

Counting Votes

Election Day outcomes affect the community and college students

On November 6, Americans will flock to the polls to cast their ballots for the commander-in-chief, but very few will return to the ballot box for four more years. Voting today may lack the danger, revelry and fanfare of the country's infancy, but the importance of casting a ballot hasn't faded.

So why has voter turnout, particularly on elections closer to home, faded? That's the question furrowing the brows of leaders and causing political scientists to ponder the future of democracy.

Research points to complaints about voter fatigue and voter apathy, reportedly based on "inconvenience" and frustration with "too many" elections about issues and candidates

they don't like or understand, while others simply surrender and say, "My vote doesn't matter." In our on-demand society, there is no app for that.

"I call that the paradox of voting," said Tyler Young, professor of political science at Collin College referencing the idea that the cost of (or effort) of voting exceeds the benefit and that one's vote does not impact an election.

"At the end of the day, local government means a lot more to you than the federal government. Barack Obama doesn't determine who the principal of the school is," Young said.

School districts are governed and mostly funded locally. Transportation – from fixing the pothole on your street and building new highways, tollways or mass transit – is overseen on several levels from the state down. From gun laws to red-light cameras, most edicts are established on the city or state level. Of course, taxes, spending, budget cuts and services – or the lack thereof – are also determined at local levels by city councils, school boards, college boards and every other commission, board, taskforce, committee and quorum.

Locally, only three percent of registered voters in Collin County voted in the general and special elections last November. That's 13,227 votes from the 423,312 registered voters in a county with a population of more than 800,000. Included on the ballot that day were 10 state constitutional amendments, propositions in McKinney, Plano and other cities, and seats on various boards and councils. State turnout was five percent in a state of more than 25 million people.

In Plano, a city with a population of about 260,000, a little more than 4,700 voters dictated the passage of three propositions, including increasing city council member terms and providing the city council with the power to

appoint judges to the municipal court. Just 1,574 voters in McKinney voted on a proposition expanding city council terms to four years. In a city of 136,000 people, it passed by just 158 votes. A margin of 573 votes determined whether the city of Frisco would revoke a commitment of bond funds for a performing arts center in Collin County.

In the May 2011 general elections, 10 races were decided by 100 or less votes. Seventeen were decided by 200 or less votes. Fifteen races included uncontested candidates.

Clearly, voting does matter, particularly on the state and local levels, whether we choose to participate or not.

Even more tragic is the number of young voters who, in spite of their rights in the 26th amendment, do not vote. Only 16.4 percent of 18-20-year old Americans reported voting in the last Congressional elections.

"The generation that is in college now will have to live with the decisions made today for many years to come, and those should not be made in absentia," said Cary A. Israel, district president of Collin College.

That is why the college created the Center for Scholarly and Civic Engagement. The center teaches college students the power of civic activism and ingrains a lifelong commitment to voting. The center hosts voting registration drives, debate watches, candidate forums and partners with MTV for their "Rock the Vote" campaign.

It's an important time in the student lifecycle because voting is habit-forming. According to the Tufts University's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), "When young people learn the voting process and vote, they are more likely to do so when they are older. So, getting young people to vote early could be key to raising a new generation of voters."

Collin College also volunteered to open campuses as official polling sites to make it easier for students, employees and members of the community to cast their ballots early on campus and avoid standing in line on election day.

"Voting is the responsibility of the citizen," said Dr. Michael McConachie, dean of communication, humanities and social and behavioral sciences at Preston Ridge Campus in Frisco. "I always tell my classes that they've

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Top students rate Collin College Honors Institute as 'experience like no other'

Cameron Woolley's first Collin College Honors Institute course – psychology – was unlike any experience he ever had in a classroom. During this class, he worked on original research and created a 10-page essay that resulted in findings that did not exist in the field at the time. His breakthrough then led to his first experience in publishing.

Excited and unable to shake this memory, Woolley, of Plano, was officially hooked.

According to Honors Institute Director Ryan Rynbrandt, students in the Honors Institute receive a unique and exceptional educational experience. "There is an excitement in the classroom, and the work is engaging and challenging."

Woolley explained that professors in the program "push me one step further than I think I can go, and that is how I learned to challenge my perceived limits and go beyond my comfort zone into new territory. I know that I will be given the tools and motivation to perform the highest level of work I possibly can." *continued on page 3*



FEEDING FRENZY:

Microbiologist helps reduce parasite numbers

It looks like a sweet, innocent, little critter under the microscope. In fact, it resembles a swimming balloon with a smiling face. But don't be fooled. Giardia is a parasite that feeds off humans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Giardia is one of the most frequent causes of waterborne disease (drinking water and recreational water) among humans in the United States." In this world bursting with microbial life, how do you know your disinfectant will kill scary bugs like Giardia? You trust the laboratory skills of people like **Natalie Lukomski**.

Lukomski earned a Collin College associate of science degree in 2003, bachelor of science degrees in microbiology and biology in 2005 and a master's of biology in 2008 from The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). Today, she is a microbiologist/chemist at MicroChem Laboratory Inc.

"We test for disinfectant and antimicrobial efficacy for companies around the world. Companies want to make sure their products will kill a certain percentage of microbes at specific temperatures within a certain exposure time. We also perform product sterility testing," said Lukomski.

Collin College was an obvious choice for Lukomski. Her younger sister and mother both graduated from Collin, and her older sister is currently taking paralegal classes at the college.

"Since I had to pay for my own education, having the option to take quality classes at a reduced cost and live at home really helped me financially. I was not sure I was going to pursue a science degree until I took Professor Cathy Donald-Whitney's biology course. I learned and perfected titration in Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy's class many years ago. I use that skill all the time at work on projects such as hard water analysis. I also learned stoichiometry from Dr. El-Ashmawy, and that was the basis of my research for my master's thesis."

Lukomski was impressed with the quality of the professors at her original alma mater.

"I would definitely recommend Collin College. It is an easier step forward in your education because the class sizes are smaller and the professors are focused on teaching and take time to help you. At a university, a microbiology class can have more than 200 students. If you put a lot of effort into your classes at Collin, you get a lot out of them."

Lukomski enjoyed biology so much that she became a Collin College student assistant and worked in the laboratory at Spring Creek Campus.

"I got my basic lab skills and learned how to pour plates and make solutions and media. It is totally different really doing it than reading about it in books. When I transferred to UTA, I took an environmental microbiology class. My professor offered me the opportunity to work in the lab. He was very impressed that I already had basic lab skills. The foundation I received from Collin College helped with projects he was working on. Later, he offered me a position as a research assistant."

In graduate school Lukomski was studying the microbial aquatic food webs with eukaryotic algae *Ochromonas danica*, which could potentially stimulate environmental conditions such as run off from fertilizers. Today, she dons a lab coat, gloves, goggles, a mask and a face shield to work on BSL2 (biosafety level two) projects such as measuring the number of microbial colonies recovered from endoscopes, which are reprocessed and reused in hospital procedures multiple times each day.

"I've worked with several interesting organisms including *E.coli* O157:H7, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, *Mycobacterium chelonae* isolates, *Mucor plumbeus*, *Eurotium chevalieri*, *Clostridium sporogenes* (very stinky). As long as you have a healthy respect for these organisms, general safety gear is fine," she said.



Natalie Lukomski

Lukomski was selected to work on a special project with Giardia because of her experience with protozoa and her master's thesis, "Carbon, Nitrogen, and Phosphorus Stoichiometry of a Heterotrophic Flagellate."

After a long day in the laboratory working with parasites like Giardia, Lukomski goes home to behemoth, stuffed-animal-like microbes. Her favorites include *Anobium punctatum* (a bookworm), a girly, purple Mono (Epstein-Barr virus) with long eyelashes, which she notes is ideal for a kissing disease and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* with little bud scars on its head, beloved because of her home brewing hobby. She hopes to own a Giardia stuffed animal one day soon.

"I would definitely recommend Collin College. It is an easier step forward in your education because the class sizes are smaller and the professors are focused on teaching and take time to help you. If you put a lot of effort into your classes at Collin, you get a lot out of them."

"I am excited about the Giardia project. Protozoans are very interesting, and this one makes me smile. I love my job, working with a wide variety of microbes and performing new tests all the time. It was Collin College that provided me with a strong biology and chemistry foundation, along with my first hands-on laboratory experience, which allowed me to accomplish so much. I'm very grateful for all my wonderful, insightful professors who challenged me to work hard. I am looking forward to developing new products, like Aldahol High Level Disinfectant, which will soon be distributed worldwide and will help ease people's lives."

Natalie Lukomski

DEGREES

Associate of Science, 2003
Collin College

Bachelor of Science degrees in
Microbiology and Biology, 2005
The University of Texas at Arlington

Master of Biology, 2008
The University of Texas at Arlington

CURRENT POSITION

Microbiologist/chemist
at MicroChem Laboratory Inc.

VISION 2016

Collin College launches new four-year strategic plan

This fall, Collin College is pulling back the curtain to reveal a much-anticipated, new strategic plan known as “Vision 2016.” It began more than a year ago when the college’s Board of Trustees held a retreat to frame a plan that would lead the college into its third decade.

After revisiting the college’s mission and core value (at right), trustees reviewed demographics, budget forecasts, community needs, projections on higher education demand and progress on past initiatives to develop a philosophical foundation for the four-year plan.

“The nation’s economy is going through an era of tremendous change, and higher education must look forward if we want to lead our students and community to prosperity,” said Board of Trustees Chairman Mac Hendricks, of McKinney. “We believe it is important to create a collegiate educational experience that is accessible, meaningful, beneficial and attainable.”

The entire college contributed strategies to the final plan, which was designed to “Inspire learning that will transform lives and enhance communities.” Specifically, the plan details four strategic goals with expected results and targeted actions.

Cary Israel, district president of Collin College, predicts college in the future is going to look very different than it has looked traditionally. “We believe that innovation in 2016 and beyond will challenge the traditional boundaries and rely on partnerships that share areas of excellence in nationwide collaboratives.”

The college has already established some of these collaborative programs. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education awarded Collin College a \$20 million federal grant to train unemployed workers who are changing careers. Six colleges spanning from coast to coast are participating in the grant.

MISSION STATEMENT

Collin College is a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character and challenging the intellect.

CORE VALUES

We have a passion for:
Learning
Service and Involvement
Creativity and Innovation
Academic Excellence
Dignity and Respect
Integrity

Collin College is also a national Center of Excellence in Nursing Education, and was recently awarded a \$4.4 million technology grant from the National Science Foundation partnering with other North Texas colleges and universities as well as colleges in Georgia, Wisconsin, California, Michigan and Florida (See related story, page 4).

“Collin College is definitely an exciting place to be right now,” said Dr. Colleen Smith, who serves as Collin College’s district senior vice president of academic affairs and student development. “The new strategic plan was generated through extensive collaboration across the district beginning with a strong foundational purpose from the Board of Trustees. The college is known for innovation and for staying ahead of the curve because of the many creative and engaged faculty and staff members.”

President Israel summed it up by saying, “In the future, we will be able to do more, reach more people, and improve our community as individuals and as a team. Today, we have been given the opportunity to reinvent ourselves and to truly re-craft our jobs. This is the path of indispensability, and it need not be the road less traveled.”

STRATEGIC GOAL #1:

Improve academic success by implementing strategies for completion.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2:

Provide access to innovative higher education programs that prepare students for constantly changing academic, societal and career/workplace opportunities.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3:

Engage faculty, students and staff in improving a district-wide culture of adherence to the Collin College Core Values.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4:

Enhance the college’s presence in the community by increasing awareness, cultivating relationships, building partnerships and developing resources to respond to current and future needs.

For more information on the Vision 2016 strategic plan, visit www.collin.edu/aboutus/strategic_goals.html.

Top students rate Collin College Honors Institute continued from page 1

Honors Institute Perks

Aside from the support of professors, Honors Institute students gain a competitive edge along with the perk of learning in small classes designed to foster larger discussions.

Additional incentives include an Honors Institute notation on the student’s transcript, the opportunity to publish research and access to special honors transfer programs with The University of Texas at Dallas and Texas Woman’s University – both of which automatically accept students into their honors programs when they graduate with 12 or more credit hours from the Collin College Honors Institute.

“The Honors Institute also looks great on applications for transfer universities, scholarships and jobs,” Professor Rynbrandt added. “Students are in classrooms with highly-credentialed professors who love teaching and classmates who want to tackle problems in creative ways.”

Honor student Alex Fleming concurred, and said she was excited to explore concepts from angles outside normal curriculum.

“My students tell me that they enjoy being in a classroom with other driven, motivated students,” Professor Rynbrandt said.

That is how honor student Merrily Guyer felt. “As a returning student from the workforce, I take my education seriously,” she said. “I wanted to surround myself with other scholars who were striving for the same level of excellence as I was.”

The demand for Honors Institute courses is growing quickly as enrollment in the program increased by nearly 40 percent from spring 2011 to spring 2012.

The growth may be the result of satisfaction from students, like Guyer, who love it so much that they sing its praises. In fact, Guyer and fellow students created a student organization – The Honors Community – to promote the Honors Institute. “I have personally experienced greater participation from peers, more in-depth instruction from professors and opportunities to advance my academic career through Collin College’s Honors Institute,” she said. “Most of the peers I know who have taken honors classes find them incredibly rewarding and fun. In a perfect world, every class would be an Honors Institute class.”

Honors Successes

According to Woolley, Honors Institute courses also show students how to discuss

advanced material with the confidence and polish of an expert. In fact, he credits the program for preparing him to handle the presidency of the Student Government Association at Collin College. Those valuable lessons will help this future-attorney tremendously as he begins a double major this fall in economics and risk management at Southern Methodist University.

“Through Honors Institute courses, I gained new insights into collaborative project management,” Woolley said. “I attribute my success, in part, to the different approach to the learning environment of an honors classroom.”

Collin College students who have at least a 3.5 GPA are eligible for the Honors Institute. Incoming freshmen are also eligible if they have a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher.

“Going through the Honors program is a fantastic experience,” Professor Rynbrandt said. “The work is interactive and based around the students’ own interests, and you get to network with great students and professors. Collin College’s Honors program is an experience like no other.”

For more information about Collin College’s Honors program, visit www.collin.edu/Honors or call 972.881.5120.

Student & Alumni HIGHLIGHTS



Collin College students **Jenna Clayborn**, **Linh Nyuyen**, **Jamie Brown** and **Madalina Negura**, along with faculty members **Kelley Reynolds** and **Julie Boganwright**, represented the college's Respiratory Care program at the Texas Society for **Respiratory Care** convention and took **first place** in the state competition. This marks the second time in the history of the program that Collin College students placed first in the state. All four students will compete in New Orleans at the American Association of Respiratory Care national convention in November.

Collin College was one of five community colleges represented at the **NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars** event at the Johnson Space Center. Students were split into three companies and assigned a project to complete. The projects included the design and construction of a robot, a technical presentation and a final sales presentation. The lead presenters for all three companies were Collin College students, including **Maribeth Ruddell**, **Shawn Shukla** and **Nick Morand**. Ruddell also received the "Scholar of the Week" award, which is given to one student at the end of the event. Also serving major roles within their respective companies were Collin College students **Ben Moore** and **Steven Maggard**.



Shawn Shukla

Student **Darien Lee** was the Southwest Region winner of the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges Student Math League competition. The Collin College team finished second in the competition.

Collin College student and post captain **Ricky Fitzsimmons** helped lead Plano Police Explorer Post 911 to a state championship victory. The 15-member post, sponsored by the Plano Police Department, beat 128 teams to win the state title for the fourth time in the past five years. Post 911 also named Collin College student **Drew Rothenberger** its "Rookie of the Year."



Alessandra Pickerill



Hondo Webb



Jenny Cecotti

Three Collin College athletes have received Academic Student-Athlete Awards from the National Junior College Athletic Association. **Alessandra Pickerill** (women's tennis) was given the Pinnacle Award for Academic Excellence for maintaining a 4.0 grade point average. **Hondo Webb** (men's basketball) and **Jenny Cecotti** (women's tennis) were given the Exemplary Academic Achievement for maintaining a 3.6-3.79 grade point average.

Student **Dylan Rafaty** published a book titled *Occupy Special Education – Children Should be Seen and Heard*. The book is part memoir and commentary about Rafaty's educational experience from the perspective of a special education student.

Student **Marcus Shanks** participated in the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center's 10-week Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program. Shanks learned and worked in UT Southwestern's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, one of the premier biomedical research institutes in the nation. More than 1,000 students applied for the SURF program and only 85 were chosen this year. Shanks plans to transfer to The University of Texas at Dallas and eventually become a researcher in the biomedical field specializing in neuroscience.



Marcus Shanks

Ralph Woods, student, placed second in Pearson Publishing's National Writing Rewards Contest for his essay titled "The Rise of Social Media: The Downfall of Progress" and received a \$500 prize. For Woods' recognition, professor of developmental writing **Marti Miles-Rosenfield** received an honorarium, which she donated to the English-as-a-Second-Language Excellence Fund.



Laurel Cook

Collin College's chapter of **Psi Beta** psychology honor society has earned the 2011-2012 Chapter Excellence Award from Psi Beta national. The chapter also received honorable mention for the Psi Beta Community Service Award 2012 and past president **Laurel Cook** was selected to receive the Psi Beta Community Service Award for 2012 for her work with the Angel Tree project.



Faculty & Staff HIGHLIGHTS

The *Dallas Business Journal* and Metroplex Technology Business Council named the Collin College **engineering and technology department** a finalist for the **Tech Titans Technology Advocate Award**. Nominated by the Frisco Economic Development Corporation, the award recognizes a local technology champion for outstanding leadership in assisting, advancing or accelerating the performance of technology companies and/or the technology community.

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting presented the "Merit Award" to Collin College's **surgical technology program** for the second year in a row. The honor was a tribute to Collin College's 100 percent pass rate on the Certified Surgical Technologist examination. Equally impressive is **the percentage of Collin College surgical technology graduates who landed jobs: 100 percent!**

Collin College has received the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). GFOA standards require that budget documents must be proficient in four categories to be eligible for the award; the budget serves as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide, and a communications device.



Dr. Cary A. Israel

Cary Israel, district president, published an article titled "Job Emergence in an Age of Fusion" in the Winter 2011-12 edition of *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*. President Israel was also named to the Texas Hall of Honor for Distinguished Chief Executive Officers by Phi Theta Kappa honor society.



Dr. Istvan Csato

Jennifer Brooks, professor of psychology, was named the Faculty Advisor of the Year by Psi Beta national psychology honor society.

Dr. Istvan Csato, professor of geology, will publish "A Three-Dimensional Stratigraphic Model for the Messinian Crisis in the Pannonian Basin, Eastern Hungary" in *Basin Research*.



Jennifer Brooks



Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy

Dr. Amina El-Ashmawy, professor of chemistry, was invited to serve as a member of the new American Chemical Society's Two-Year College Advisory Board and serve as chair of the board for an extended one-year term.

Candace Cooper, professor of developmental English, published the book *Writing to the Prompt: A Guide to Answering Writing Prompts Effectively*. Students used this book at the new Developmental Writing Boot Camp.

Candace Eldridge, professor of speech communication, was elected to serve on Phi Theta Kappa's Alumni Advisory Council. The Alumni Advisory Council is comprised of Phi Theta Kappa alumni, both appointed by the Phi Theta Kappa executive director and elected each year by alumni attending the annual convention. Eldridge was inducted into the Alpha Mu Tau Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa when she attended Collin College and is a former Texas Regional Officer and International Officer candidate.



Dallie Clark

Pink, a collection of poems by professor of humanities **Dallie Clark**, will be published by Finishing Line Press in October.

Collin College's Dance Department returned from the American College Dance Festival Association South Central Region festival with a number of honors. Professor **Tiffanee Arnold's** piece, "Cleansing," was selected for the festival's Gala Concert, which marked the seventh time a work from Collin College has been chosen for this prestigious honor and the fifth for Arnold. Collin College was one of nine colleges chosen for the Gala Concert.

John R. Lundberg, professor of history, published *Granbury's Texas Brigade* about Confederate Brigadier General Hiram B. Granbury. Lundberg used letters, diaries and regimental documents to provide the perspectives of the soldiers throughout the battle.

The Harry Ransom Center, the arts and humanities research facility at The University of Texas at Austin, acquired a photograph by **Byrd Williams**, professor of photography, along with one photograph from his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. The four pieces — "Young Engineer" (1906), "B Hall" (1905), "Woman Downtown" (1937), and "Mary's Room Above the Daiches" (2011) — are representative of the "whole dynamic of the [Williams] family," said Ransom senior research curator



Byrd Williams

Roy Flukinger. Williams is a fourth-generation photographer. His photograph "Mary's Room" is a 2011 collaboration with **Elizabeth Mellott**, professor of photography.

Lisa Vasquez, vice president, public relations and college development, was elected to the Council of Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) District 4 Board of Directors for a two-year term.

Bobbie Long, executive director at the Central Park Campus library, was asked to participate on the National Institute of Health and National Library of Medicine Task Force focusing on outreach to community colleges. Long is one of two community college library directors asked to be involved in the project, a national initiative for the years 2011-16 from the National Library of Medicine working through the Regional Medical Libraries.



Bobbie Long

Dani Day, associate vice president for Teaching and Learning, was elected to serve as president of the Texas Community College Instructional Administrators board of directors.



Dani Day

Nasreen Ahmad, research analyst for the Institutional Research Office, presented a paper titled "A Predictive Model of Why Students Leave College" at the 49th annual Forum of Association of Institutional Research in June.

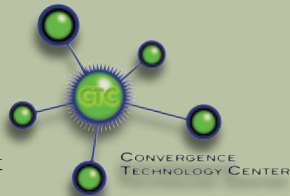


Nasreen Ahmad

Amy Lenhart, counselor, was quoted in a story in *Monitor on Psychology* from the American Psychological Society about mental health services at community colleges.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded a \$4.4 million grant to the **National Convergence Technology Center** at Collin College. This grant extends through July 2016 and is the fifth Advanced Technological Education grant awarded to Collin College since 1999. Founded in 2004, the National Convergence Technology Center is a partnership between Collin College and seven colleges and universities including El Centro College; the University of North Texas; Florida State College, Jacksonville, Fla.; Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton, Wis.; Lansing Community College, Lansing, Mich.; Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, Calif.; and Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Ga.

Together, Collin College and its partners will collaborate to develop program improvements to meet workforce needs by equipping faculty to teach emerging technologies demanded by the workforce, furnishing technology-enabled instructional support systems to assist colleges in launching convergence programs, increasing the number of completers with certificates and degrees ready to meet workforce needs and building capacity by mentoring colleges nationwide in implementing new programs in convergence technology.



Around the clock

Weekend College keeps time on student's side



Tim Jackson

For Tim Jackson, it was a matter of time. He did not have enough of it, and he needed more to finish a college degree.

Working full time, the 29-year-old stumbled upon Weekend College at Collin College. Things fell into place.

"I was finishing up my associate's degree, and I needed those classes to graduate," Jackson said. "I was working Monday through Friday, and the only time to take classes was the weekend. It really worked out for my schedule."

Weekend College has become one of Collin College's most popular alternatives for attaining a degree. In 2008, there were 3,994 students enrolled in Weekend College. By the end of 2011, enrollment jumped to 6,165 students coming to classes on the weekend.

"Weekend College aligns closely with the community-centered mission of Collin College," said Dr. David Green, director of Weekend College. "Most Weekend College students are highly motivated and committed to completing courses, in addition to balancing a full schedule of other activities."

The brutal truth is that there are simply not enough hours in the day for most working adults – no matter how many jobs or children he or she is trying to juggle – to earn a degree. Collin College paves many avenues for those individuals to achieve their goals and dodge the roadblocks keeping them out of college.

Dr. Green said Weekend College's student body includes single or stay-at-home parents and those wanting to re-enter the job market as well as students seeking to accelerate their academic progress or those anticipating a career change.

"The Weekend College student population is a representative cross section of Collin College students," Dr. Green said. "It is not unusual to have students who want to complete a degree in a shorter time frame take courses in Weekend College as well as those who are working full time or changing careers."

Jackson, during the summer of 2012, took two classes on Saturday for about a 10-week period. Added up, the classes took eight hours a day, but Jackson said that the format enhanced what he learned from the courses.

"We do cover a lot," Jackson said. "But it has been easier for me especially coming back to school. It's more of a relaxed environment, and we spend the time wisely. Everyone is on board. We don't waste a lot of time. Being a four-hour class, we have more time to review and go over things that we didn't quite grasp."

Weekend College is offered in two distinct formats depending on the individual's schedule or comfort. The standard 16-week format meets once a week on Friday evenings, Saturday or Sunday. The express block offers a three-or eight-week format on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Students can complete their core curriculum and earn an associate of arts or science degree through Weekend College.

Core classes completed on the weekend can be transferred to a university if the student chooses to continue his or her journey. There also are plans to add tracks for certificates and marketable skills achievement awards.

Jackson transferred to The University of Texas at Dallas this fall with plans to earn a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies and continue his career in real estate. The veteran is using the GI Bill to pay his way through higher education.

"You can sacrifice a Saturday for a couple of weeks to get what needs to get done," Jackson said.

Visit www.collin.edu/academics/weekendcollege to learn more. Call the Weekend College office at 972.881.5801 or email weekendcollege@collin.edu for more information.



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been raised with the idea that if you don't vote, you can't complain. Your complaining is a freedom of speech. But I follow up with the idea that if you do complain, doesn't it carry more weight if you vote? When candidates are winning with a majority of the vote most of the time, the conclusion is that people are satisfied with the job they are doing."

The impact of elections and elected officials on students and higher education itself is colossal. First and foremost, funding decisions are in the hands of federal and state elected officials. Whether in terms of state appropriation or Pell Grants, the cost of higher education continues to headline any rhetoric concerning candidates' stance on colleges and universities.

"Higher education opportunity is going to be a very big issue in the fall campaign both for the presidential and localized levels of government," said David Baime, vice president for government relations for the American Association of Community Colleges. "College has become a higher and higher priority for Americans. People want to know how candidates look at this issue. College students and their ability to access and complete college are imminently linked to what the federal government does. A lot of broader budget issues – taxes, entitlements, Medicare, Medicaid, tax cuts, etc. – impact the funding available for college students. There's one federal government and one federal budget. The truth of the matter is, there's not a lot of money going directly to undergraduate institutions."

Legislation exists that would cut about \$170 million in Pell Grants in the next decade, the largest source of federal financial aid.

"About 10 million students are getting Pell Grants, and more students take out loans every year. I think for self-interest, if nothing else, this election season is pretty darn important for college students," Baime said.

In 2011-12, \$24.4 million in Pell Grants were awarded to Collin College students. However, when Pell Grants disappear, students turn to loans instead.

Nationwide, student loan debt has surpassed credit card debt. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the nationwide total automobile loan balance is \$730 million. The total credit card balance is \$693 million. The total student loan balance is \$870 million, and about 40 percent of all student loan debt is owed by Americans under the age of 30.

However, money is just the tip of the civic engagement iceberg. Recent decisions made in Austin that tie directly to life on campus in Collin County range from whether to allow concealed handguns on campuses, which failed, to a law requiring all new college or university students to get a meningitis vaccination before registering for class, which passed.

Ironically, the movement to lower the voting age to 18 evolved after the era of 1960s campus activism leading up to the Vietnam War. Young Americans argued that if they were old enough to be drafted and sent into combat overseas at 18, then they were mature enough to vote. Today, members of the military and their spouses vote at much higher rates than the general public, but 18-year-olds do not.

"Active-duty troops and senior citizens vote for a reason—because they know they have 'skin in the game.' We all do, and there are too many reasons to let an election pass without voicing our opinions on public policy," said President Israel. "Collin College has the lowest tuition in the state of Texas, but nearly 26,000 students applied for financial aid. There are 53,000 students annually at Collin College, and they stand to be a powerful voice at the poll. Campus activism may have changed since the 60s and 70s, but students and our communities are no less committed to what is right."

The act of voting – and voting thoughtfully – is the most basic tenet of civic engagement. A broad swath of informed and motivated citizens is the catalyst for a government by and for the people.

For information about the upcoming elections, polling places and more, visit www.co.collin.tx.us/elections. For more information about the Center for Scholarly and Civic Engagement, visit www.collin.edu/academics/csce. To vote early on campus, see details in "Ballot Box Buzz" on page 6.



Did you KNOW?

By the numbers:

Why YOUR VOTE Matters

823,981

Estimated population of Collin County



423,312

Registered voters in Collin County



3%

Percentage of voters who cast a ballot in November 2011 elections.




158


Number of votes that passed a measure extending terms for McKinney City Council to four years





Ballot Box BUZZ

Did you know that you can vote on campus at Collin College? Avoid the lines on election day and vote early at any of these four campuses:

 **Central Park Campus,**
1st Floor, C Wing
2200 W. University Drive
McKinney, TX 75071

 **Preston Ridge Campus,**
University Hall
9700 Wade Boulevard
Frisco, TX 75035

 **Spring Creek Campus,**
atrium
2800 E. Spring Creek Parkway
Plano, TX 75074

 **Collin Higher Education Center,**
atrium/lobby
Northeast corner Hwy. 121 and U.S. 75
3452 Spur 399
McKinney, TX 75069

For more info, call 972.881.5927.

Policy issues affected by your vote:



STUDENT ACTIVISM

Last fall and spring, Collin College students volunteered for the following different community organizations:

Adam's Animals
American Cancer Society
Baal Dan, India
Blue Star Mothers
Boys and Girls Club, Frisco
Carter Blood Care & Plano
Sunrise Rotary
Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County
Children's Medical Center, Dallas

City of Frisco
City of Plano
C.I.T.Y. House, Plano
Community Children
Foreman Elementary School, Plano/
Chinese Institute of Engineers
Homeless in Dallas
Hope's Door
International Rescue Committee
Lakeside Community Theater

Malaria Foundation
Mathews Elementary, Plano
North Texas Food Bank
Overseas Soldiers
Plano Children's Clinic
Rasor Elementary, Plano
Samaritan Inn, McKinney
Soldiers' Angels Network
SOS Children's Village

Spina Bifida Association
Sunrise Senior Living, Plano
Susan G. Komen
Veterans of Plano
Vietnam Children
Webb Elementary, McKinney
Wounded Warrior Project

Organizations listed include fall 2011 and spring 2012 student volunteer locations.

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