

# OPPORTUNITY

# NEWS



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# NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

## TSTA-AE club earns state honors

San Jacinto College education professor Dr. Judith Maima Skeele is the advisor of the Texas State Teachers Association-Aspiring Educators at the Central Campus. On March 1-3, together with seven students, the group attended the state conference in San Marcos.

The team brought home many honors, including the local chapter of excellence award, the best digital scrapbook, and the best T-shirt at the conference.

Maima Skeele received the outstanding advisor award, and officer Elizabeth Morales was elected as district secretary. In addition, four officers were elected as state delegates and attended the House of Delegates in Frisco, Texas, in April.

In June, advisors Dr. Stephanie Potter and Maima Skeele will accompany two students to the national conference in Philadelphia. Maima Skeele said the San Jac TSTA chapter is committed to encouraging and equipping future educators of excellence.

## Ravens baseball celebrates fourth annual Challenger Day

The San Jacinto College Ravens baseball team partnered with the North Shore Little League Challenger Division to commemorate its fourth annual Challenger Day on March 9. The day was celebrated by fans of the Challenger Division and Ravens alike, with special guest Lee Brown from the North Shore Rotary Club.

The local Challenger Division started



Photo by Judith Maima Skeele, San Jacinto College

seven years ago as part of the national Little League Challenger Program. The division enables boys and girls with physical and mental challenges, ages 4-18 or up to 22 if still enrolled in high school, to enjoy baseball along with millions of other children who participate in the sport. More than 30,000 athletes participate in 950 Challenger programs worldwide.

The Ravens and the Blinn College Buccaneers acted as buddies during the game. The buddies assist the



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

## Flock to the Block draws crowd

San Jacinto College hosted Flock to the Block at the Central Campus on Saturday, April 20.

More than 700 attendees enjoyed fun and food while learning more about the College and its valuable resources. From bounce houses and kids' games to interactive exhibits and informative booths, local families and prospective students engaged with the College community, asked questions, and enjoyed the campus.

View Flock to the Block photos at [bit.ly/Flock-to-Block-2024](https://bit.ly/Flock-to-Block-2024).



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

Challenger players on the field as needed. Whenever possible, players bat and make plays themselves.

“The Challenger event always significantly impacts our athletes — maybe even more than the children we support,” said Kory Koehler, assistant baseball coach. “They are greatly moved, and it’s an honor to represent our College in a way that gives back to our community.”

See more photos at [bit.ly/Challenger-Day-2024](https://bit.ly/Challenger-Day-2024).

# FROM YAWNING IN BIOLOGY TO LAUNCHING NEW BIOTECH PROGRAM

By Courtney Morris  
San Jacinto College

STEM was the last box Kevin Rodriguez would have checked on a career assessment. Science seemed linked to yawning.

In Rodriguez's high school biology class, handouts replaced hands-on experiments. It wasn't until five years after high school that Rodriguez changed his thinking.

The epiphany came from the unlikely place: a TV series. Stunning visual aids in "The Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey" captured his attention.

"You take a step back and realize there's a lot more," Rodriguez said. "I knew I wanted to go into science after that."

Today, the San Jacinto College alumnus no longer thinks science is boring or meant for smarter people. In fact, he teaches in the College's newest STEM program: biomanufacturing technology.

## Taking one giant leap

While enrolling at San Jac might have seemed a small step for some, it was a giant leap for the 23-year-old Rodriguez in 2014.

The former straight-C student had to take remedial classes and learn how to study. In several classes, he scraped by without textbooks, unable to afford them. Juggling work, family, and full-time classes felt like an "uphill battle."

The turning point came after Rodriguez won biology and chemistry department scholarships through the San

Jacinto College Foundation. Tears welled up as he read the award email. No more holding back.

"You feel like you belong — you're validated," he said. "This is the moment where it's up to you. No one cares where you came from, what grades you made in high school. What can you do now?"

## Building research resume

After the scholarships came more opportunities. Rodriguez stumbled across a flyer for the CURE program, the University of Iowa Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences.

In summer 2017, he numbered among San Jac's first three students pursuing cancer research at CURE.

"That was the first time I held a pipet and did my own experiments," he said. "It was like being without training wheels. I learned about cell culture and all the reading that research takes."

Rodriguez then leveraged his research experience and a conference presentation to land a Baylor College of Medicine internship, where he did neuroblastoma research for two summers.

## Returning to San Jac

After graduating with a life science associate degree in spring 2018, Rodriguez earned a bachelor's degree in biology. He then helped produce cancer therapies at two biotechnology companies.

In 2023, Dr. Christopher Wild, San Jac's associate vice chancellor of biotechnology, approached the alumnus

about an advisory committee for the new biomanufacturing technology program. He also needed instructors.

The timing was perfect. Not only had Rodriguez always wanted to teach at San Jac, but his company was being bought out.

"I have a love for this College," he said. "It changed my life."

In January 2024, Rodriguez joined San Jac. The biomanufacturing technology program offers onboarding training and, beginning this fall, an Associate of Applied Science degree at the South Campus. In 2025, the Center for Biotechnology will open at the Generation Park Campus.

The program trains those who want to help patients behind the scenes — no needles or blood.

"There's a gap between the Ph.D. scientist designing the drugs and the doctor administering the therapies," Rodriguez said. "That's where we come in, manufacturing those therapies and drugs."

He compares biotechnology to process technology, involving fundamental science while still being "incredibly accessible."

"You can troubleshoot problems, but you don't need a Ph.D. level of understanding," he said. "It sounds science-y, but it's not as daunting as it might seem."

## No holding back

Gone are the days of yawning in high school biology. Now Rodriguez has single-minded focus: training others to produce life-saving therapies.

Ten years ago, San Jac helped him drop self-doubt and seize opportunities. Today, he's helping others pursue brighter futures too.

"There's no one checking your IQ at the door — no one asking for your family history," he said. "The only thing holding you back is yourself."

Scan the QR code to learn more about the biomanufacturing technology program.



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

# BSN PROGRAM TAKES YOUR NURSING CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

**By Dr. Ardette Creeks and Dr. Carliss Ramos**

SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

In fall 2020, San Jacinto College launched its hybrid Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-to-BSN) program with one faculty member. Much has changed since then. Not only were health care workers toiling on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, but more than half of San Jac's first BSN students were in nurse residencies after completing associate degrees.

Today, San Jac's BSN program is 100% online. Of its 65 graduates, 21% have landed more advanced nursing roles, and 8% are pursuing master's programs.

The BSN program answers the needs of both industry and working registered nurses. Top health care organizations advocate for entry-level nurses to hold BSN degrees, and many health care institutions prefer BSN-prepared nurses for leadership, specialized, and research roles. Meanwhile, most new nurses start with an associate degree or nursing diploma so they can earn a paycheck before continuing their education.

San Jac helps fill the nursing shortage while offering affordability and flexibility through multiple entry points into the nursing field — up to the BSN degree. Thanks to the BSN program, working RNs can maintain their income while getting solid leadership training to advance their careers.

Why choose San Jac's BSN program? Students enjoy smaller class sizes, an easier application process, and a lower cost than a university — while learning from a nationally accredited program and college with a six-decade history of nursing success.

## Who are San Jac's BSN graduates?

San Jac's BSN students work everywhere — from acute hospital settings, rehabilitation centers, drug/alcohol dependency clinics, and dialysis

centers to school districts. Most seek either new management roles or higher pay and career advancement under their current employers.

After completing her associate degree in nursing and working as a clinical inpatient nurse for seven years, Kelli Sartin became a nurse educator in San Jac's vocational nursing program. Then, to advance her leadership skills, she enrolled in a university BSN program.

When Sartin took a break to care for her terminally ill mother, she learned she couldn't pick up where she'd left off at the university. Instead, she ended up in San Jac's BSN program — learning where she worked. Since earning her BSN in fall 2023, she encourages her own nursing students to enroll in the program.

"If I can do it, so can you," Sartin said.

In 2021, Kiri Rohne enrolled in the BSN program after completing San Jac's

certified nurse aide, vocational nurse, and LVN-to-RN transition nursing programs. Once living out of her car, Rohne now works as a board-certified cardiovascular nurse at HCA Health Care Clear Lake Heart Hospital. No longer does she worry about a steady paycheck or a reliable roof.

"I'm proud of my story and how hard I fought to get here," Rohne said. "When people ask me where I graduated, I'm proud to say San Jacinto College."

## Why should you apply?

San Jac's 100% online BSN program allows students to learn from where they are. The learner-centric BSN program follows an eight-week course model, which builds on previous education and experience. Professors include Dr. Ardette Creeks, DNP, RN, and Dr. Carliss Ramos, DNP, RN.

The three-semester, 31-credit-hour

program focuses on these concepts:

- Community health nursing
- Nursing research
- Public and global health policy
- Informatics
- Leadership

Now serving its seventh cohort, the program admits students every fall and spring. Thanks to a generous endowment from the Katha and Clifton Black family, every accepted BSN student will receive a one-time scholarship.

The application period for the fall 2024 cohort is open now through Aug. 17. For more information, scan the QR code. Or contact RN-to-BSN department chair Dr. Veronica Jammer at [veronica.jammer@sjcd.edu](mailto:veronica.jammer@sjcd.edu) or [sanjacbsn@sjcd.edu](mailto:sanjacbsn@sjcd.edu).



Photo by Courtney Morris, San Jacinto College

# SHIFT FROM SONOGRAPHY TO TEACHING FUELED BY PASSION

By **Melissa Trevizo**  
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Jamelli Cortez started her journey at San Jacinto College in the diagnostic medical sonography program.

“I went into sonography because I knew there was always a need for those types of jobs,” Cortez said. “My mom was pregnant at the time, and I loved seeing her ultrasounds. I thought this was going to be

my career, but I didn’t have a passion for it.”

In August 2021, Cortez took a part-time job with Galena Park Independent School District as a tutor, and her career goals changed forever.

“I started tutoring students in early childhood education from pre-K to fourth grade,” she said. “I fell in love with teaching and never looked back.”

Cortez made her major

switch with help from the College’s educational planners and began pursuing her degree in teaching.

“Everyone at San Jac was a big help when I switched my majors,” she said. “I wasn’t sure if it would be an easy transition, but they made it work for me.”

Cortez’s passion grew while attending class and putting her lessons into practice each day as a tutor.

“I loved learning everything I could about the teaching career,” Cortez said. “Seeing the kids interact with their teachers — the way the teachers handled classroom management — I soaked in every bit of it. It made me excited for my future.”

Cortez cites education professor Jorge Embil and early childhood program director Caresal Bolds for further igniting her enthusiasm about a teaching career.

“Mr. Embil would show us in detail what is expected of a teacher and how we can deeply impact the lives of students,” Cortez said. “I love the fact that they showed us how kids’ minds develop and how to reach them where they are.

They both inspired me to be a great teacher.”

On a personal note, Cortez also practiced her classroom management and tutoring skills at home with her sister, who is 17 years younger.

“She is going to kindergarten this year, so I’ve been helping her practice her reading, math, and writing,” Cortez said. “It’s fun to see her progression, and it helps me grow my skills too.”

Cortez graduated with her associate degree in teaching from San Jac in May 2023. She plans to pursue her bachelor’s degree from the University of Houston-Clear Lake this fall and teach bilingual classes in third or fourth grade at a local school district.



**BE THAT UNFORGETTABLE**

**TEACHER**



Are you working in the education field but lacking the degree needed to lead your own classroom? San Jacinto College’s new bachelor’s degree program will prepare you to be that unforgettable teacher for children from six weeks old through third grade.

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**COLLEGE**  
**LEARN MORE AT SANJAC.EDU**

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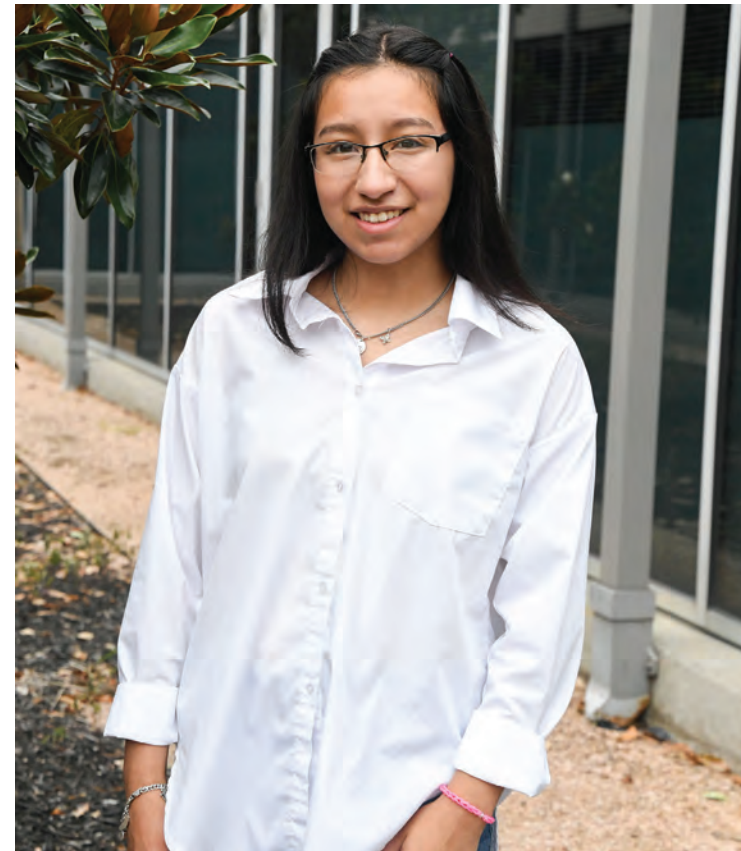


Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

# NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING ALUMNA WARNER FINDS PASSION AT SAN JAC

**By Melissa Trevizo**  
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

San Jacinto College alumna Shanna Warner is blazing her trail in the world of non-destructive testing as a second career.

A former San Jac senior administrative assistant, Warner began her journey into non-destructive testing with a chance encounter during a training session at the LyondellBasell Center for Petrochemical, Energy, & Technology.

“Something sparked in me,” Warner said. “I liked the idea of working in the field and getting my hands dirty. NDT is a cool marriage of crafts and engineering, and the salary potential didn’t hurt either.”

Eager to explore this newfound interest, Warner wasted no time in pursuing her passion. She began taking classes in January 2021, immersing herself in the curriculum.

Under the guidance of dedicated instructors like Wayne Chrisman and Stephen Rowland, Warner not only gained a deep understanding

of non-destructive testing principles but also absorbed essential values such as ethical inspection practices and attention to detail.

She earned her associate degree in non-destructive testing technology in December 2022.

Today, Warner is an eddy current assistant for the oil and gas sector, working toward her Level II inspector certification. Her job has taken her to five states and all over Houston, providing her with invaluable hands-on experience.

Reflecting on her transition from her previous role at San Jac, Warner speaks fondly of her time there.

“My 9-5 at San Jac was amazing,” she said. “Working there set my expectations high for what a workplace should offer.”

Warner’s adventurous spirit and dedication to her craft are evident in her approach to her work.

“I’ve always had a ‘mess around and find out’ kind of personality,” she said. “I keep myself open, willing to explore new opportunities and push boundaries.”

Looking ahead, Warner aspires to return to San Jac one day as an instructor, eager to give back and inspire future non-destructive testing professionals.

“I’d love to be an example for future students, especially as a woman in the industry,” she said. “But first, I’ve got a long way to go as I move up my certification levels.”

As Warner continues to make a name for herself in the world of non-destructive testing, her story serves as a testament to the power of perseverance and lifelong learning. In a world where career paths constantly evolve, Warner’s journey exemplifies what happens when you dare to follow your dreams.

“If anyone is thinking about a career change, go for it. Make an accessible plan with attainable goals, and try it out,” Warner said. “As cliché as it sounds, you only live once. If you can make the move, you should.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about the non-destructive testing program.



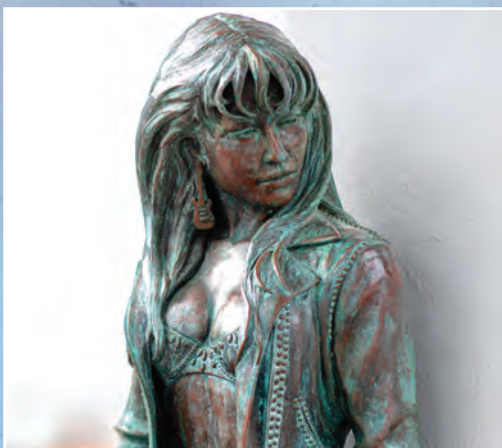
Photos courtesy of Shanna Warner

## SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
June 3	Summer classes begin	Varies	All campuses and online
June 19	Juneteenth	Closed	All campuses and online
July 4	Independence Day	Closed	All campuses and online
July 18	Promise @ San Jac deadline		Future Promise Scholars: Deadline for financial aid submission and to register and enroll for full-time classes for fall 2024. Learn more at <a href="https://sanjac.edu/promise">sanjac.edu/promise</a> .
Aug. 19	Fall classes begin	Varies	All campuses and online

All times and event schedules listed are subject to change. For more information, visit [sanjac.edu/calendar](https://sanjac.edu/calendar).

# THIS MONTH *IN* SOCIAL MEDIA



## Facebook

Happy Birthday to the Queen of Tejano music, Selena Quintanilla-Pérez! Your music continues to inspire and uplift generations.



851 Reactions | 22 Comments | 72 Shares



## Instagram

Central Campus has many spots where you can take your graduation pictures. Here are our top three places! Comment below if we'll see you around campus taking your grad pics — maybe Poe will show up at your photoshoot!



319 Likes | 32 Shares | 24 Saves



## LinkedIn

“I want to be clear: Community colleges are not ‘less than’ other higher education institutions. To those who promote the negative stigma surrounding community colleges, I would say that their perception is outdated and inaccurate. Community colleges are evolving, adapting to the changing needs of our society, and providing students with the education they need to succeed.” — Jose Valentine, Dean of Enrollment Services



251 Reactions | 18 Shares | 11 Comments

# YOUR GOALS. YOUR COLLEGE.



## SAN JACINTO<sup>SM</sup> 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

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## 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](https://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](https://sanjac.edu).

