipment for the program. This is a college-to-career commitment, Lone Star said, and students will be offered full-time positions with NOV after earning their associate degrees.

“This partnership is important because students are learning machining basics in the classroom and can apply that knowledge working in a hands-on environment at NOV,” said Jeff Dodd, NOV's vice president of human resources. “This is a ‘win-win’ program for NOV and the students, who may not have had an opportunity to attend college and earn an associate degree in machining technology without NOV’s assistance.”

According to Lone Star, the students began to develop their interests while enrolled in the Machining Pathways program at Archie L. Blanson Career and Technical Education High School, which is named after LSC-North Harris President Archie Blanson.

Aldine Independent School District opened the campus in 2018. The school's goal is for students to complete a foundation program of study with endorsement and to graduate with a certificate and/or college hours toward an associate degree.

By sparking students' interest in high school, LSC and NOV hope the partnership will help address the labor shortage America is seeing in the energy and machining industry, the college said.

“Our goal is to provide systems of support that will prepare these talented individuals for a college and career in the machining industry,” said Cruz Casiano, LSC-North Harris Career and Applied Technology's division director. “The first step is to identify high school students interested in this field and guide them into the pipeline to obtain college and career success.”

LSC Chancellor Stephen Head recently announced his plans to retire on Aug. 1. During his time with LSC, Head focused on student access, equality, success and completion; academic quality; workforce programs in alignment with community needs; and collaborative agreements with education, business and local civic organizations, Lone Star said.

Based on its spring 2022 enrollment of 64,382, LSC ranked No. 1 on the Houston Business Journal's 2022 Largest Houston-Area Colleges and Universities List.

NOV Inc. is No. 32 on the HBJ's 2022 Largest Houston-Area Public Companies List, based on revenue, and 2022 Largest Houston-Area Energy Employers List, based on local employment.

From the Houston Business Journal:
<https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2023/03/07/lone-star-college-jci-collaboration.html>

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Education

Lone Star College extends collaboration with Johnson Controls to help underserved students



Image: Lone Star College System

The Johnson Controls Inc. room at Lone Star College's Construction & Skilled Trade Technology Center offers students in the program with an opportunity to get hands-on experience.

LONE STAR COLLEGE SYSTEM



By Sofia Gonzalez – Reporter, Houston Business Journal
Mar 7, 2023

▶ Listen to this article 5 min



Lone Star College is collaborating with Johnson Controls Inc. (NYSE: JCI) to expand opportunities to students interested in heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics and electrical technology programs.

The collaboration is part of Milwaukee-based JCI's Community College Partnership Program, which launched in 2021. During the 2021-22 school year, JCI awarded \$100,000 to LSC Foundation to fund scholarships, student supplies and classroom teaching equipment. A second \$100,000 was awarded for the 2022-23 year. At the end of JCI's four-year commitment, LSC will have received a total of \$400,000.

The goal is to help underrepresented students gain a better career and quality of life. The program gives students at LSC-North Harris' Construction & Skilled Trade Technology Center access to a lab with real-world HVAC and electrical training, internships, networking opportunities and lunch-and-learns.

Upon completion of the program, JCI also will try to hire as many students as possible, Kevin Vaughn, JCI's vice president and general manager for the Texas area, said in an interview with the Houston Business Journal. The company provides building

systems and more. JCI operates the Community College Partnership Program at 20 schools in cities where the company has a significant customer base and employee presence.

“[The money] can be used to help reinvigorate an interest and serve really underserved communities as it relates to shrinking the skills gap and expanding the amount of students that are interested in these types of fields,” Alim Adatia, JCI’s senior director for sustainable infrastructure, told the HBJ.

LSC was part of the first cohort of schools the company partnered with in the 2021-22 academic year. During the first cycle of grant money, 65 recipients received 78 scholarships. Of those recipients, 26 were first-generation college students. One-third – 23 – of the recipients went on to complete their associate degrees.

Through LSC’s HVAC and Electrical Technology Program, students will earn two certificates before completing their associate degrees, allowing for more training before graduating, Cruz Casiano, LSC-North Harris Career and Applied Technology’s division director, told the HBJ. One semester is typically dedicated to residential work, while the other is dedicated to commercial work. This gives students an option to become versatile in the field, Casiano said.

LSC offers day, night and weekend options for the trade program.

Candice Palacios, JCI’s metro market lead systems specialist, told the HBJ that, as a former LSC student, she admires the fact that community colleges provide students with the flexibility to complete programs like this one.

“I know just working from the team here [at LSC] that they do everything in their power to get these students and give them a little carrot to continue to get on through your coursework and to really complete it because they want to see them successful,” Palacios said. “Students who go through this program already have a leg up.”

Casiano also said the program helps LSC students eventually earn favorable salaries. For instance, the median midlevel salary for HVAC jobs is around \$36,000, but senior-level salaries are around \$86,700, according to LSC.

Another goal of JCI’s Community College Partnership Program is to shrink the workforce shortage caused by retirements, career changes following Covid-19 and a skills gap.

“If you don’t have young, vibrant minds entering the field, when there’s a gap, you lose innovation,” Adatia said.

LSC also recently partnered with Houston-based NOV Inc. (NYSE: NOV), the oil and gas equipment and services provider formerly known as National Oilwell Varco, to help strengthen the future workforce in the machining industry. Through the NOV partnership, students are trained to create mechanical parts, tools for engines and other automated products with power-operated machines.

BY
SOFIA
GONZALEZ,
sgonzalez@
bizjournals.com

Community colleges and trade schools focus
on preparing students for middle-skill jobs.

On the job

From its clean energy initiatives to aerospace, the city of Houston is ripe with opportunities when it comes to trade skills – filling the economy with plenty of “middle-skill” opportunities for both students and employers. Middle-skill level jobs, otherwise known as positions that require either an associate’s degree or a high school diploma plus on-the-job training, certificates or apprenticeships, are on the rise in the Gulf Coast area following the pandemic. According to a Workforce Solutions report, through 2030, the number of these jobs in the area is projected to rise to just over 1.2 million, representing a 16.1% growth rate.

In an interview with the Houston Business Journal, Juliet Stipeche, executive director of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, said that people push one education style over the other – typical-

ly saying a bachelor’s degree is the only way to a career. However, she said based on the analysis, it’s now known that there are significant amounts of jobs that only need middle-skills, and

oftentimes, these jobs might be a better option for some.

“We have to do a much better job promoting the middle-skill level jobs, but also celebrating those jobs,” Stipeche said. “Those are the jobs that help the city and the county and the state run.”

Stipeche said the Covid-19 pandemic, Hurricane Harvey and the February 2021 winter storm demonstrated a significant need for essential workers in industries in multiple trade industries. Despite the need, Houston’s trade industries are seeing a workforce shortage. According to the report, the pandemic can also be blamed for this. In the 2019 to 2020 academic year, the number of middle-skill degrees and certifica-

tions awarded fell by 1,656 or 4%.

These jobs are the backbone of the economy but go unfilled because people don’t have the appropriate training, Stipeche said. Now, community colleges in Houston are working to fill the gap and create careers for individuals through different trade skill programs catered to a variety of industries such as manufacturing, health care, electrical, welding and information technology, for a lasting economic impact.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES’ EFFORTS

Surrounding community colleges in the Houston area offer noncredit and credit options for its students. In an interview, Ken Tidwell, the outgoing dean for workforce development and the interim associate vice chancellor for maritime, said oftentimes he feels there is a negative connotation to noncredit, but he said he thinks of it as short-term workforce because the college is helping crank out students into the workforce faster.

Noncredit helps students garner a credential that is either industry based for a state licensure that is for a targeted trade skill, whereas credit options count toward a degree. Tidwell said the pandemic’s worker shortage brought on an emphasis and need for the short-term workforce, noncredit option. Options for students include maritime work, truck driving and welding.

Tidwell said ultimately, the goal of the college is not to just help a student get a certification, but to give them an opportunity to gain an economic return through a job – eventually sinking the money made right back into the economy.

“By increasing the workforce, it trickles out to all the quality of life, and it starts right here” Tidwell said. “If you don’t have the workforce, you don’t have the fuel to make the whole engine work.”

In an interview, Michael Webster, associate vice chancellor for

“These jobs are the backbone of the economy.”

JULIET STIPECHE, executive director of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

workforce instruction at Houston Community College, said that almost 50% of the city's labor market right now requires what he calls that "sweet spot" of middle-level skilled jobs that HCC, like many other community colleges, offers.

"I think everybody is looking for a solid career, a leg up," Webster said. "This is a place where you start and then your career can go wherever you want it to."

He said when you peel back which jobs are most important, the college is met with three main industries: construction, information technology and health care, all areas that are heavily focused on through its various programs for students.

Webster said now that HCC is also dabbling into bachelor's degrees, the pathway to a career is even stronger because students have the ability to build on already earned credentials and completed programs.

At Lone Star College, a Construction and Skilled Trades

Center is fully dedicated to providing employers with a skilled workforce in construction supervision, electrical technology, and heating, ventilation, air-conditioning (HVAC) and refrigeration industries.

Although committed to creating educational programs for students, Cruz Casiano, the director of LSC's career and applied technology division, said LSC works to also eliminate barriers for students, creating a support system that sets them up for success.

"We want to make it more personal," said Casiano. "We want the student to know that we care. We understand life happens, it is challenging."

HANDS-ON TRAINING

Tidwell said programs for workforce training use extremely hands-on heavy labs or practicums. For example, welders will learn welding on top of the courses taken, health care students will be in clinicals and Coast Guard trainers will get in a boat and go through training assessments on water.

This extends to the growing

aerospace industry in Houston as well. Tidwell said students at his college are offered internship programs to learn how to operate real aerospace manufacturing under the supervision of subject matter experts from the companies at the space port.

Webster said at HCC, apprenticeship programs are also offered to allow students to get the same hands-on experiences in the trade fields. When it comes to health care, he said HCC has a state-of-the-art medical facility that includes simulation centers to help students experience what it would be like to work in a hospital.

HCC is also leading a new 17-member disaster resilience and workforce collaborative formed with a \$1.8 million from JPMorgan Chase & Co. (NYSE: JPM). The college will provide the curriculum for the collaborative through its Resiliency Center of Excellence – giving those involved real-world training in sectors such as clean energy, disaster response, resilient jobs, utilities, trades and manufacturing.

At LSC, its trades center holds classrooms and labs to allow those undergoing the programs to have an abundance of options for hands-on experiences. The school has also partnered with companies such as NOV and Johnson Controls Inc. to extend this further.

With NOV, a cohort is enrolled in LSC-North Harris' Associate of Applied Science Computer Numeric Control Machining Program. The students are expected to enroll full-time in the fall and spring semesters in the college before being given a part-time position with NOV. After attending classes in the morning, the students work in an NOV machine shop in the afternoons Mondays through Thursdays and all day on Fridays.

With JCI, the company provides scholarships to underserved students to reinvigorate an interest in trade skills, offering support internships that build on its LSC classroom facility that is equipped with HVAC and electrical training.

When it comes to the real world experiences, all commu-

nity colleges agree that Houston's access to companies in energy, petrochemical, manufacturing and health care, among other industries, is a helpful resource for students.

A SUCCESS STORY

The programs at the various colleges have time and time again offered many low-income students ways to make a name for themselves. Summer Barnhill, a former student at San Jacinto College, said she grew up poor and didn't realize it in the past that she had the ability all along to get to where she is today.

Barnhill graduated in May 2022 with her associates degree process technology, but with her ability to network and get hands-on experience through her program at San Jacinto College, she was able to secure a full-time position with her dream company, LyondellBasell, a month before graduating.

"[College] is attainable," Barnhill said. "It is reasonable. You can make it happen. There are so many opportunities out there." ❧



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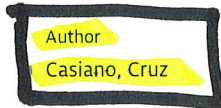
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WORKFORCE TALENT PIPELINE: EXAMINING THE IMPROVEMENT OF POSTSECONDARY WORKFORCE CREDENTIAL COMPLETION AT A LARGE TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE IN TEXAS

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Abstract

Background: As of 2022, over ten million jobs are unfilled in the United States. This has created a labor shortage crisis affecting key skilled trades, negatively affecting our economy and the future of these industries. The existing gap between available jobs and skilled workers to fill them is a significant problem that must be addressed. Addressing this gap entails filling high-skill, high-wage, in-demand jobs with skilled, credentialed workers. Community colleges can provide the workforce with education and training necessary to address the critical labor shortage. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine postsecondary completion rates of certificates and associate degrees awarded in eight workforce programs at a large two-year college in Texas. An analysis of certificates and degrees awarded by year, award type, and campus may provide a valuable framework to drive improvement in credential completion. Identification of contexts where students are better equipped to enter the workforce may lead to more favorable employment and salary outcomes in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand workforce programs. **Research Questions:** The four questions that guide this work are: (1) what is the overall distribution of postsecondary credentials in workforce programs awarded from 2019 to 2021 at Institution A, (2) what is the distribution of postsecondary credentials for workforce programs awarded by year and award type from 2019 to 2021 at Institution A, (3) what is the distribution of postsecondary credentials for workforce programs awarded by campus and award type from 2019 to 2021 at Institution A, (4) based on distributions, which campus(es) have the highest number of credentials completed by award type from 2019 to 2021 at Institution A. **Method:** This quantitative study will employ descriptive and causal comparative analyses to examine the distribution of postsecondary credentials awarded by year, award type, and campus for eight workforce programs at Institution A from 2019 to 2021. Specifically, the researcher will examine data from the Analytics and Institutional Reporting Agency within Institution A regarding completion of workforce certificates and associate degrees in automotive technology, electrical technology, heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC), industrial diesel technology, inspection technology, manufacturing technology, robotics-automated manufacturing technology, and welding technology. **Results:** For the quantitative analyses, the study revealed the highest percentage of credentials awarded were Certificate Level 1. Certificate Level 2 and Associates, noted to be low at Institution A. However, one campus showed higher percentages in all three credentials in comparison to other campuses. These results build on limited existing evidence of the current status of workforce credential completion at 2-year institutions. Discussion of the meaning of these findings as they relate to similar institutions is outlined within. **Conclusion:** This research provides policy recommendations to address the labor gap, education/training gap, and college completion gap. To drive improvement in completion rates and time to degree in workforce programs that lead to favorable employment and salary outcomes in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand fields, there is a need to replicate and implement a research based proposed action plan that includes relevant initiatives in addition to a new College to Career Framework with a holistic student support approach.

URI