

OPPORTUNITY

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NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

Pledge by Feb. 28 for Promise @ San Jac Scholarship

High school seniors who live in San Jacinto College's taxing district have until Feb. 28, 2026, to pledge for the Promise @ San Jac Scholarship.

This scholarship ensures all in-district high school graduates — including those in portions of Clear Creek, Pearland, and Humble ISDs, as well as all of Channelview, Deer Park,

Galena Park, La Porte, Pasadena, and Sheldon ISDs — can earn a workforce credential or an associate degree with 100% of their tuition, books, and supplies covered.

The scholarship doesn't have any GPA or financial restrictions, meaning all in-district graduating seniors qualify.

Other deadlines for future Promise Scholars to remember include:

- **April 30, 2026:** Complete and submit the FAFSA or TASFA.
- **June 30, 2026:** Complete all enrollment steps and register for fall classes.

Visit sanjac.edu/promise to learn more about the scholarship and enrollment and eligibility requirements.

Expos introduce local youth to stellar STEM

Local kids experienced astronomically engaging science, technology, engineering, and math with hands-on demos and experiments at San Jacinto College's North, Central, and South Campuses this past fall.

Once again, San Jac and Communities in Schools of Southeast Harris and Brazoria County partnered to spotlight STEM education and careers for children and family members from Communities in Schools' afterschool programs.

The three STEM expos — themed "Out of This World" — welcomed more than 1,700 attendees.

San Jac students, faculty, and staff ran STEM, petrochemical, and health science booths. Exhibits ranged from robotics demos and CPR stations to synthetic human cadavers and dissection tables.

Scan the QR code to view the **STEM Expo photo album**.



Photos by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
Jan. 12	Spring Term Begins		
Jan. 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	Closed	All campuses and online
Jan. 26	Late Start Term Begins		
Feb. 5	College Community Day		No day or evening classes
Feb. 6-7	Artists for Hope	7 p.m.	South Campus, Flickinger Fine Arts Center, Proscenium Theatre (S15.151) No non-instructional activity

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

CAR CRAZY: ALUMNUS' JOURNEY FROM GARAGE TO GENERAL MANAGER

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Lenny Gordon has been crazy about cars since childhood, when he shadowed his dad at a car dealership.

As a teen, Gordon was tinkering under the hood of his own Chevy Camaro and interning at Monument Chevrolet through a high school auto tech program. It was Monument's owner, Carroll Smith, who encouraged him to continue his studies at San Jacinto College.

The College's General Motors Automotive Service Education Program alternated between classes and dealership internship hours. The fast pace gave Gordon plenty of variety and hands-on practice. Dave Norman, the program director, also proved to be a great mentor.

"He went out of his way to make sure everyone felt welcome," Gordon said. "He was always encouraging and taking extra time to help us."

After completing his Associate of Applied Science in 2006, Gordon earned a bachelor's degree in general business administration and management from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. He continued working at Monument, where Smith — knowing his goal to become a general manager — rotated him through every department.

At the service counter, Gordon learned how to anticipate customers' needs and turn a bad experience into a positive one. His most pivotal moment was transitioning from service to sales, from rebuilding cars to building relationships.

"My dad had always been in service," he said. "That's all I ever knew. I had no idea how to do sales — I was scared and nervous."

Gordon not only succeeded in



Photos by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

commercial and retail sales but built lasting customer relationships along the way.

In 2019, he transferred to Norman Frede Chevrolet in Clear Lake, which became Fertitta Chevrolet in 2024. Now as general manager, he wants Fertitta not only to become the biggest Chevy dealership in Houston but to lead the industry with a hospitality emphasis.

"We want the experience, regardless of the service, to be like none other before," he said.

What does hospitality look like at a dealership? It could be a service technician visiting customers' homes to change oil. Or Uber dropping off customers at the mall while vehicles are getting serviced.

Under Gordon's leadership, Fertitta boasts a 4.7 out of 5 Google

rating, one of the highest for a Texas dealership. More than seeing the dealership grow, though, he enjoys cultivating his team and taking on the next generation of San Jac auto technician students as interns.

At 17, Gordon determined to become a general manager and never looked back. Today, he focuses on growing not just the dealership but the people.

"I love seeing the success of people below me," he said. "I love seeing people buy their first car, buy their first house, get married, and have kids. Set your goals early and set them high. Every day strive to get one step closer to that goal."

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac's **auto technology programs.**



'MAGIC BOOK BUS' EXPANDS READING CULTURE

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Climb on the Magic Book Bus! San Jacinto College North Campus English professors Dr. Courtnee Fenner and Nikkol Baker took a cue from the popular 90s-era book and TV series to create an out-of-this-world literary experience for their students.

In the "Magic School Bus," Ms. Frizzle and her students take field trips across time and space to dive into science. In Fenner and Baker's reimagining, 32 San Jac students from English 1301 classes boarded their own "magic" charter bus Oct. 15 for a day-long adventure to literary and cultural spaces throughout Houston. The trip was funded through a San Jacinto College Foundation Student Success Initiative grant.

Students explored the Institute of Hispanic Culture, Brazos

Bookstore, and Contemporary Art Museum. Along the way, they collected books to start their own home libraries.

What does it take to turn non-readers into bookworms? With declining literacy rates across Texas and the U.S., Fenner and Baker decided to take students beyond northeast Houston, which has few bookstores or literary institutions.

"Getting exposed to the reading culture of San Jac and Houston can be the first step in establishing new literary and intellectual practices for students," Fenner said.

Beyond the field trip, the project included semester-long activities — with students touring the North Campus library, learning about San Jac's literary magazine "Accents," participating in "Power of the Pen" writing events, and signing up for a public library card.



Photos by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

PHYSICS PROFESSOR EMPOWERS STUDENTS THROUGH RESEARCH

By **Neesha Hosein**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Since 2018, physics professor Dr. Madhu Gyawali has worked to build a “research culture” at San Jacinto College South Campus — an effort driven by his passion for science and student success.

For Gyawali, student involvement starts on the first day of class.

“After I explain my syllabus, I spend about half an hour discussing research opportunities and their impacts on students’ future studies and careers, including scholarship benefits,” he said. “I show ways they can be at the head of the line for jobs by adding something extra to their resume.”

Research group offers skill building

In groups of three or four, students learn to present, create posters, co-author articles, collect data, and develop abstract concepts and methodologies.

“Minimal participation involves making posters focused on atmospheric phenomena such as nitrogen dioxide and ozone measured by the College’s Pandora Spectrometer,” Gyawali said. “This teaches presentation and teamwork.”

The next level is writing an article for a magazine, followed by preparing a peer-reviewed article for academic journals. Students share findings and assign responsibilities, building leadership skills.

Participation requires motivation

“Only the motivated can do this,” Gyawali said. “They must develop skills in software

like Python and Jupyter Notebook, cutting-edge technologies used in data sharing. They also practice statistical analysis, graphing, and data visualization.”

He encourages students to find their niche.

“Some may want to write; some prefer to process data,” he said. “If someone is good at design, they take that task. It’s about sharing creativity in a group.”

Dentist and San Jac alumnus Dr. Arjang Geramifard said Gyawali’s mentorship helped shape his future.

“Dr. Gyawali is very passionate, and he does everything from the bottom of his heart,” Geramifard said. “His dedication is something you learn from.”

Geramifard won first place at the San Jac Undergraduate Research Symposium in 2019.

“We were the last people to leave San Jac that day,” he said. “He coached me step by step — how to begin, where the peak of the research was, how to present it. His dedication never stopped.”

Beyond San Jac

Gyawali’s dedication has expanded his collaboration to six community colleges across the U.S. and research partners abroad. A NASA partnership, built on the Pandora Spectrometer research he leads as principal investigator, placed San Jac among a network of 160 institutions. This made San Jac the first community college in the 250-site NASA/European Space Agency global air quality network, from which guest speakers often inspire students via Zoom.

Most of Gyawali’s research efforts are voluntary, including weekends, and he often funds projects himself as he considers the outcome worth it.

“Publishing a peer-reviewed article without funding is a challenge, but I’m managing because I have very good collaborations outside of the College,” he said. “Since coming to San Jac, I have published 11 peer-reviewed articles, and four of them included student

participation.”

Geramifard said research opened doors, sparking interest from potential employers.

“When you’re getting involved in research, it’s a gateway toward a different world,” he said. “I’ll call it an internship toward the real world. Research teaches you how to learn by yourself, which is a valuable skill.”

Before joining San Jac, Gyawali taught in Nepal, where hundreds of his students started STEM careers in medicine and engineering, many of whom shared with him that their research experience gave them a boost.

“Students remember the impact we made, and that is my motivation, something I want to continue doing at San Jac,” he said.

Gyawali, in a collaborative project with

San Jac physics professor Dr. Andrew Whitley and 10 students, recently published the paper “Undergraduate Research at San Jac: A High-Impact Practical Case at a Two-Year Institution.” The paper highlights lessons learned, sharing their success story as a model for other institutions.

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



Photo courtesy of Madhu Gyawali



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Photo by San Jacinto College

FROM HOOPS TO HARBOR: RIGGS FINDS CALLING AT SEA

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Michael Riggs never expected to trade shooting hoops for throwing line. But when professional mariners spoke at his high school, he discovered a path that would change his future.

Growing up in Houston's south side, Riggs entered Jack Yates High School with his sights on basketball. That changed after meeting industry representatives who spoke about job security, competitive pay, and the variety of careers at sea.

"I knew people worked on boats, but I didn't know the variety of jobs," he said. "You can make a great living out of it. There are so many opportunities available."

Riggs joined a maritime magnet program and visited San Jacinto College's Maritime Campus for the first time during a field day, practicing line throwing and climbing into a life raft.

After graduating in 2022, he briefly tried another field before returning to the Maritime Campus in 2024. Touring the simulators and meeting Coast Guard-approved instructors confirmed his decision. The promise of immediate job placement after graduation sealed the deal.

"That drew my attention," he said. "I can start working now and worry about other stuff later."

Pursuing the right field was one thing. Relearning how to study was another. When Riggs passed all but two of his first five Coast Guard certification tests, he considered giving up.

"You've come too far," he reminded himself. "You can't quit."

On his second try, Riggs succeeded. He now holds multiple Coast Guard certifications along with his merchant mariner credential. This past summer, he interned with G&H Towing on a harbor tug, where he learned the value

of asking questions, paying attention to details, and staying busy.

"Is there anything else I can do to help?" he often asked the captain.

Now on track to graduate in summer 2026 with his maritime transportation Associate of Applied Science, Riggs sees his future on the water — whether aboard tanker ships, harbor tugs, or eventually the U.S. Coast Guard.

His story reflects what the Maritime Campus does best: helping students find purpose and leave ready to excel.

"I don't see myself doing anything else, to be honest," he said. "You can make it out here. You just have to put the time in and be dedicated."



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

Maritime Campus

San Jacinto College's Maritime Campus is a Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education. Students graduate ready for entry-level positions or advancement in current careers on all types of ships.

Located on the Port of Houston, the 45,000-square-foot campus includes high-tech navigation simulators and training and industry docks.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the **maritime program**.



Photo by San Jacinto College

THIS MONTH *IN* SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook

🎓 Celebrating a proud milestone in the surgical technology program. This month, we are highlighting a special moment for the Allied Health Science Department. The August 2025 cohort marks the first graduating class under the leadership of Samantha Harrell, who recently became the program director. The surgical technology team continues to lead with care, collaboration, and a strong commitment to excellence in health care education. Congratulations to the students, faculty, and leadership on this important achievement.



70 Reactions | 5 Comments

5,440 Impressions | 1,192 Engagements

Instagram

🐾 Online furry buddies make the long days so much better. Happy #NationalCatDay #sanjacintocollege #collegelife



323 Likes | 8,257 Impressions | 384 Engagements

LinkedIn

San Jac shares “A Raven’s Journey” at the 2025 State of the College! 🦉 This year’s event spotlighted the journeys of our amazing students, faculty, staff, and alumni, each one showing the power of education and community. A special thank-you to our Chancellor for her continued leadership and heartfelt commitment to the San Jacinto College community. Her passion for education and service was felt by everyone in the room. We are proud of the work happening every day at San Jac and the people who make it possible.



78 Reactions | 118 Post-Link Clicks

4,165 Impressions | 202 Engagements

YOUR GOALS. YOUR COLLEGE.



SAN JACINTO COLLEGESM

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

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VISION & MISSION



Vision — Together with our community members and business and industry partners, San Jacinto College sets the standard for educational excellence, economic growth, and social mobility characterized by innovation and responsiveness.

Mission — We change lives through education, community engagement, and partnerships.

SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS



A gift to the San Jacinto College Foundation transforms lives, enriches our community, and provides tomorrow's community leaders. For more than 25 years, the Foundation has helped thousands of students reach their goals. Our former students and graduates have filled vital roles in hospitals, classrooms, executive offices, manufacturing plants, and laboratories across our region and beyond. They have also won the World Series and NBA championships, starred in major motion pictures, and created major theatrical productions. Help our students today with the gift of education. Contact the San Jacinto College Foundation at 281-998-6104 or visit sanjac.edu/foundation.

COMMUNITY IMPACT



Surrounded by monuments of history, evolving industries, maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has served the people of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. The College is ranked second in the nation among more than 1,100 community colleges, as designated by the Aspen Institute and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution that spans five campuses, plus an online college, San Jacinto College serves approximately 45,000 credit and non-credit students annually. It offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce. The College is fiscally sound, holding bond ratings of AA+ by Standard & Poor's and Aa2 by Moody's.

For more information about San Jacinto College, visit sanjac.edu.