

Determination Leads to a Career in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Olive-Harvey College Student: David Burton



When David Burton enrolled in the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program at City Colleges of Chicago – Olive-Harvey College in Chicago, Illinois, he knew he'd made the right choice. **"Nothing can duplicate the hands-on learning experience I received at Olive-Harvey College going through the process of getting my CDL license."**, David said.

David appreciated that Olive-Harvey College reinforced safety as the most important factor in truck driving commenting, **"Olive-Harvey College taught me the safest and most effective**

way to drive. Learning how to drive a tractor-trailer during inclement weather was a challenge to say the least."

After much determination, perseverance and belief in himself, David received his CDL through Olive-Harvey College. He said, **"I made a good decision to get my CDL and a great choice in selecting Olive-Harvey College to help me navigate the way starting out."**

For more information on this program, visit Olive-Harvey's Commercial Driver Training [webpage](#).

““The amount of resources and learning materials provided at no additional cost had immeasurable advantages and would not have been available at a traditional for-profit truck driving school.”

David Burton



Recent Immigrant on Track for a Successful Future in Technology

Moraine Valley Community College Student: Alexandros Orestis



After serving 12 years in the Greek Special Forces, Alexandros Orestis and his wife decided to settle in the United States to pursue a better future. It was a courageous move that Alexandros knew would be one of the biggest challenges he'd ever faced, **"I started from zero. I came to this country without knowing how to make a complete sentence,"** he explained, **"I knew only to say, 'Hello, how are you?'"**

Alexandros already had a computer technician certification in Europe, but it was not recognized in the United States. Alexandros looked at several institutions, comparing programs and costs, and decided Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC), in Palos Hills, Illinois, was his best option.

Alexandros credits Moraine Valley's inclusive atmosphere and the faculty's willingness to go above and beyond with

helping him feel part of the campus community. **"The instructors made me feel so comfortable, and they assisted me to the point that I easily adapted,"** he commented. **"Faculty treat everyone equally, and they respect the students. My worry was only an imagination."**

Alexandros has earned numerous credentials and plans to complete his Electronic/Computer Controls Technician Associate of Applied Science degree. Argonne National Laboratory recently hired this straight-A student as a paid intern. They were impressed with the academic skills he had gained at Moraine Valley. He exclaimed, **"They told me, I'm the right candidate for multiple positions because of the range of skills I have – even before I'm graduating."**

For more information on this program, visit [MVCC's Electronic/Computer Controls Technician webpage](#).



"I had the opportunity to attend an amazing program. They're giving me the tools to succeed in the field of technology"

Alexandros Orestis



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**Moraine Valley
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Different Starts - Same Finish for Two Engineering Students

Moraine Valley Community College Students: Emily Stachowicz & Amanda Hoeksema

Neither Emily Stachowicz nor Amanda Hoeksema planned to become engineers. Emily thought she would be a cartoon artist, while Amanda's early interests focused on writing science fiction stories. As they got older, they discovered engineering offered a way to express their creativity in a sought-after career.

These two future engineers did not know each other when they joined the Engineering Pathways Program at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois. However, they discovered they had much in common as they began their engineering education. Both were distinguished scholars and recipients of the America's Promise Grant and were grateful these programs helped with their expenses. Moraine Valley Community College partners with the Calumet Area Industrial Commission to offer the Department of Labor's America's Promise Grant. Students receive guidance in selecting a manufacturing career path, employment placement assistance, scholarships to pay for their education and ongoing coaching to help students meet education and career goals. Emily said, **"Not worrying about money helped me have a minimal amount of stress when I was going through such a rigorous program."**

Both women were accepted into the summer internship program at Fermilab, a particle physics and accelerator laboratory in Batavia, Illinois. Although their internships were switched to a remote format due to COVID-19, both gained valuable experience. Emily has been working on building a radioactive cleanup robot, and Amanda is helping design a robotic arm that one day could be used in the lab's accelerator tunnel. They learned about internship opportunities in their Introduction to Engineering I course, where their instructor invited speakers from various companies and organizations to give presentations about engineering careers and internship opportunities. Both students were amazed they could make these important connections at a community college. Emily said, **"It was an unexpected, welcome surprise."** Amanda added, **"I'm able to actually interact with engineering colleagues. It definitely will help me to have this knowledge."**

After completing their Associate in Engineering Science degrees, they both plan to transfer to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Grainger College of Engineering to continue their studies.

For more information on this program, visit MVCC's [Electronic/Computer Controls Technician webpage](#).



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**Moraine Valley
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Oakton Student Employee Leading Three-Dimensional (3D) Printed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Donation Project



Oakton Community College Student: Matt Slizys

Matt Slizys is helping save lives by spearheading a project using 3D printers at Oakton Community College's campus in Skokie, Illinois to create Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) face shields. As a proud Lithuanian, Matt was looking to lead a cause dear to his heart. After finding a Facebook group that was making face shields for Swedish medical professionals, he decided to help senior care facilities in Chicago that serve members of the Lithuanian community by creating and donating PPE.

With assistance from Oakton faculty members, Matt's project has created 25 face shields, with the goal of producing 100. Once that production goal is met, college officials will select facilities with the most immediate need to receive the equipment. **"Being able to do something to help others with this PPE movement is simply an**

amazing feeling," Matt commented. **"Instead of sitting in and quarantining myself, I'm able to be productive with my days and make a difference."** Matt attributes Oakton for preparing him with the skills he needed to assist others during the pandemic.

Matt graduated last semester with an Associate in Applied Science degree in Manufacturing Technology. While attending Oakton, he served as a student employee for the Manufacturing and Technology Department. He still works in that capacity while he waits to transfer to Purdue University, where he plans to study reprogramming robots or working with industrial 3D printers.

For more information on this program, visit [Oakton's Manufacturing Technology website](#).



"Oakton helped me to gain valuable hands-on experience, confidence, and knowledge to be able to create projects that can help the world."

Matt Slizys



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Oakton
Community College

Layoff Brings Opportunity for a Career Change

Elgin Community College Student: Cuauhtemoc Palmerin

Cuauhtemoc Palmerin assumed he would be able to retire from Caterpillar Inc, where he had worked as a Welder/Assembler for 18 years. However, when Cuauhtemoc became a victim of Caterpillar's restructuring and layoffs, he had to alter his plans for the future. Because he'd been laid off, Cuauhtemoc was eligible for a Trade Readjustment Allowance through the U.S. Department of Labor, which provides educational funds for displaced workers.

Cuauhtemoc decided to go into Integrated Systems/Maintenance Technology (IST) program at Elgin Community College in Elgin, Illinois, as part of the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program. ICAPS provides an integrated pathway in CTE for college credit and program certificate opportunities for Adult Education and Literacy students who lack basic skills. As an ICAPS student in the IST program, Cuauhtemoc was part of a cohort environment that provided

support from peers and helped him feel a part of the community college culture at Elgin. As an older, non-traditional college student, Cuauhtemoc appreciated that he also had access to a support instructor who really helped him with the skills he would need to succeed in his classes. He is working towards his associate degree in IST and recently earned his Basic Vocational Specialist Certificate in Industrial Maintenance.

Currently, Cuauhtemoc is working as an Industrial Maintenance Technician at Rana Food Solutions in Bartlett, Illinois. The original plan was for Cuauhtemoc to complete his internship at the company, but because of the collaboration of the ICAPS Student Support Specialist and the Internship Coordinator, he was offered a full-time position instead.

For more information about this program, visit Elgin's IST [website](#).



“Employers are looking for validation and people with degrees. By taking advantage of the retraining opportunity, I am able to provide credentials to future employers.”

Cuauhtemoc Palmerin



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Elgin Community College

Blazing a Trail to a Promising Future

John Wood Community College Student: Todd Klingele



When Todd Klingele entered the Manufacturing Technology program at John Wood Community College (JWCC), he knew it was going to be challenging. While he accepted that the courses would require serious commitment, Todd's main apprehension was fitting in with the campus community.

Fortunately, JWCC's required freshman course, Blazing Your Trail, supports new students as they transition to the higher education culture. With this type of support, Todd had the confidence to join JWCC's Student Government Association and become known as one of the top student body leaders as he entered his sophomore year.

JWCC's program delivers a "real world" look at what a career in Manufacturing Technology entails and offers electives in eight different areas to prepare students for a variety of careers. Todd also took

advantage of the extra workforce skills and certifications at JWCC, which he feels will help make him a top contender when he applies for jobs.

Todd is working to earn his applied science associate degree and aspires to become a luthier (a craftsman who makes and repairs stringed instruments) at the Gibson Custom Shop in Nashville, Tennessee. He is grateful for his time at JWCC and encourages others to give the community college a look. **"The workforce program at JWCC is well worth it to anyone looking to get a degree or certificate and get straight into working for any business,"** he comments. **"It has greatly improved my knowledge and I am thankful I made the decision."**

For more information on this program, visit JWCC's Manufacturing Technology [website](#).



"John Wood has grown me academically, as a person, and a leader. It has pushed me into new situations, and I am now a better person for it."

Todd Klingele



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DACC College Express Graduates First High School Student with Advanced Welding Certificate

**Danville Area Community College Student:
Clayton Dodson**



Clayton Dodson is the first person to admit that his first few days in Professor RJ Rowland's Welding class as a junior at Bismarck-Henning-Rossville-Alvin High School were shaky. **"I was a terrible welder,"** Clayton admitted. His instructor, Professor Rowland, agreed, **"At the beginning, Clayton had no self-confidence. The phrase, 'I can't do it!' regularly came out of his mouth."** But Clayton persevered and in June 2020 – despite a final semester interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic – he became the first College Express student to graduate high school with an Advanced Welding Certificate from Danville Area Community College (DACC), in Danville, Illinois. The College Express program at DACC offers dual credit for high school juniors and seniors in sixteen career/technical programs which traditionally lead to an associate degree or certificate.

Now an 18-year-old recent high school

graduate with a secure job, Clayton has a welding position at Shaw Mantrip, building mine cars for use in the coal mines around Sparta, Illinois. His father, also a welder, is a Maintenance Supervisor in one of those mines. Clayton explained how having a certificate helped him secure a job most 18-year-olds wouldn't be qualified for, **"I'm not the first young guy they've hired out of high school,"** he said, **"but most of them are just sweeping the floor. My certificate gives me an unusual skill set for my age and a great head start on my career."**

Though thrilled to have a good, full-time job directly out of high school, Clayton has plans for what he'd like to do beyond his first job. **"My goal is to build my experience and connections until I can open my own shop,"** Clayton shared.

For more information about this program, visit DACC's [Welding website](#).

“Through College Express, my tuition was paid by my high school. Other than one online math class that DACC offered at a discount, I got my Advance Welding Certificate without paying a dime. I'm 18, fully employed, and owe nothing for my training.**”**

Clayton Dodson



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**Danville Area
Community College**

Taking the Heat of College to a New Level

Lake Land College Student: Jaden Kaufman



When 3 p.m. rolled around on a typical school day, most seniors at Paris High School were heading to practice, club meetings, home, or work. However, for Jaden Kaufman, late afternoon marked the beginning of his seven-hour college day. Throughout his entire senior year of high school, five days a week, Jaden jumped into his car to drive the nearly hour-long trip to Lake Land College in Mattoon to begin his evening of five hours of class and hands-on training.

Two summers spent working at Jay's Electrical Heating and Cooling, a local business owned by a family friend, helped Jaden decide what career he wanted to pursue after graduation. Jaden spent his senior year of high school earning a certificate in Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC). The one-year program is demanding, and students learn the many different skills

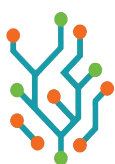
needed to install, maintain and repair residential and commercial heating and air conditioning units.

Jaden graduated from both Paris High School and Lake Land College, armed with a high school diploma, and HVAC certificate and the confidence he could succeed as a technician in the HVAC field. As Jaden reflected on his decision to earn a certificate in HVAC, he said, **"I knew that getting ahead in college before finishing high school could give me a lot of opportunities as I moved forward."** After graduating from high school and Lake Land College, Jaden went on to work full-time as an HVAC technician for Jay's Electrical Heating and Cooling in Paris, Illinois.

For more information about this program, visit Lake Land's HVAC [website](#).

“I am able to get a job wherever I want to live, be happy with it and be financially stable which brings me peace of mind when leaving high school and entering the real world. This opens up a lot of opportunities for me. HVAC is a promising career.”

Jaden Kaufman



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LAKE LAND COLLEGE

A Layoff Leads to a Dream Career

Lincoln Land Community College Student: Gary Wood



As a child with a father in the United States Air Force, Gary Wood had long dreamed of a career in the aviation field. Gary had to put his dream aside when he was diagnosed with color blindness, but years later he would turn a layoff into a career in aviation.

Gary was a membership coordinator for a health club when he was unexpectedly laid off. Working through the local unemployment office, Gary connected with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which enabled him to go back to school to pursue credentials for a career in aviation. Gary entered the Aviation Mechanics program at Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) in Springfield, Illinois – the only aviation mechanics program in central Illinois.

Gary loved the LLCC Aviation program and appreciated the hands-on training

in the labs as well as the support he received from his instructors. Gary earned an associate in applied science degree in Aviation Mechanics as well as certification as an aviation airframe technician and an aviation power plant technician. After finishing the program, he felt prepared to take advantage of the better job opportunities and increased income his new career would offer.

It wasn't long after graduation that Gary began his career at West Star Aviation. Currently, he is employed with the Air National Guard in Springfield, Illinois where he works on jet engines in the turbine engine shop. Gary enjoys working for the Air National Guard because he is supporting the country in its national defense.

For more information about this program, visit LLCC's Aviation [website](#).



“I am grateful for my second chance that turned my life around.”

Gary Wood



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A Veteran Heating Up in a Cool Career

Kaskaskia College Student: Alex Auld



United States Air Force veteran, Alex Auld, is a graduate of the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Program at Kaskaskia College (KC) in Centralia, Illinois. Alex calls Kaskaskia College a great asset to the local community.

KC's HVAC program helps with job placement by bringing in employers to speak with students about career opportunities. A one-on-one chat with a Walmart Regional Service Manager following a presentation resulted in Alex securing a position with Walmart.

Shortly after he was hired, Walmart did away with their internal maintenance staff and contracted with CBRE Technical Services to provide maintenance and

service for Walmart's equipment. Alex was offered a position and is still employed at CRBE. He is pursuing a degree from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale in Technical Resource Management.

When asked what he thought was special about the HVAC program at KC, Alex credited the commitment of their instructors to helping their students find a career they can love commenting, **"Professor Kohnen is not only an instructor but that he has a passion for the trade that he passes on to his students."**

For information on this program, visit [KC's Heating, Vent, & Air Conditioning website](#).

“I chose the program because of the accreditation that I had, and also it was conveniently in my hometown. Mark Kohnen is an excellent instructor and does everything he can to accommodate his students.”

Alex Auld



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