

Engage

College of DuPage—
your community college
Vol. 2, No. 1

From COD to Head of the Class

COD alumna and Golden
Apple recipient Lisa Buchholz
exemplifies excellence
in teaching





A Message from the President

In this issue of *Engage*, we take a look at transfer programs and the strong foundation that College of DuPage provides for further higher education and enhanced career potential.

On our cover is Lisa Buchholz, who discovered her career path while completing a general education requirement at the College. Also featured in this edition are Mark Tom and Nahiris Bahamón Fernández, who both gained the skills they needed to pursue successful medical careers. These are just a few examples of the many alumni who successfully transferred and then embarked upon challenging and rewarding careers.

COD has built strong partnerships with a wide range of universities to make the transition to the next destination as smooth as possible. By establishing 3+1 and 2+2 agreements, as well as other opportunities, we lay the groundwork for student success beyond our classrooms.

Several benefits come with choosing College of DuPage as your first institution for higher education. One is the high-quality education that we provide at an affordable cost. Another

is small class sizes that give students greater access to our faculty. Rather than sit in large lecture halls to learn from teaching assistants, COD students always are taught by professors with extensive knowledge and experience.

COD students find that enrolling in one of our transfer programs gives them an edge over other students who start at four-year institutions. In addition, a recent study from the National Student Clearinghouse found that students who transferred with a two-year degree or a certificate were 16 percent more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than students who transferred without one.

College of DuPage is dedicated to teaching and learning, which is reflected in the quality and depth of our programming. The stories on the following pages demonstrate the varied ways our curriculum impacts students as they prepare to continue their studies at baccalaureate-granting institutions.

—Brian W. Caputo is interim president of College of DuPage.

IN THIS ISSUE

For the Community 1
COD offers services and resources to community members.

From COD to Head of the Class 3
A general education course led Lisa Buchholz to an award-winning teaching career.

Prescribing a Future 6
Two alumni pursue medical careers after successful starts at COD.

Past, Present, Future 9
Life lessons shape the course of history for COD professor.

Making It Count 10
COD's Accounting program prepares students at all levels for successful careers.

Creating a Smooth Transfer 12
COD offers seamless paths to earning bachelor's degrees.

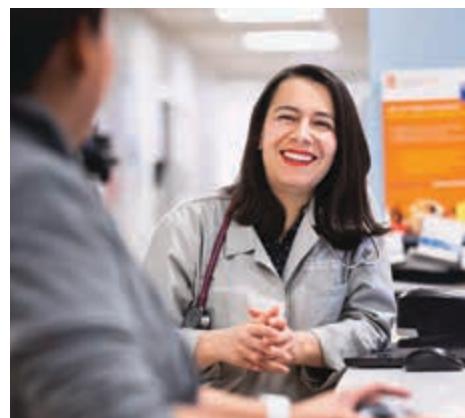
Launching Pad to NASA 17
Reggie Martin uses skills learned at COD as a successful engineer.



page 3



page 10



page 6



page 12

For the Community...



Reference Librarian Christine Kickels (left) works with a community member on finding grants for nonprofits.

Become a Lifelong Learner at the College of DuPage Library

With its staff accessible in person and online more than 80 hours every week, the College of DuPage Library offers District 502 residents numerous services and resources at no cost.

"The COD Library is a great place to begin exploring college life or to expand your knowledge of a particular topic," said Jennifer McIntosh, COD Associate Dean, Library. "Connecting people with resources to succeed is what we do. We teach people to be confident information consumers and creators. The Library prides itself on its quality academic collections, dedicated staff and varied learning spaces ideal for individuals and groups, with comfortable seating and views overlooking the prairie."

Residents can find rich collections that mirror the diverse program offerings of the College. Notable topics include career and test preparation, business, health science, and technology, as well as English language acquisition and citizenship.

Unique to the College and DuPage County is the Philanthropy Collection, which features the database Foundation Directory Online, with access to more than 140,000 grant-making institutions for

funding opportunities. Visitors can also find books for developing skills in grant writing, cultivating donors and starting a nonprofit.

"We encourage our district residents to visit the Library and get a COD Library card so they can check out books and media," McIntosh said. "If making a trip to the Glen Ellyn campus isn't convenient, residents can access many of our electronic collections at any of the College's four centers located throughout the district."

Library services and resources available to district residents include assistance from reference staff, requesting books through interlibrary loan from libraries nationwide, free workshops, access to computers loaded with productivity and media software, and access to the College Archive, by appointment, to explore the history of the College.

The Library is open seven days a week when classes are in session. Consult the Library website for current hours. For more information, contact the Library at (630) 942-3364 or visit cod.edu/library to explore all that the Library has to offer.



Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage

From COD to Head of the Class

A general education course led Lisa Buchholz to an award-winning teaching career

Growing up, Lisa Buchholz enjoyed the time she spent babysitting kids in her neighborhood.

Her family noticed how well she worked with young children and suggested that she pursue a career in education. However, Buchholz did not believe it was the best path.

"I don't know if it was because of the experience I had as a student in grade school, but it was tough for me to even think about being a teacher," she said. "It just didn't sound like the right thing for me."

After graduating from high school, Buchholz enrolled at College of DuPage to stay close to home and complete her general education requirements while deciding what to do long term. She recalled facing criticism from her peers for choosing to attend a community college.

"I had to endure critical comments from people I graduated with," she said. "It made me so angry that this stereotype was out there. To me, it made perfect sense to get an associate degree and then transfer to another school."

As a student at COD, Buchholz loved her classes in business and marketing and thought her career path was set. However, taking a child care class to fulfill a general education requirement completely changed her plans.

"I reluctantly took the course, which required me to observe in a preschool or daycare center," she said. "I selected a school and my entire focus changed through that experience. If I had taken a child care course where I only had to read the book and go to class, I never would have become interested in teaching."

Buchholz said that experience, along with a number of other outstanding courses, not only provided her with career guidance but also helped her get a foot in the door and eased her transition to a four-year university.

"Next thing you know, I was being offered a job because they had been watching me through a window that looked like a mirror to us in the classroom," she said. "I ended up loving being with children and entered North Central College in Naperville as an Elementary Education major. Academically, I was totally prepared by that time and the move was seamless."

After finishing at North Central and becoming the first woman in her family to earn a degree, Buchholz began working for Glen Ellyn School District 41, first as a reading/math aide at Forest Glen Elementary School. Then she landed a first-grade position at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, where she stayed for 10 years.

Once her own children were school age, Buchholz wanted to be at their school so she transferred to Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, where she currently works as a first grade teacher. She mostly has taught first grade but also second and third.

After more than 25 years of teaching, Buchholz was recognized for her outstanding work in the classroom when she was honored with the prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching and Leadership in 2018. The award is presented annually by Golden Apple, a nonprofit organization that develops and



"If I had taken a child care course where I only had to read the book and go to class, I never would have become interested in teaching."

—COD alumna and teacher Lisa Buchholz

“College of DuPage found me my career and it’s done the same for so many others. Every single class that I took at COD was quality.”

supports teacher and school leader excellence.

She was genuinely shocked when she won the award.

“I felt like it was something that other people win,” Buchholz said. “I kept saying to myself, ‘This is not something I’d win. I’m just a regular teacher.’ I was stunned. It’s not that I don’t feel like I’m a great teacher, because I put a lot of time into this job and I love it. I felt like the nomination was rewarding enough but this is like winning the lottery.”

During her acceptance speech, she thanked COD for two reasons in particular. Not only did the College lead her into a successful career in the classroom, but she also felt it was necessary after reflecting on the criticism she received when she enrolled at the College years ago.

“With so much of the stigma that people attach to community colleges, I felt like I needed to give COD a big high-five,” she said. “College of DuPage got me on my career path and served the purpose it was intended to serve. I went there to find what I wanted to do in life and COD did that for me. I honestly owe this career to them.”

The career that COD helped Buchholz find has since been introduced to others in her family. Her daughter, Kaila, is now a teacher, and Buchholz said Kaila’s passion came from spending so much time in Buchholz’s classroom as a child.



Photo courtesy of James Richards and Golden Apple

“Kaila always loved helping me in the classroom,” Buchholz said. “Beginning when she was about 3 or 4, she would make little paper dolls of kids in my class. My classroom felt like home to my own kids and Kaila always had an interest in teaching because she spent so much time there.”

In spite of her extensive experience as a teacher and being recognized for excellence in the classroom, Buchholz is still figuring it all out and continues to use lessons learned at COD to engage her students.

“I’m constantly changing and revising what I do and the approaches I take,” she said. “Starting off in that early childhood atmosphere helped me stay grounded. I look back on the days when we were doing activities such as finger painting and I’m

reminded that I need to continue to make learning fun.”

Buchholz’s advice to young students considering a community college for any reason is to have pride in their decision.

“You should never have to feel bad about that,” she said. “College of DuPage found me my career and it’s done the same for so many others. Every single class that I took at COD was quality, and I felt very ready to enter my final two years of college once I earned my associate degree. COD was an excellent choice for me.”



Clockwise from the top: Lisa Buchholz works on a project with one of her students at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School; students celebrate during a surprise visit from Golden Apple and WBBM-TV; a replica Golden Apple sits alongside student artwork honoring Buchholz in her classroom; Buchholz accepts the Golden Apple for Excellence in Teaching and Leadership from WTTW's Brandis Friedman during the 33rd annual Golden Apple Awards.



Photo courtesy of James Richards and Golden Apple



Photo courtesy of James Richards and Golden Apple



Prescribing a Future

Mark Tom and Nahiris Bahamón Fernández pursue medical careers after successful beginnings at COD

Choosing a medical career path was natural for Mark Tom, who wanted to be a physician since childhood.

"The draw was a personal calling inspired by my family doctor when I was growing up and fueled by a desire to cure disease, relieve suffering and care for others," he said. "I was fascinated by human physiology and had early academic interests in math and science."

Tom said College of DuPage enabled him to develop skills that would help him achieve future success: balancing his schedule, managing stress and developing study habits. While at COD, he was a member of the Honors program and earned several COD Foundation scholarships, including the Cancer Federation Scholarship, the Ruth G. Nechoda Scholarship and the COD Textbook Award.

"College of DuPage provides a high-caliber education at a fraction of the cost of a four-year university," he said. "There are also great opportunities to be involved in on-campus activities and to pursue job prospects and leadership development."

In 2005, Nahiris M. Bahamón Fernández left her second year of medical school and her country of Colombia due to political upheaval. Soon after, she began attending College of DuPage and distinguished herself by receiving prestigious awards, including the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship and the Guistwhite Scholarship, one of only 20 community college students in the country to do so.

While at COD, she participated in the Undergraduate Research Collaborative, a five-year initiative funded by the National Science Foundation that provided research opportunities for two-year college students.

"Being part of the URC was a great experience that allowed me to develop and apply my analytical and critical thinking skills in ways that I wouldn't have been able to do through attending class alone," she said. "It also prepared me for the rigor of the science education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison."

After receiving a second Jack Cooke Kent Foundation Scholarship, this time for graduate studies, Bahamón Fernández attended Boston University and earned her medical degree. She currently is a board-certified pediatrician at Esperanza Health Center and a board

adviser for Physicians for a National Health Program. She is also an advocate for children and families as an active member of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and its committees on social determinants of health and immigrant health.

"Medicine, especially pediatrics, offers the perfect combination of many things I am passionate about: science, advocacy and social justice," she said. "As a pediatrician, I have the chance to make an impact on a child's health and life for years to come."

Bahamón Fernández always tells people that the best teachers she ever had in college were at COD.

"As a student who had recently arrived from a different country, everyone at College of DuPage from the administration to the professors guided and supported me to achieve my goals," Bahamón Fernández said. "I was always impressed by how committed to teaching and how engaged they were with the students.

Thanks to their efforts, when I transferred to UW-Madison, I felt very prepared to continue to succeed."

After COD, Tom was a Pre-Med Physiology major at Seattle Pacific University, from which he graduated cum laude

with his bachelor's in Physiology. Subsequently, he participated in a number of projects, including work in the Pam Roach Medical Clinic in Puerto Cortes, Honduras, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and a senior center in the San Juan Islands.

Going on to graduate from the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle, Tom is currently a resident intern at Kootenai Health Hospital and Kootenai Family Medicine Clinic in Idaho. He also works with the North Idaho Cancer Advisory Group and mentors underprivileged medical students nearby in Spokane, Wash., through the Washington State Mentorship program SHINE.

Tom said that if he had to do it all over again, he would still choose COD, citing the outstanding faculty and facilities.

"Broadly speaking, my experience at College of DuPage was life changing," he said. "It gave me the confidence in my abilities to succeed as a student and as a professional."



After a distinguished start at College of DuPage, Nahiris M. Bahamón Fernández transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Boston University. She is now a board-certified pediatrician at Esperanza Health Center in Chicago.

(Photo by Tori Soper/special to College of DuPage)



Mark Tom gained skills at College of DuPage that led to future success at Seattle Pacific University and the University of Washington School of Medicine. He is now a resident intern at Kootenai Health Hospital and Kootenai Family Medicine Clinic in Idaho. (Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage)



Past, Present, Future

Life lessons shape the course of history

Conversations in Sam Mitrani's class are often lively, centered on timely and timeless topics—family, money, religion, jobs.

For the College of DuPage associate professor, the value of history is universal.

"I think there's a push to reduce COD and other community colleges to training. I think we absolutely need training. But I want my nurse, the person who's working on my car, the electrician, the business person to also understand something about history, about how society evolves, about where they are placed within the broader framework of humanity," he said. "We have something really important to offer to the community beyond preparing people for a job."

"The cool thing about history is you can figure out why things improved, why other things have become worse—and how we can encourage one thing and avoid another. But to do that, it takes people finding a way to think outside their own immediate lives."

Mitrani's personal story shaped his professional life. He grew up on the East Coast, living part time with his hippie father in the Vermont woods with no electricity or running water—a lifestyle he grew to love—and part time with his mother in New York.

"It was the contrast between those two lives that made me interested in history and also made me critical of the idea that the way we live is the way we have to live," Mitrani said. "It's not just that some people get to live well because they have money and other people live terribly because they don't. It's not that simple."

Mitrani's great-grandfather, who owned an underwear factory, left his great-grandson enough money to pay for college. The rest went to Israel, a contribution he questioned as a youngster viewing

the turmoil of the First Intifada that further fueled his interest in history and politics.

"It was obvious that you have to be on the side of the kids who have no food, are living in poverty and are throwing rocks at soldiers who are shooting them back—even though my family is Jewish," Mitrani said. "I very quickly came to be critical of a narrow nationalist way of looking at the world."

After graduating from "a pretty standard Vermont public high school," Mitrani headed west—to the Midwest.



"We have something really important to offer to the community beyond preparing people for a job."

—Associate professor Sam Mitrani, History

"I went to the University of Chicago for my undergraduate degree and wanted to understand why the world was set up the way it was," Mitrani said.

"The answer is history. You can't understand the way the world is without trying to figure out how we got here. History is a constant unfolding of the past into the future."

Mitrani earned his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2009, joined the COD history faculty in 2011 and wrote a book, "The Rise of the Chicago Police Department: Class and Conflict, 1850-1894," in 2014. Teaching is where he wants to be, and he encourages students to select a history class of interest to them.

"I teach one class called 'World War II and the Holocaust,' and those students are different than the ones in my African-American History class. I'm launching a new class suggested by David Ellis, assistant professor of Welding at COD, about labor history, the working class and the history of work," Mitrani said.

"It's rewarding seeing students come to understand their place in the world in a broader way and to think about and even question the assumptions they made about their society."



Making It Count

COD's Accounting program prepares students at all levels for successful careers

From the moment he started at College of DuPage, Alex Campos was determined to transfer into the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and study accounting.

"College is very different from high school because you have a lot of freedom in choosing what path to take, and you have so many resources you can use," said Campos, who graduated from COD in May 2016 with an Associate in Arts degree. "I knew I had to take the initiative in what I wanted to accomplish by using the resources at COD and networking with as many people as I could."

He did, indeed, transfer into the Gies College of Business, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy in May 2018. Campos followed that up by landing a job as an independent auditor in the Chicago office of Grant Thornton LLP.



Accounting Professor and Program Coordinator Maureen McBeth relies on her own background as a former CPA at Coopers & Lybrand to help students succeed both in and out of the classroom. (Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage)

"COD prepared me with challenging classes, especially honors courses, that helped me build a strong work ethic," he said.

While at COD, Campos took full advantage of opportunities outside the classroom, such as helping community members complete tax returns through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

"I was encouraged by my Accounting professor Maureen McBeth to become an intern and help coordinate COD

students who could assist community members looking to complete their taxes," he said. "It was a great opportunity to obtain real-world experience."

McBeth, coordinator of the College's Accounting program for the past five years, noted that COD students in the VITA program work on close to 1,200 tax returns every spring.



"Being an accountant isn't just adding up numbers. It's listening, communicating and asking the right questions," she said.

Prior to joining COD's staff, McBeth—who earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in Accounting and a doctorate in Education at Northern Illinois University—worked as a CPA at Coopers & Lybrand in Chicago. She said that many students who come through COD's Accounting program return to take advanced classes in a certificate program that prepares them for the CPA exam.

"There is also a group of former COD students who transferred to UIUC and return every semester to be unofficial mentors and share the whole journey with our current students," McBeth said.

In addition to traditional 16-week classes, learning options available to COD Accounting students include 8-, 12- and 16-week hybrid formats and online classes. Students also can use the COD Library Media Lab and receive help using high-powered equipment and software to prepare video presentations, work on images for research papers and even create digital shorts.

"The Library Media Lab has been quite significant in showing our students how to use additional resources to make their presentations more professional," McBeth said.

As a student who took full advantage of everything the College provided him on his path from Glen Ellyn to Champaign-Urbana and then Chicago, Campos is thrilled with the result.

"I am grateful for everything that College of DuPage offered me," he said. "COD helped me reach the point where I am now in my early professional career."

Above left: Alex Campos studied accounting at College of DuPage before transferring to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He now works as an independent auditor at Grant Thornton LLP. (Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage) *Above right:* Accounting students Anthony Dunlap (left) and Regina Carter (center) help a community member with her tax return through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, in which students work on nearly 1,200 tax returns every spring. (Photo by Press Photography Network/special to College of DuPage)

Accounting Options at COD

Students interested in Accounting at College of DuPage can choose from two degrees and several certificate programs, as well as the 3+1 Bachelor of Arts in Management program offered by Benedictine University on COD's campus.

The Associate in Arts degree transfers successfully to most baccalaureate degree programs in Illinois with junior status.

The Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Accounting degree prepares students for entry-level employment in various accounting-related careers.

The 3+1 Bachelor of Arts in Management program, available to students earning an A.A.S. in Accounting, includes 90 credit hours of COD coursework and 39 credit hours at Benedictine University offered at significantly reduced rates.

COD also offers certificate programs in Accounting Bookkeeping, Paraprofessional Accounting, Advanced Accounting, and Business Environment and Concepts.

Creating a Smooth Transfer

COD offers seamless paths to earning a bachelor's degree

After Cyndi Mendez's young daughter boldly expressed that she did not want to go to college, Mendez knew she had to show her children firsthand the importance of receiving a college education.

At 38 years of age, she enrolled in classes at College of DuPage with the goal of earning an associate degree. During one of her Human Services classes, she heard about the College's 3+1 program, in which students take their first three years of study through COD, while the fourth year is offered by a partner institution on COD's campus at a reduced tuition rate.

"A bachelor's degree wasn't even on my radar. But when I heard about the Human Services 3+1 program in partnership with National Louis University, it seemed too good to be true," she said. "I could stay on COD's campus, save money and still get a bachelor's degree? I knew it would mean longer schooling, but it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. I never dreamed earning a bachelor's degree would be possible for me, but thanks to this program, here I am proving myself wrong."

The 3+1 program is one of many ways that COD helps students transfer as they continue to pursue their academic goals. With a wide variety of transfer partnerships, COD has guaranteed admission agreements and transfer or articulation agreements with almost 50 institutions of higher learning for nearly 200 degree programs.

Lisa Stock, Vice President of Academic Affairs, said that many of these agreements go beyond just accepting COD credits toward a degree. In some cases, completion of an associate degree at the College entitles a student to reduced tuition rates or special scholarships, guaranteed entry to exclusive programs, or a greater number of credits accepted for transfer into a specific bachelor's degree program.

"The number of unique transfer opportunities the College has available to students is abundant," Stock said. "COD has a great reputation among other institutions of higher learning, and they are coming

to us wanting to pursue transfer agreements because of the high caliber of our students. Columbia College, Northern Illinois University and Illinois Institute of Technology are just a few recent examples of colleges and universities wanting to ramp up partnership efforts with us. We never want students to lose momentum, so we are always looking for ways to add value to our students through agreements we set."

Through the 3+1 program, a number of in-demand degrees are offered in partnership with Benedictine, Concordia, Lewis, National Louis and Roosevelt universities. In all, 22 COD associate degree programs feed into 14 bachelor degrees.

Jason Florin, COD Associate Professor of Human Services, said the 3+1 program makes it more convenient for students to achieve their educational goals.

"Having the partner school on campus provides a tremendous amount of continuity for our students, similar to what students at a four-year institution experience," he said. "We enjoy being part of our students' development, so it's a huge plus to see them transition through the entire degree process."

COD also offers

traditional 2+2 agreements, which allow a student to finish two years at COD and another two years at a college or university to complete a bachelor's degree. An enhanced 2+2, on the other hand, allows a student to complete up to 90 semester credits of coursework, mostly general education courses, and then transfer for the remaining credits toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year institution.

Amid growing concerns about rising tuition, COD Transfer Coordinator Justin Hardee said the substantial cost savings offered at COD allow students to earn their degrees with a lower debt ratio than their peers.

"A misconception some people have is that by saving money at a community college, you are also sacrificing

(continued on page 15)



Jason Florin (left), COD Associate Professor of Human Services, meets with Cyndi Mendez, who is currently in the 3+1 program with National Louis University to earn her bachelor's degree.



COD Associate Professor of Engineering Scott Banjavcic (left) works in the Physics lab with engineering student Kurt Castillo, who plans to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign through the Engineering Pathways program.

WILLIAM STORM

3+1 Program, Business,
Benedictine University

"I chose the 3+1 Benedictine Bachelor of Arts in Management program for its affordability and evening classes. This allowed me to complete my bachelor's degree while working at an internship and building my knife-sharpening business, which I started while at COD in the Emerging Entrepreneurs program."

SARAH TASCHETTA

Television Production,
Columbia College in Chicago

"The transfer process from COD to Columbia College went tremendously smooth. Columbia took every credit, no questions asked. I highly recommend taking the intro classes at COD because they are the same courses you will take at a four-year school for a fraction of the price!"



on the quality of your education,” he said. “This is certainly not the case at COD. COD’s exceptional faculty and unique program offerings give students an unparalleled experience that they can take with them when they transfer.”

One unique transfer opportunity for students is through the Engineering Pathways program. Students are guaranteed admission to the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign after completing a specified list of equivalent courses at COD and earning no less than a 3.5 GPA.

After hearing about the College’s Engineering Pathways program from his high school math teacher, current COD student Kurt Castillo was relieved he could still take a rigorous course load at the College, which fosters one-on-one support.

“I’m glad I didn’t go straight to U of I after high school,” said Castillo, who is in his first year of the program. “I know I wouldn’t have been as successful as I am right now without the support of the engineering professors at COD. With their encouragement and the support of my advisors, I feel confident that when I transfer to U of I, I will be just as successful as the students who started there from the beginning.”

Scott Banjavcic, COD Associate Professor of Engineering, said faculty members consider the task of ensuring that their students are prepared to succeed at any four-year institution as paramount to their mission.

“We develop personal relationships with the students that help us challenge and push them to excel,” he said. “I have heard from many former students that COD more than prepared them to hit the ground running at U of I and other high-caliber institutions.”

Along with Engineering Pathways, COD also offers affordable tracks through other programs such as Architecture, where students can earn advanced degrees from baccalaureate-granting or professional architecture programs through articulated transfer agreements. Elizabeth Cisneros Tlaxcala earned her Associate in Applied Science degree in Architecture from COD and transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee through their articulated transfer agreement. She is currently pursuing her bachelor’s and master’s degrees with a career goal of becoming a licensed architect designing houses for those in need.

“The agreement that COD has with UWM made my transfer experience stress-free,” she said. “The architecture faculty and the UWM counselors worked together to ensure I was prepared before even stepping foot on campus. The COD Architecture program is very well known in the area and when people know where we come from, they automatically set the bar high for us because they know the quality of COD students and how well our professors have developed the curriculum.”

Jane Ostergaard, COD Coordinator and Professor of Architecture, said following an articulation agreement in place with another institution lays out the pathway for students, avoiding the guesswork that causes frustration.

“For architecture, and even in other disciplines, the course requirements for each institution are very specific and vary greatly from school to school,” she said. “Within our curriculum, which electives you would take if you were pursuing our Pre-Architecture

degree differ depending on which school you want to transfer to. The transfer agreements that COD has with top universities provide step-by-step class requirement guides. Our students find the transfer process through these agreements pretty seamless.”

Hardee said that while COD offers numerous transfer opportunities in a variety of fields, students should not feel overwhelmed. To start, he advises students to find a program of study that interests them and then work with an academic advisor to narrow down transfer options.

“Becoming part of a pre-established transfer program at COD takes away a lot of the frustration students can feel when they are wanting to transfer from a community college to a university,” he said. “COD already has paths laid out for students that help provide a seamless transfer. Seeking guidance and support from an academic advisor will ensure students get started on the right track.”

As for Mendez, she is now in her final year of the 3+1 program.

“I can still get advice from the COD Human Services faculty who I have relationships with, as well as continue to utilize COD’s resources,” she said. “I have the best of both worlds—getting a bachelor’s degree from a prestigious university while staying at a place that I’ve come to know and love.”



“College of DuPage’s 3+1 program is an excellent and affordable opportunity for students to get their bachelor’s degrees, all while staying on campus,” said alumnus Kyle Newman, now employed in the College’s IT division.



College of DuPage engineering graduate Reggie Martin obtained a position at NASA in 2006 and has built an impressive resume at the agency. (Photo and logo courtesy of NASA)

Launching Pad to NASA

Reggie Martin uses skills learned at COD as a successful engineer

When Reggie Martin graduated from high school, a career working at NASA was not on his radar.

Much of his focus had been on playing sports, but he also spent time developing skills in technical areas such as electronics and auto mechanics. Instead of attending college, Martin decided to enlist in the U.S. Navy and served for six years, including time on the USS John F. Kennedy. He is a veteran of the Bosnian War and the Desert Shield/Desert Storm operations during the Gulf War, and his recognitions include Operations Department Sailor of the Year in 1991.

After returning to the Chicago area to be near family and friends, Martin began working as a technician at Fermilab, where he was surrounded by scientists and engineers who fueled his interest in engineering. He then decided to enroll at College of DuPage, attending classes while continuing to work.

"My studies at College of DuPage laid a tremendous foundation," he said. "The class sizes were small, so I got to know my professors pretty well. After spending time in the military, they were very helpful in easing the transition as far as getting back into the routine of going to school regularly."

Martin completed his Associate in Engineering Science degree and transferred to the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. He continued working at Fermilab throughout college and eventually moved into a position as an engineer.

In 2006, Martin obtained a position at NASA and has built an impressive resume at the agency. He is currently the lead integrator expert for the Kennedy Ground Control Subsystem (KGCS), where he is responsible for managing the research, design,

development and implementation of all hardware and software interfaces.

Martin said the journey to where he is now has been due in large part to his decision to attend College of DuPage before transferring to a four-year university. At COD he developed skills in areas such as time management and responsibility, which helped him in transferring to IIT and later during his career.

"I had a goal to achieve, which at that time was getting to a four-year school," he said. "I learned the intricacies and foundational skills that I still use in the work that I do today."

Martin received one of NASA's highest honors, the Silver Snoopy Award, for his work representing KGCS and coordinating with the center's security team. He also was nominated as Employee of the Year in 2016.

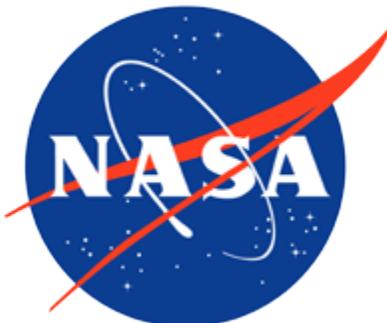
Recently, Martin has put much thought into academic choices as his children, who are now teenagers, prepare for college. He said students today can benefit

from earning an associate degree before pursuing a bachelor's.

"When you transfer with your associate degree, you have already reached a certain level of success, and you won't end up paying more money for essentially the same courses that are offered at a four-year school."

Martin expressed pride when reflecting on the long-term benefits COD has had on his career.

"Even though NASA wasn't my original goal, I always wanted to get better and improve every step of the way," he said. "College of DuPage helped me get to the next level and kept me moving forward."



"When you transfer with your associate degree, you have already reached a certain level of success, and you won't end up paying more money for essentially the same courses that are offered at a four-year school."

—COD alumnus and NASA engineer Reggie Martin

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College of DuPage alumnus Alex Campos is currently an independent auditor in the Chicago office of Grant Thornton LLP. See page 10 to read more about COD's Accounting program.

Engage

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Direct all comments and questions to the editor at kleeman@cod.edu.

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