

New freshmen poised to seize higher education

DEAL OF THE CENTURY

The countdown is on as future college freshmen lock in plans for college this fall. They have a lot to think about: “Who offers my major?” “Should I go private or public?” “How far can I move away? Should I commute or go online instead?” “How much will it really cost?”

College Decision Checklist



- ☐ Major available
- ☐ Academic quality
- ☐ Student-professor ratio
- ☐ Location and convenience
- ☐ Campus culture
- ☐ Campus activities
- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Scholarship availability
- ☐ Transferability
- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Housing options
- ☐ Safety and security
- ☐ Transportation

These are good questions. A good college decision gives you the power to succeed in your dream career. The wrong turn can be a mistake that haunts you for decades.

The College Board, which administers the famous SAT exam, recommends that students consider location, size and majors offered as well as special programs, clubs and activities on campus, the variety of academic programs and available facilities like labs, theaters, and gyms.

If you asked the students and alumni highlighted in this newsletter, they would tell you that one of the most important factors is value.

According to Forbes, more than two-thirds of American students graduate from colleges and universities with debt. U.S. student loan debt has hit an all-time high at more than \$1.3 trillion, and 40 million Americans are now struggling with student loan payments. In fact, experts say debt of this magnitude is delaying or preventing a growing percentage of Americans from buying cars or homes. With student loan debt growing by \$2,726 per second, it would be easy for local students and families to think they were priced out of quality higher education.

Not so, says Collin College’s district president Dr. Neil Matkin. “The deal of the century is right in your backyard, and we have no intention of keeping it a secret.”

He explained that community colleges are well known for their affordability. Collin is also known for quality and university partnerships. In Texas, 75.8 percent of all the freshmen and sophomores are enrolled at community colleges, no doubt because of the low cost.

By comparison, four years at the University of Texas at Austin will cost up to \$44,240 for a bachelor’s degree. By attending Collin College during the freshmen and sophomore years and then transferring to

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COLLIN QUALITY

NLN National Center of Excellence in Nursing Education

NSF National Science Foundation National Center of Excellence

TECH TITANS Tech Titan

TOP Top Military Friendly

8 Carnegie Professors of the Year

7 Minnie Stevens Piper Professors

COLLIN ADVANTAGE

PERSONAL ATTENTION

Average class size:

25.6 students

2nd LOWEST tax rate in Texas among community colleges

LOWEST TUITION IN THE STATE OF TEXAS:

85%

LESS THAN Texas public universities average

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Subduing Stigmas: Collin Alumna Comes Full Circle

Vashtai Kekich knows all about stigmas. As a single mother trying to care for a two-year-old, she simply could not create the life she wanted for herself and her daughter on her own. She made the difficult decision to utilize state assistance. Bolstered by her parents' encouragement, she decided to enroll in college. On nights when she felt she could not go on she relied on a special motivation.

"I looked at my daughter Reese's sweet face. It was so innocent. I knew I could not fail. I didn't have a car or a bank account. All I had were dreams and fears and an immeasurable love for my daughter. I didn't want her to suffer. I had to accept that I needed others to help me be a good parent. At first, I was too embarrassed to use a food stamp card or pull out the Medicaid card at the doctor's office. I had to learn a lot about humility. My mom showed me what a woman does to provide for her family, and my dad came out of retirement to help me. That kept me humble. They never made me feel bad or guilty," said Kekich, who calls her mother her best friend.

Fast forward three years, and Kekich is completely independent of state assistance and immensely grateful for the opportunities she has been given. She has come full circle, giving her time and energy to help others break a different stigma. Today, she is the communications manager for The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Kekich earned a Collin College associate degree, magna cum laude, in May 2013 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication studies with honors distinction from Southern Methodist University (SMU) in May 2015. Commencement marshal at her SMU graduation, she was the first person in her class to receive a diploma, and she was also asked to speak at the ceremony. She is currently a Master of Public Affairs candidate at The University of Texas at Dallas.

"In my first semester at Collin, I received an invitation to Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), and my life goals shifted. I decided I wanted to become a lifetime learner and find a career where I could continue to grow.

**"I don't
think
I would be
the person
I am now
without
Collin
College."**

I earned an associate degree in 11 months," she said.

Kekich says her Collin College associate degree hangs proudly in her office. She garnered a Collin College Emerging Scholar award, a PTK scholarship and was inducted into the National Honor Society Texas Hall of Honor. She also received several SMU scholarships including Communications Advisory Board, Douglas Bauer and honor scholarships in 2013, 2014 and 2015. In addition to volunteering, Kekich is currently serving as the Dallas Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) university relations co-chair.

"At Collin, Dr. Mary Anne Andrade motivated me and selected me for an Emerging Scholar award—the first college award I received. Reese and my parents attended the ceremony. The confidence I gained enabled me to excel at SMU while working at the university's Cary Maguire Ethics Center and upon graduation accept a position at The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Today, I work with philanthropists and celebrities like Mark Cuban and football legend Emmitt Smith, the institute's Okay to Say spokesperson. Where did I get the confidence? At Collin, where I was never the token single mom—I was a scholar with a great kid. I don't think I would be the person I am now without Collin College."



Vashtai Kekich

FIGHTING ANOTHER NATIONAL STIGMA

According to Kekich, mental health legislation was passed 20 years ago, but local communities are still struggling with how to implement it.

"The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is diligently working to change the landscape of mental health throughout Texas, focusing on policy changes, best practices for real world settings, and developing and promoting policies in support of primary care and behavioral health integration, specifically within three key populations—children, veterans and smart justice. There is an outlet to talk openly about mental illness and inspire others to speak up about erasing the stigma. Just visit OkaytoSay.org," she said.

Kekich uses cancer as an example of how a stigma can change.

"Cancer has evolved from a disease that people would not discuss into a 'casserole disease.' If you tell your church or school community that a family member has cancer, people immediately ask if they can bring a casserole, but if you say a family member is suffering with mental illness, no one is lining up to bring a casserole or help take the person to doctors' appointments. Mental health matters. It's OK to say, 'Grandma had breast cancer,' and people need to know it is also OK to say, 'My uncle has anxiety.' It is OK to talk about it and get help for it," Kekich said.

In addition to giving back to the state via her work at the institute, Kekich is planning to create scholarships for her church, Collin College and SMU. Ultimately, she wants to earn a doctorate.

"I want to give students the experience I was given. Collin College didn't teach me how to get a job. Collin taught me how to have a career and live."

Kekich adds she is a very hopeful person because she is living proof of how quickly people can change their lives with hard work, a pure heart and help from others.

"This community gave me and my family a big hug. I wake up every day, go to a job I love and help create change in a place that changed me. I have a small and amazing family and a huge extended family—it is all of Collin County. It doesn't get better than that."

Editor's note: Recently, Vashtai Kekich accepted a new position as director of communications and public affairs for The Arc of Dallas where she will be helping to subdue stigmas in those living with disabilities.





Brandon Tinsley

From layoff to payoff: Grant provides training, job skills in high tech fields

Life has improved significantly for Brandon Tinsley in the last couple of years.

The one-time T-Mobile technical support worker was laid off in 2012 along with his wife Genia and 6,000 other employees who woke up one morning to find their jobs had been shipped overseas. Despite a strong

work history and an eagerness to improve his station in life, Brandon didn't have a college degree or the connections he believed he needed to get to the next level professionally.

Tinsley could have easily been left behind in a rapidly changing technological world, but because of the skills he learned and the relationships he made at Collin College, Tinsley is earning a six-figure income as an IT business analyst only a few months after graduation.

Tinsley's is just one of hundreds of success stories nationwide to come out of a Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant shared by seven community colleges in six states. Those colleges – Collin College, Bellevue College, Bunker Hill Community College, Del Mar College, Moraine Valley Community College, Rio Salado Community College and Salt Lake Community College – formed the National Information, Security and Geospatial Technologies Consortium (NISGTC), dedicated to improving technical education infrastructure and teaching methods in networking and data communications, cybersecurity, programing and geospatial technologies.

Dr. Brenda Kihl, Collin College's executive vice president, said the program was designed to provide enhanced technical education in information technology for workers whose jobs were off-shored as well as others who could benefit from the programs. The goal is to prepare students for high-wage positions in rapidly expanding fields important to the technical infrastructure in the United States. She believes the grant implementation was a success.

"We have made significant progress in developing programs that create stackable credentials within IT programs. Students can earn a certificate in less than a year and continue on to complete

their associate degree," Dr. Kihl said. "That way the students have a credential in hand at various steps along the way."

That structure allowed students in the grant program to progress in their careers as they worked through the program. The program supported 1,502 students at Collin College and 6,201 nationwide. Of those students, 2,135 students earned a certificate or degree, and 1,959 participants who were employed during the program increased their wages.

The grant allowed the Collin College staff to attack the problem in two different ways – funding technology and equipment purchases that made teaching those subjects more effective, while also providing academic support, career coaching and job placement services to make sure the students got off on the right foot when they left the classroom.

One of the largest expenditures by the grant was the creation of a Virtual Laboratory (VLab) where students can practice networking, programming, geospatial technology and cybersecurity skills in a "sandbox" environment separate from college networks. The VLab allows students to progress independently so that students who master a skill or concept quickly can move on to another subject, while others can repeat exercises to become proficient at them.

The VLab was a rousing success as a teaching tool. By September 2015, 275 colleges and universities had accessed the VLab, and it had been used 45,970 times. Dr. Ann Beheler, NISGTC lead, said the VLab design may be so popular because it reflects some realities of modern information technology.

"The Virtual Lab models how work is done in the IT industry," Dr. Beheler said. "Once the equipment is installed, they don't usually touch the equipment again. It's all done through the Internet."

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Brandon is earning a six-figure income as an IT business analyst only a few months after graduation.



"The goal is to prepare students for high-wage positions in rapidly expanding fields important to the technical infrastructure in the United States."

*Dr. Brenda Kihl
Collin College's executive vice president*

Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy named 2015 U.S. Professor of the Year

I T BEGAN WITH A CHALKBOARD. Nearly 25 years ago when chemistry Professor Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy first came to Collin College, she requested a small blackboard for her office so that she could help students work out problems and equations. Word spread, and soon multiple students were coming to her office.

“I would have people come into my office and say, ‘Oh don’t mind us, we’re just here to use the blackboard,” El-Ashmawy said. “It was exciting to see students opening up and taking the concepts they learned in my classes and teaching them to each other.”

For her dedication to teaching, as well as outstanding academic, scientific and scholarly achievement, Dr. El-Ashmawy was named the 2015 U.S. Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Her achievement marks the eighth Carnegie Professor of the Year for Collin College, a feat unmatched by any college or university in the state of Texas.

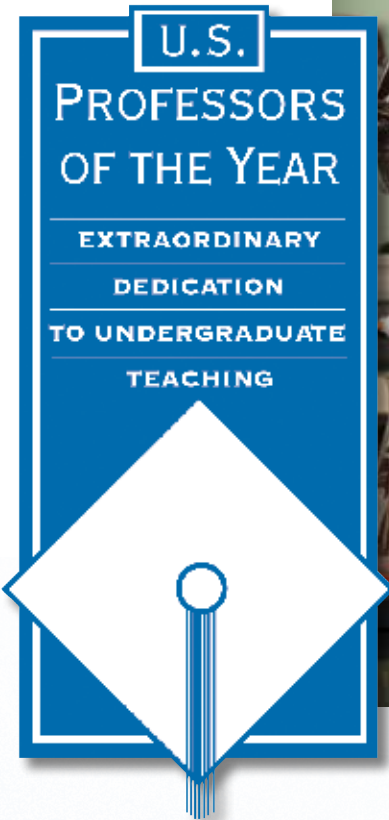
The college is now home to four Texas and four U.S. Professors of the Year. Collin College has also won more Carnegie Professor of the Year accolades than Cornell, Northwestern, Vanderbilt, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, Rice, Texas Christian University and University of Texas at Austin.

“It’s always a great honor to receive acknowledgement of my achievements, but the greatest gift is when I can use my strengths to serve those around me,” Dr. El-Ashmawy said. “When my students see how chemistry impacts everyday life and why chemistry is so important to society, those transformations are precisely what drive me everyday as I walk into the classroom.”

The Professor of the Year program, now in its 35th year, is the only national initiative that focuses solely on excellent undergraduate teaching and mentoring.

Professor El-Ashmawy accepted the award at a Washington, D.C. ceremony in the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. CASE and Carnegie also honored Professor El-Ashmawy at a Congressional reception at the Folger Shakespeare Library on Capitol Hill.

In addition to her U.S. Professor of the Year Award, she was also named a 2015 Minnie Stevens Piper Professor and is an American Chemical Society Fellow. But her path to outstanding achievements in her field almost didn’t happen.



Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy

“When I was a senior in high school, my mom looked at my schedule and noticed I wasn’t taking a chemistry course,” El-Ashmawy remembered. “She said, ‘What do you mean you’re not taking chemistry? Of course you are!’ So she called the counselor and got me in a chemistry class. I went into that chemistry class and absolutely loved it.”

From there, she went on to receive an associate degree from Kilgore College, a bachelor’s and master’s degree in chemistry from Texas A&M University and a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of North Texas. While completing her master’s degree, she discovered her passion for teaching.

According to Collin College District President Dr. Neil Matkin, “Professor Amina El-Ashmawy is an extraordinary professor who works tirelessly to educate students and empower them. She embodies the best in education, and we are honored that she has called Collin College home for more than 20 years,” Matkin said.

Dr. El-Ashmawy’s academic achievements include developing the online chemistry curriculum and enterprising different methods of reaching students.

One of Dr. El-Ashmawy’s former chemistry students, Chad Lemaire, is now a psychiatrist and a clinical assistant professor at the Baylor College of Medicine and says that Dr. El-Ashmawy helps her students think outside of the box and prepares them for the future.

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Most in Texas! Eight Carnegie Professors of the Year

						
2000 U.S. Professor of the Year Brad Baker	2006 Texas Professor of the Year Jennifer O'Loughlin Brooks	2007 U.S. Professor of the Year Dr. Rosemary Karr	2009 U.S. Professor of the Year Dr. Tracey McKenzie	2012 Texas Professor of the Year Dr. Greg Sherman	2013 Texas Professor of the Year Ceilidh Charleson-Jennings	2014 Texas Professor of the Year Dr. Collin Thomas

Highlights

Six students from the Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Education program received scholarships from Meeting Professionals International to attend the Future Leadership Forum in San Francisco. The students are **Anthony Garcia**, **Joe Tuazon**, **Ivy Tuazon**, **Deshawn Thornton**, **Doby Lokman** and **Preeti Talwar**.

Three Collin College students were named NJCAA Region V North All-Academic Team selections. **Noah Hill** was selected for basketball, while **Landon Ibbott** and **Brandon Yang** were



Noah Hill



Landon Ibbott



Brandon Yang

selected for men's tennis. Student athletes must have a grade point average of at least 3.25 and have completed 36 hours of college credit to qualify for the honor.

Sandra Field, a Collin College alumna, was chosen to participate in the Summer Undergraduate Research Program at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center for 2015. She was chosen from among 1,200 applicants. Previously, Field was selected to participate in the summer undergraduate research experience program at The University of Texas at Dallas.

Student **Shomari Harris** was named a finalist for the 2015 Women's Basketball Coaches Association Junior/Community College Player of the Year Award.

Dance student **Kieran King** received a \$7,000 scholarship to the University of Oklahoma that is repeatable each year.



Kieran King

Student **Crystal Martinez** received the 2015 NODA Region IV "Outstanding Undergraduate Student – Two Year Institution" award. NODA is the association for orientation, transition and retention in higher education and Region IV covers Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. This is the second year in a row a Collin College student has won the Two Year Institution category.



Crystal Martinez

Respiratory student **Todd Porter** received the Lambda Beta Society AMP/Hill Leadership Award, a first for a Collin College student. In addition to a \$2,000 prize, this award includes travel expenses, hotel accommodations and full registration for the American Association for Respiratory Care International Congress.



Fernando Osornio

Student **Fernando Osornio** received the Congressional Gold Medal from the U.S. House of Representatives. This is the highest honor that may be bestowed by the U.S. House of Representatives upon a civilian under the age of 24, other than the Purple Heart. Osornio was also recognized as one of "DFW's Next Latino Leaders."



FACULTY & STAFF

Highlights



Tiffanee Arnold

Dance professor **Tiffanee Arnold** was elected to a second three-year term on the National Board of Directors of the American College Dance Association representing the South-Central Region. She is the first and only two-year institution faculty representative to serve on the board in this region.

Music professor **Kris Berg** received Global Music Awards Gold Medals in two categories—Best Big Band Performance and Best Composition—for his recent CD release, "Time Management."

Julie Boganwright, clinical coordinator for the respiratory care program, received the "Educator of the Year" award from the Texas Society for Respiratory Care.

Chief Information Officer **Dave Hoyt** has been elected vice president to the Texas Connection Consortium, a group comprised of 40 state universities, colleges and community college districts that share the resources of a solution center.



Dave Hoyt



J.D. Isip

Professor of English **J.D. Isip** recently published a full-length poetry collection titled *Pocketing Feathers*. He also defended his dissertation, "The Franklin Stereotype: The Spiritual-Secular Gospels of Four Nineteenth-Century American Authors," at Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Executive Vice President **Dr. Brenda Kihl** was appointed to the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee on Block Scheduling for Certain Programs by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Counselor **Pam Love-White** was named the Texas Counseling Association 2015-16 president-elect. She will represent 7,200 Texas professional counselors before Congress, the Texas Legislature, state agencies and regulatory bodies.



Dr. Brenda Kihl

Brenda Macarty, professor of hospitality, was recently recognized for demonstrating "Excellence in Strategy, Innovation, Leadership and Culture" in the profession.

Michelle Millen, interim dean of health science, was elected chair of the Council for Excellence in Education of the American Health Information Management Association Foundation. Millen's article, "Patient Engagement: HIM and Education Filling the Gap," was published in the *Journal of the American Health Information Management Association*.



Michelle Millen

Karen Musa was selected to serve on the Texas Restaurant Association Education Foundation for a three-year term.



Karen Musa



Stephen Rogers

Stephen Rogers, coordinator of Programs for New Students, was named to the Community College Advisory Board of The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS). NSCS is the largest accredited college honor society in the U.S.

Angela Switzer, professor of respiratory care, was selected as the moderator for American Association of Respiratory Care's National Sputum Bowl — a patient care and respiratory care trivia tournament. Switzer is a current National Sputum Bowl champion representing the state of Texas and Collin College, along with respiratory care clinical coordinator Julie Boganwright.

Associate Professor of Communication Design, **Chris Titze** has just been named one of Luerzer's Archive's "200 Best Digital Artist Worldwide." A special issue of the advertising creative resources magazine commemorating the honorees was released in November.

A WFAA news report on Photography Professor **Byrd Williams'** life and work won a Lone Star Emmy for Texas Heritage. The report covered Williams' photographic archive, which consists of letters from, equipment of and images created by four generations of his family, all of whom were Texas photographers. The collection spans 120 years.



Byrd Williams

Deal of the Century

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UT as a junior, a student can earn the same UT bachelor’s degree for \$24,780. That means saving 43% or nearly \$20,000.

However, value is more than a low price tag. Collin College is known for top caliber academics along with the lowest tuition in the state of Texas.

At this institution of higher learning value also includes hands-on, undergraduate research experiences, opportunities to publish papers in journals and learn from professors who pepper their lectures with examples from their own research or work experience. Collin College graduates like Vashtai Kekich (see page 2) would describe the college as a family and a launching pad that catapulted her from state assistance to a lucrative career in which she fights national stigmas. Alumnus Brandon Tinsley (see page 3) would add Collin College’s value includes graduating with networking contacts, impeccable skills and industry-recognized certifications that directly translate into high paying salaries. As the chart indicates, the average Collin College class size is less than 26 students, and the student faculty ratio is less than 20 students per professor. This means Collin College students receive personalized attention in and out of class. Their professors know their names and have time to walk them through challenging physics problems during office hours. They know asking a question about a subject is something their professors typically have time to answer and expound upon because they know that at Collin College the focus is on the student.

“At Collin College, we are going through a transformation intended to completely wow our students, faculty, staff, and communities. The idea is that by offering WOW! experiences that ease the burden of our students and all of our stakeholders, we can create a superior experience, second to none.”

“Collin is not just a college in the community but for the community. The next decade will be an exciting time of growth for Collin College, and we want everyone to know we’re here for you. Believe me, ‘here’ is a remarkable place to be!”

How much does college REALLY cost?

Tuition and fees	\$ _____
Books and class supplies	\$ _____
Computer/technology	\$ _____
Transportation	\$ _____
Room and board	\$ _____
Personal expenses (laundry, phone, snacks, etc.)	\$ _____
Miscellaneous	\$ _____
TOTAL:	\$ _____

College earns eighth “Professor of the Year”

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“Dr. El-Ashmawy’s teaching did not just allow me to do well on a standardized test or prepare me for a rigorous medical education,” Lemaire said. “Rather than teaching directly from a textbook or curriculum, she used innovative techniques that engaged us in a way that was very different from most other college experiences. Her method of teaching was based on demonstrations and student-centered exercises that led to a discussion of chemistry concepts that proved meaningful.”

Outside of the classroom, Dr. El-Ashmawy is a published author with multiple journal articles and textbook credits to her name, including a chapter in “Sputnik to Smartphones: A Half-Century of Chemical Education.” She has also served as the Collin Serves committee chair, a faculty advisor for various student groups and a mentor for at-risk students.

“The civic responsibility that I feel is one of the main reasons why I teach,” Dr. El-Ashmawy said. “I love teaching and with it the sense of responsibility to serve and be engaged in my community. It’s always a great honor to receive acknowledgement of my achievements, but the greatest gift is when I can use my strengths to serve those around me.”



Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy,
2015 U.S. PROFESSOR OF THE YEAR
Published author, 2015 Piper Professor,
American Chemical Society Fellow



CONFERENCE CENTER RIBBON CUTTING

College officials and community leaders cut the ribbon on Collin College's new conference center building on Sept. 3, 2105 at a VIP sneak preview at the Central Park Campus in McKinney. The event took place on the 30th anniversary of the college's first class offered in 1985.



CARY A. ISRAEL HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER RIBBON CUTTING

Three decades of Collin College leadership celebrated the ribbon cutting of the Cary A. Israel Health Sciences Center, a new building on Collin College's Central Park Campus in McKinney. The event took place Jan. 20, 2016, the 30th anniversary of the opening of the college's first campus.



COLLIN COLLEGE REDEDICATES THE JOHN ANTHONY THEATRE

Collin College rededicated the John Anthony Theatre at the Spring Creek Campus in Plano on Jan. 26, 2016 honoring the founding president during the college's 30th anniversary celebration.



Grant provides training, job skills

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The NISGTC consulted with national business leaders to ensure the skills the students were learning in class and practicing in the VLab matched employer needs. The consortium borrowed an idea that Collin College had used in its National Center for Convergence Technology. Four National Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) – one for each of the grant's career fields and made up of business leaders in each field meeting quarterly – co-lead the work with faculty to shape the curricula.

"One of the benefits of business leaders' participation is that Collin College is made aware of what skills industries are seeking so we can work to incorporate them into our curriculum" said Dr. Kihl.

The idea was to make sure the students were "workforce ready" with the knowledge and skills they would need to succeed in the

IT industry and quickly be productive on the job. The teams worked to fill any gaps in the curriculum and assisted in the creation of 107 online courses that reflected skill sets that modern IT workers need. Those courses will remain online as open-source teaching materials at nter.collin.edu.

Of course, landing a job in IT isn't always as simple as learning the technical aspects of the job and earning a degree. BILT members also mentored students, guided virtual internships/externships, helped with résumé writing and mock interviews and used their network of colleagues to help place many program graduates or in some cases hired the grads themselves.

At the same time, Collin College and the other partner institutions hired career coaches to work closely with students on résumé development and interviewing skills, while

also keeping them on track for their certificates and degrees. When a student seemed to be lagging behind, the coach would step in to make sure he or she got the help they needed with IT-specific tutors.

The career coaches also organized IT job fairs, which was where Brandon found his first job in a couple of years. He continued his classes and became Security+ certified and was approached by a recruiter who offered him a job at double his then salary. Brandon has continued to climb the corporate ladder, and he believes the foundation he developed at Collin College has done a lot to help meet his career goals.

"My success has really been because of the schooling, my certification and a lot of things I was able to learn," he said. "I did a lot of independent study, but I learned a lot from my professors at Collin."



4 years at
The University
of Texas at Austin = \$44,240



OR



2 years at
COLLIN COLLEGE
\$2,660 + 2 years at
The University
of Texas at Austin = \$24,780



Special Thanks!

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