

Engineering

@ McLennan Community College

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What's Happening



The 2024-25 academic year was one for the books for the McLennan Community College Engineering program! New spaces for engineering students opened up in the Science

building, as Dr. Andreas and Professor Sidwell were granted a sabbatical to develop both the Engineering Commons and the Engineering Workshop. The Commons gives students a dedicated space to work and study with other engineering students, and the workshop provides tools and equipment for designing and building projects for their classes. Dr. Andreas and Professor Sidwell wrote a paper over their work in creating these spaces and presented them at the American Society for Engineering Education 2025 Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada, this summer.

For the fifth year in a row, MCC engineering students continued the tradition of competing in the NASA MINDS competition as Team Pleiades. Their work to develop strategies to mitigate the effects of lunar dust awarded them 2nd place overall! MCC's Team Pleiades was the only community college team to earn a top placement, beating out several four-year university teams!

Last fall, the StarChasers completed their research project finding candidates for young stellar nurseries. Student Peter Newcomer presented their findings at the Texas Academy of Science 2025 Annual Conference in Waco in the spring.

MCC had an "out of this world" visitor in the spring! Astronaut José Hernandez visited campus as part of the Distinguished Lecture Series, with our very own Professor Sidwell moderating the discussion. The StarChasers and NASA MINDS students were also invited to attend a special student presentation before the talk, where they were able to meet him.

Six students from Dr. Andreas' Engineering Dynamics class took a trip to the McGregor Research Center last spring, where they are using 3D printing technology to build houses. The students peppered the lead tech with questions! This technology is still in its infancy but the work they are doing is astounding.

Professor Wright taught Chemical Engineering Thermodynamics for the first time last fall, and her class had a special visitor. Aryn Bolton from Capstone Mechanical gave a talk to her class about his work with HVAC systems and showed how what they were learning in class directly applies in industry.

In the spring, MCC Engineering partnered with the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and joined their Community College Engineering Pathways program. This means that any MCC engineering student, regardless of major, can become a member for free and earn amazing benefits!

ASME Community College Empowerment Program

We're thrilled to announce a brand-new partnership with ASME (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) through their Community College Empowerment Program (CCEP). This collaboration opens up incredible opportunities for our students, including free ASME memberships, access to webinars and workshops, and connections with industry professionals who can serve as mentors, guest speakers, and even provide internship opportunities. Our students will also benefit from exclusive resources like internship prep programs, access to the latest engineering research, and career pathways that link directly to ASME's extensive employer network. For faculty, this partnership helps us keep our curriculum fresh and connected to industry trends while also building a network with other educators across the country. We couldn't be more excited about the doors this partnership will open for our students' growth, learning, and future careers.

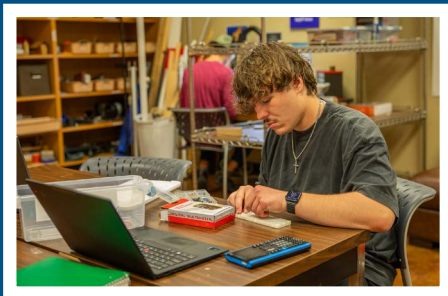
Alumni Spotlight – Peter Newcomer

Peter Newcomer was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He grew up and went to high school in Killeen, Texas. Following high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps where he served as an Electro-Optical Ordnance Repairer for 10 years. In his final years of service, he enrolled in MCC where he began his studies in electrical engineering. While at MCC, Peter showed interest in undergraduate research joining the NITARP Team, StarChasers, and NASA MINDS Team Pleiades. Team Pleiades continued the MCC tradition of bringing home medals by placing 2nd overall in the 2025 competition. In his spare time, Peter is a woodworker and CNC hobbyist. He used those skills to assist in setting up MCC's first CNC mill for engineering students. He is now pursuing a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering

at Baylor University with a graduation date of Fall 2027. While studying at Baylor, Peter is also engaged in an engineering internship at L3Harris in Waco and undergraduate research in thermal optics at Baylor. He is gaining valuable engineering and industry experience working on Department of Defense projects in both areas. Of the MCC faculty, Peter says, "My nontraditional education path has been a challenge, but they have been amazing mentors and didn't quit on me when I was struggling."



New Workspaces: Engineering Workshop and Commons Now Available to Engineering Students



This year also marked the exciting launch of two new spaces for our engineering students: the Engineering Workshop and the Engineering Commons. These areas have quickly become hubs for collaboration, creativity, and hands-on learning. Students now have dedicated places to work on projects, practice new skills, and connect with their peers in a supportive environment. The Workshop is stocked with the essential tools students need to bring their ideas to life, while the Commons provides a welcoming space for studying, teamwork, and building community. One of the biggest highlights has been the addition of three state-of-the-art Craftbot 3D printers, which are available to any student who completes the required training. Already, we've seen students put these resources to great use, and the impact on their learning and confidence has been tremendous.

NASA MINDS



MCC Engineering students earned 1st place in Technical Poster, 2nd in Overall Design, and 3rd in Technical Paper in the 2025 NASA MINDS national competition – the only two-year college to place. Their project focused on developing and testing strategies to reduce the harmful effects of lunar regolith, a highly abrasive and toxic dust that threatens long-term structures and habitats on the Moon and Mars. Through this work, students gained experience in applied research, design, and presenting their findings to NASA engineers. Their success shows that MCC students can compete and win on a national stage. Those involved were students Mike Baker (team lead, Electrical Engineering), Mason Vanek (Mechanical/Aero Engr), Brady Vanek (Mechanical/Aero Engr), Jordyn Winter (Mechanical Engr), Kandace Brown (Mechanical Engr), and Vince Iwunze (Biomedical Engr), and faculty April Andreas (Engr) and Larry Benton (Chemistry).

Distinguished Lecture Series: Dr. Jose Hernandez

This year, MCC proudly brought back the Distinguished Lecture Series with a special guest Astronaut José Hernández. A committee selected Hernández, who first visited MCC in 2014, to share with engineering students how he turned his dream of becoming an astronaut into reality.

This time, he spoke to a much larger audience of students, faculty, staff, and community members, inspiring everyone with his story—from his humble beginnings as a migrant farmworker to his incredible journey into space. Professor Sidwell had the honor of moderating the event, joining Hernández on stage to ask questions about his path and experiences. During the conversation, he even gave a special shout-out to MCC alumna Karen Rucker, who traveled back to campus for the event. Karen had been a student during his 2014 visit and is now thriving in the aerospace industry.

Earlier in the day, Hernández also held a smaller, student-focused session where engineering students had the chance to ask him their own questions. Both events were a huge success, leaving our students motivated and our community proud.



Faculty Spotlight: James Marcus Wauson

James Marcus Wauson is a McLennan County native and began taking MCC classes in high school in 2001 before graduating from Texas Christian Academy in 2003. From 2003 to 2011, he worked various jobs while taking courses part-time, completing an associate degree in general academics in 2011.



In 2012, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving four years with one deployment to Afghanistan. During his time in the military Mr. Wauson realized he greatly enjoyed teaching and mentoring others. He decided that he wanted to teach at the collegiate level, though it seemed an impossible goal at the time.

After an honorable discharge in 2016, Mr. Wauson returned to MCC to earn an AS in Mechanical Engineering, then transferred to Texas Tech University in 2017. He completed his BS in 2019 and joined the

Bio-Inspired Mechanics & Systems (BIOMS) Research Lab, where he developed artificial cilia-like fibers to generate fluid flow at low Reynolds numbers. He earned his MS in Mechanical Engineering in 2022. While in Lubbock, he met the love of his life, Mrs. Bingjing Zhou-Wauson who also earned her own MS in Mechanical Engineering during the same period.

While working for the Texas Department of Transportation, Mr. Wauson was offered the opportunity to teach for Tarleton State University-Waco and he leapt at it. Having been a student at MCC across a 15-year span, Mr. Wauson has a unique perspective of the difficulties and challenges students at MCC can face. He also has a great understanding of the culture, community, and positive impact MCC can have. Mr. Wauson hopes to inspire students and be an example of what's possible through perseverance and hard work. He looks forward to the future of Engineering through MCC and TSU. Currently both Mr. Wauson and Mrs. Zhou-Wauson teach courses in Mechanical Engineering for TSU at MCC.

Where Are They Now?

Eskindir Abebe (EE, Texas Tech, 2019) is designing airport conveyor systems as a lead electrical engineer at Brock Solutions in Irving, Texas. He and his wife are expecting their first baby in February.

Jamie Andriot (ME, UT Dallas, 2020; MS Sys Engr, SMU, 2024) recently moved into Systems Safety for a cool program at a defense contractor. He and his wife Bre, whom he met while at MCC, are celebrating their son's first birthday, and her own big milestone: graduating in the top 10% of her pharmacy class at UNT Health Science Center and starting a residency at John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth!

Mark Berry (BS in CE, UT Arlington, 2015; M.Engr. in CE, UT Arlington, 2017) has a new job at Diaz Engineering in The Woodlands. He's got three boys, a new gig, and a mini dachshund named Dexter.

Elijah Espinoza (ME, Texas Tech, 2020) is still doing structural analysis for a defense contractor and continues to learn and grow after more than four years on the job. He is proud to now serve on the MCC Engineering Advisory Council.

Chris Garland (ChemE, Texas Tech, 2016) is a Project Engineer at Lassonde Pappas, keeping the juice flowing near Asheville, North Carolina. He's married now and moonlights as a golf YouTuber (check out CGChunkyGolf!)

Matt Groh (ME, U of Alabama, 2024) has recently pivoted from the 3D printing industry and landed a new role as a Sales Engineer with Hexagon, a metrology company. He is now working closely with quality control teams.

Jaxom Hartman (EE, Texas Tech, 2019; MS in EE, ASU, 2024) is enjoying a new promotion, and reports that the engineering econ proved useful well beyond class, from 401(k)s to asset loans. One of his earlier projects, the SOAR pod, has also been publicly released.

Jacob Lockhart (MET, Tarleton, 2017) moved to Arkansas and now works in R&D for Sig Sauer, developing ammunition and building prototypes.

Colin Mocek (AE, Texas A&M, 2016) now works for Textron Aviation in Wichita as an FTE and co-pilot in the Experimental Flight Test Department for Part 25 commercial jets. After nearly a decade in Wichita, he's happily settled with his wife and two energetic daughters who keep him on his toes.

David Moran (ME, Arizona State, 2019; MS in ME, UT Austin) has recently joined Stoke Space at Launch Complex 14 in Florida. Throughout his career, he's tested and operated nearly every part of a rocket, from engine development and payload integration to cryogenic systems and full-scale hotfire campaigns. Time really does fly when you're launching rockets!

Andrei Roman (EE, Texas A&M, 2023) is working in electrical engineering at Oracle, developing network management software that helps utilities manage and restore power outages. He also launched a free health and fitness app called Altus, designed for newcomers and detail-oriented gym-goers alike, with workout tracking and nutrition tools, and clothing on the way soon.

Karen Rucker (EE, Texas Tech, 2019; MS in Aero E, CU Boulder, 2025) finally got her master's in aerospace engineering while working full time for BAE Systems – and her advanced open water diver certification, and completed her first ultramarathon – but what about second master's?

Riley Samford (ME, UT San Antonio, 2024) is now an Associate Quality Engineer at Southwest Research Institute in the Fire Protection Section, where he inspects IMO-rated products and OSHA-regulated fuel tanks, and conducts IMO indicative testing. He also earned an Industrial and Manufacturing Certificate and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt!

Kaylee Wiley & Jorge Vasquez (CE, Texas Tech, 2019 x 2) are still at TxDOT and are getting married this November at Bear Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park. Their two dogs, Kiba and Kuma, keep them busy and happy, and they're excited for all that's ahead!

Hope Wright (ME, Tarleton, 2025; MS Tarleton) was promoted to Manufacturing Engineer at Trane in Waco and is now working toward her master's degree. It's been a busy year filled with career milestones and new furry family members: two puppies, Tater and Sammy, and two kittens, Poundcake and Gordo, joining cats Rusty and Mickey.

DP Yadav (CompE, Texas Tech, 2020; Master of Science in Data Science from UT Austin, 2025) is celebrating five years as a Data Engineer at Liberty Mutual. Now living in the Austin area with his wife and two young boys, life is busy, joyful, and full of family time.

Zabrina Darr (CE, Tarleton) works full time as a Senior Design Technician at Doucet-Kleinfelder, designing waterlines, wastewater systems, and storm drain infrastructure. She's married and has a six-year-old son who keeps life lively and full.

Eric DeLeon (ME, Baylor) is adjusting to life just across the highway. He's meeting plenty of new faces while serving as president of a scholarship program that supports transfer students.

Dylan Green (Math, Louisiana State University of Alexandria) is finishing his mathematics degree and plans to continue on to the University of North Dakota to study engineering. With less than a year left until graduation, he sends well wishes to the MCC Engineering team who helped start it all!

Megan Krupa (CE, Tarleton) is in her final semester at Tarleton State. She's continuing her internship with TxDOT in Stephenville and hopes to return to Waco after graduation.

Colin Wyble (ME, TSU) is now a drafter and intern at Diversified Product Development under Linewise, the same place he shadowed for his Intro to Engineering portfolio! He works on SolidWorks drawings, inspects parts, and designs machines for power line work. He is putting his Matlab knowledge to work in his classes!

AE = Aerospace

CE = Civil

ChemE = Chemical

CompE = Computer

EE = Electrical

ME = Mechanical

MET = Mechanical
Engr Technology