

OPPORTUNITY

NEWS



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NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

San Jac, LyondellBasell win partnership award

The American Association of Community Colleges presented San Jacinto College and LyondellBasell with the Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership Award during its annual convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

“We are honored to receive this recognition from the AACC, alongside our incredible partner LyondellBasell,” said Dr. Brenda Hellyer, San Jacinto College Chancellor. “We have a longstanding partnership with LyondellBasell that focuses on training the next generation of workforce in a modern facility that was built for industry, by industry. I thank the AACC for recognizing this work that is changing lives and the socio-economic mobility of our region, and I appreciate the collaboration we have with LyondellBasell – and all our industry partners – that makes this possible.”

AACC recognized the College and LyondellBasell for their collaborative approach to student success. Together, through activities such as awarding



Photo by San Jacinto College

\$2,500 scholarships to instrumentation and process technology students, employees serving on the College’s curriculum advisory and Chancellor advisory committees, and creating a scaled model glass distillation lab at the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology, LyondellBasell is demonstrating its commitment to San Jac students and its communities.

Music, dance collaborate for ‘Dancing on Steel’

San Jacinto College’s music and dance departments collaborated for a unique concert this May – “Dancing on Steel.”

The performances were held at the Central Campus Slocomb Auditorium and the Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park.

“The steel band and I were thrilled to collaborate with our guest artists and the dance program to stage the world and Houston premiere of ‘Dancing on Steel,’” said Michael Mizma, music professor. “I have wanted to collaborate like this for many years, and I’m so excited we finally made it happen.”

“Dancing on Steel” featured six steel band pieces inspired by dance movements and the rich cultural traditions of Trinidad and Tobago. The concert reflects the influence of the country’s multiethnic and multicultural heritage, featuring choreographed dance.

Students from Mizma’s steel band performed for the second year at the Miller Outdoor Theatre as part of their performance grant program, but this was their first time partnering with South Campus dance students and dance professors Jamie Williams and Jennifer Salter.

“Our dance program is thrilled about this collaboration. It has opened so many opportunities for our dancers,” said Williams. “They learned traditional Trinbagonian dance and performed live music on a huge outdoor stage. We were very fortunate to give them this experience.”

View event photos at bit.ly/SJC-Dancing-on-Steel.

San Jac, Kaneka hold ribbon cutting

The San Jacinto College Foundation and Kaneka Corporation held a ribbon cutting May 31 for the new Kaneka Nondestructive Technology Quality Lab with dignitaries, including Kaneka board chairman Kimikazu Sugawara and president Kazuhiko Fujii, who flew in from Japan.

Additionally, Kaneka presented the San Jacinto College Foundation with \$100,000 to support the sustainability and upkeep of the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology, where the Kaneka lab is housed. These funds ensure CPET continues to offer the latest training equipment, technology, and curricula.

Nondestructive testing evaluates the properties of materials, components, structures, or systems without damaging them. This specialty is vital to petrochemical, aerospace, defense, and construction industries.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

ARELLANO DISCOVERS PASSION FOR COMPOSING, AUDIO ENGINEERING AT SAN JAC

By **Melissa Trevizo**
San Jacinto College

Already a versatile composer, songwriter, music educator, and audio engineer, San Jacinto College alumnus Jose Arellano sets his sights on Georgia as he transfers to the Savannah College of Art and Design this fall.

Before embarking on his academic journey at San Jac, Arellano was still determining his career path. Having been

in the high school band, he was already interested in the arts and could read music and play the clarinet.

“I bought music notation software just to play around with it,” said Arellano. “I discovered that, wow, I can create my own songs with this. It sparked something in me. I started to study music theory independently and wanted to know more about how it worked.”

Arellano’s dedication to music theory grew as he enrolled in San Jac’s music program, where he immersed himself in composing.

While at San Jac, Arellano honed his skills on multiple instruments. He took up alto saxophone, piano, and explored cello pan with the steel band.

“Performing with the steel band along with world-renowned composers was an amazing opportunity,” he said. “It’s something I will never forget.”

In 2021, Arellano graduated with his associate degree in music. COVID-19 thwarted his initial plans to transfer to a university, so he returned to San Jac to pursue a degree in audio engineering.

“I had such a great experience with audio engineering,” said Arellano. “Not only are the professors knowledgeable, but being hands-on in the studio is invaluable.”

Toward the end of his audio engineering studies, Arellano began an internship at New Hope Church, where he managed live sound for services and special events, gaining real-world experience.

Arellano graduated with his associate degree in audio engineering in spring 2024, adding a second associate degree to his belt.

Creatively, Arellano draws inspiration from his emotions and surroundings, nurturing small ideas into fully developed musical pieces.

“I like to think about the creative process like painting,” he said. “I focus

on the foundational elements and intricate details that form a complete composition — the circles and squares that make up the detail. That is what music is to me. The harmonies, arrangement, and orchestration build the image in your mind.”

Beyond his studies, Arellano teaches piano, composition, and songwriting at Attuned Music School, inspiring students of all ages.

“My teaching philosophy emphasizes the cyclical nature of creativity and the importance of audiation — the ability to hear music in your mind,” he said. “I encourage students to harness this skill to enhance their musical expression.”

Arellano plans to pursue a degree in sound design, a field he discovered through a film analysis in his audio engineering program. This revelation, coupled with his girlfriend’s experience at the Savannah College of Art and Design, led him to apply to the college’s sound design program.

“One day, I’d like to be a video game composer combining expertise in music, audio engineering, and sound design to create immersive auditory experiences,” he said. “My dream is to compose for a major game company like Nintendo.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac’s arts programs.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

START-TO-FINISH

NURSING PROGRAM

CNA to BSN

San Jacinto College offers a complete nursing pathway from certified nurse aide to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Our affordable tuition and flexible online classes make it easy for you to achieve your dream of helping others as a nurse. Scholarships available!




An Equal Opportunity Institution

FINE ARTS ALUMNA CANINO SHOOTS FOR THE MOON

By **Melissa Trevizo**
San Jacinto College

In the ever-changing graphic design landscape, where innovation reigns supreme, Mariana Canino stands out as a testament to determination. At just 23, the graphic designer has left a mark on the industry, thanks partly to her journey at San Jacinto College.

A fan of various creative pursuits, Canino found her calling in graphic design amid a sea of hobbies, including cycling, sketching, and mastering new design software.

“I’ve always found immense satisfaction in tackling creative challenges and collaborating within a team, with clients, or through partnerships,” she said. “These experiences continuously encourage me to pursue my passion in the arts.”

Like many young adults, Canino navigated higher education without financial support.

“I am first-generation, and my family could not afford to help me with college,” she said. “San Jac was the best decision I could’ve made for my parents and myself.”

Her time at San Jac was nothing short of transformative. Canino gained professional experience through work-study opportunities and earned her associate degree in fine arts in 2020.

“While attending San Jac, I gained my first official logo client and got my first job as a gallery attendant at the Central Campus,” she said. “I also met incredible individuals and passionate teachers who taught me many things.”

Reflecting on her journey, Canino challenges misconceptions about community colleges like San Jac.

“Community colleges get a bad rap about being a student’s last choice,” she said. “In my experience, it’s a great place to go for your education. San Jac helped me much more than any other educational facility I enrolled in.”

Canino transferred to the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Shortly after beginning her UHCL journey, she got a part-time job as a graphic designer at the university.

“If you can get a job at the place where you also study, you not only gain experience and save valuable resources but also save time you can use to work towards your personal development,” she said.

After graduating with her Bachelor of Fine Arts from UHCL, Canino landed a job as a graphic designer for Intuitive Machines in 2023, creating logos and graphics for its lunar program.

“My job requires me to conceptualize ideas into proposal graphics that get submitted to NASA, commercial

partners, and other governments for competitive review,” she said. “Intuitive Machines is like no other job I’d ever imagine. There are so many bright minds in one company, and my mission is to use my creative talents to showcase everything this company has accomplished.”

In her professional endeavors, Canino finds joy in her work’s diversity and her team’s camaraderie.

“One week, you are working on a flyer for an internal event. Another week, you are working on broadcast material for NASA,” Canino said. “I want to be a part of Intuitive Machine’s growth and its exposure, even if it means learning new tools along the way. I get inspired at work simply from being there. We all

want to see each other grow and succeed.”

As for the future, her goals extend beyond personal success.

“I want to help the people I care about while also continuously improving myself,” she said. “I want to keep honing my skills to create a positive impact on the earth.”

As Canino continues to aim for success in graphic design, her story proves that the possibilities are limitless with talent, determination, and the right education.

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac’s art and design program.



Photo courtesy of Intuitive Machines

HOW TO SUCCEED AS AN ADULT STUDENT

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

If you're an adult student coming to San Jacinto College for a new degree or enrolling for the first time, you've taken the most important step: You've stopped waiting and started doing.

Whether you're 25 or 85, San Jac experts share how to step back into the classroom with confidence.

SETTING GOALS

Q: How can I set clear academic and personal goals?

Adam Rogers, program advisor coordinator:

Goal setting comes down to prioritizing — the ability to say “no” and be realistic. Have an honest conversation with your support network about your academic pursuits and the sacrifices needed. Make sure your long-term goals are reinforced by shorter ones. If your long-term goal is to earn your degree, there should be shorter-term goals for the year, semester, month, and week.

MANAGING TIME

Q: How do I juggle all my responsibilities?

Dr. Pranie DeForest, college prep department chair: If you take more classes than you can handle, you may end up failing or dropping a class, which costs money and time. Figure out how much time needs to be dedicated to study, family, and work. If this adds up to more than 24 hours in a day, adjust your schedule. If taking two classes is out of the question, take one and focus on doing well.

NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY

Q: What if I'm not tech savvy?

Roselle Helms, director of technology effectiveness:

The technology support page offers helpful tools like applying for the student loaner laptop program. Or visit our new campus service desks if you're unsure where to start. We can help meet your technology needs, whether it's connecting to the Wi-Fi or verifying system updates are current. Learn more at sanjac.edu/support/technology-support.

FUNDING COLLEGE

Q: What costs should I consider when returning to college? What aid is available?

Dr. JoEllen Price, dean of financial aid and scholarships: You should consider directly billed tuition (based on residency status) and indirect costs (books, supplies, travel expenses, food, housing, and personal expenses). It's essential to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, which determines your eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid programs. You can also apply for San Jacinto College Foundation scholarships at sjcd.academicworks.com.

STUDYING

Q: What study techniques can help me retain what I'm learning?

Erika Hernandez, Student Success Center director:

1. Form a study group: Peers can offer different perspectives and study tips.
2. Take notes: Pay attention to the class and study material. If you don't understand something, ask questions before, during, or after class.



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

3. Visit the Student Success Center: We offer face-to-face and online tutoring services and areas to study.

STAYING HEALTHY

Q: How can I prioritize my health while keeping up with classes?

Robert Murray, director of mental health counseling:

Studying, working, and managing relationships can feel overwhelming. Self-care is paramount. It's important to notice when the stress is too much ... when you need to step away from whatever you're doing, regather your thoughts, then return to the activity with a clear head.

If you're having difficulty with your class, reach out to your professor. If you're experiencing depression, anxiety, etc., please reach out to a mental health counselor in the welcome centers at South, Central, and North Campuses.

EXPLORING CAREERS

Q: How can I transition into a new career?

Jennifer Cerda, career and transfer coordinator:

Reflect on your passions and skills. Research industries and careers that interest you. Look into job market trends, required skills, and potential growth opportunities.

Identify the transferable skills you've acquired throughout your education and previous work that can be applied to your new career. Consider if you need more education or training to bridge any knowledge or skill gaps for your new career.

Lastly, consider starting with part-time or freelance work, internships, or volunteer opportunities in your new career field.

CONCLUSION

Finally, don't forget to celebrate you. Once you've earned that certificate or degree, walk across the commencement stage to accept your diploma!

NURSING ALUMNA HEADS TO HARVARD

By **Neesha Hosein**

SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

One San Jacinto College alumna has transformed barriers into steppingstones.

While at the zoo with her daughter, Erica Fernandez Benavidez decided to check her email.

“She was getting her face painted when I got the notification about getting into Harvard,” Benavidez said. “I started crying and announced it out loud, and strangers began cheering for me.”

Benavidez will start a distance learning master’s degree program in bioethics at Harvard University this fall. The Pasadena-born Texan credits her family as her driving force.

As a child of immigrants who don’t speak English, she found the path to being a first-generation college student daunting as she had to be her own advocate.

Why nursing?

Benavidez developed a sensitivity for medical ethics from childhood.

At 16, she observed the lack of compassion her grandpa received while hospitalized. When her sister was in the intensive care unit with a brain injury, Benavidez was there every day as her advocate. Another time, her father was in the ICU with

kidney failure, and she realized he wasn’t getting things he needed because of the language barrier.

This compelled her to do something to ensure non-English speakers get the same care as everyone else. Her employer encouraged her to pursue nursing as a good starting point toward studying ethics.

Inspiration came from many sources

With English as her second language, Benavidez always struggled in school and wondered if she had what it took to earn a degree.

Her father managed to achieve his goals in a demanding job without English fluency, and Benavidez found his strength and determination contagious.

In her second semester of the vocational nursing program at the South Campus, Benavidez failed a required course, which necessitated repeating the semester. Feeling defeated, she was ready to give up on her dreams.

“My mother has always believed in me,” Benavidez said. “She was the one who inspired me to never give up. She convinced me to continue trying.”

The second time around, Benavidez passed and became a licensed vocational nurse. She graduated from the associate

degree nursing program at the Central Campus in 2008 and became a registered nurse, followed by a bachelor’s degree in nursing in 2017 from the University of Texas Health Science Center.

As a pediatric oncology nurse for 16 years at Texas Children’s Hospital, she has noticed the disparities among different cultures within the patient population.

“The non-English speakers are not getting the same health care,” she said. “Hispanic patients often don’t ask questions. I know this because I’m part of that demographic. I’ve noticed resources not being offered to patients because they are unable to communicate their needs. Most just go along with whatever the doctors say, even when they don’t understand what is happening.”

Journey to Harvard

San Jac nursing professor Dr. Laurene Matthews gave Benavidez unforgettable advice.

“Dr. Matthews taught me, ‘When you’re in the nursing field, you treat patients like you want to be treated.’ Those words stuck with me my whole career,” Benavidez said. “She taught me the value of asking patients the right questions, viewing them as a whole and not just a diagnosis.”

When Benavidez found the

bioethics program at Harvard, she thought, “Why not?” The acceptance was a testament to her lifelong commitment to serving others.

The future looks bright

Benavidez will graduate from Harvard in 2026 and already plans to pursue a Ph.D. in public health afterward.

She also started a home infusion business, Amigos Healthcare Services, that focuses on Spanish speakers who need IV medications prescribed by doctors for conditions like lupus, multiple sclerosis, encephalitis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

“I want to focus on quality health care for all individuals,” she said. “My biggest goal in life is to help people. My business does a lot of patient advocacy, representing the underserved community.”

She has advice for others who are seeking a fulfilling career.

“Focus on your passion. When you find your passion, that’s when you find satisfaction in your job, and you’ll be a better person for it,” Benavidez said.

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac’s nursing programs.



Photo courtesy of Erica Fernandez Benavidez

SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
Aug. 12	Summer hours end		Administrative offices return to normal business hours
Aug. 19	Fall classes begin	Varies	All campuses and online
Sept. 2	Labor Day	Closed	All campuses and online

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

THIS MONTH *IN* SOCIAL MEDIA

Worried about the **writing section** of San Jac's scholarship application?

We might be able to help... →



Save for later!



Facebook

Our general scholarship application does not require students to write an essay but includes several short-answer writing questions. Many students avoid scholarship applications because they are anxious about writing, but our review committee is not looking for perfection! Instead, they want to see a snapshot of who you are, why you need financial assistance, and that you're making an honest effort.



116 Reactions | 24 Comments | 1,097 Clicks

Instagram

The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program has selected San Jacinto College as a finalist for the 2025 #AspenPrize for Community College Excellence based on our strong student outcomes. We're one of only 10 colleges selected from among more than 1,000 community colleges nationwide!



184 Likes | 1 Comment | 8 Shares

LinkedIn

Student support is what we do best! San Jacinto College faculty, staff, and administrators celebrated with students as they moved their tassels and became graduates ready to pursue their dreams.



59 Reactions | 3 Shares | 939 Clicks

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

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An Equal Opportunity Institution

VISION & MISSION



Vision — San Jacinto College will advance the social and economic mobility of all members of our community. We will be known for our excellence in teaching and learning, our intentional student-centered support, and our commitment to every student. We will be the preferred workforce and economic development partner in the region and a champion for lifelong learning. San Jacinto College will inspire students to explore opportunities, define their educational and career paths, and achieve their goals and dreams.

Mission — San Jacinto College is focused on student success, academic progress, university transfer, and employment. We are committed to opportunities that enrich the quality of life in the communities we serve.

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 one of the top 10 community colleges in the nation as designated by the Aspen Institute and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. The College is a Hispanic-Serving Institution that spans five campuses, serving approximately 41,000 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.

