

# CONNECT

Winter 2015 • ECPI University



## **Best for Vets 4 Years Straight**

*Latest Honor from Military Times  
Caps off a Year of National  
Rankings in Military Education*

**Learn Why so Many People Say  
ECPI University is the Best  
Decision They Ever Made**

As we begin 2015, I would like to invite everyone to sharpen their focus and start the year off right. First, make a New Year's resolution that you are going to help at least one student graduate. Whether that student is yourself, or if you are faculty, staff or a fellow student, commit to helping at least one person reach their goal. Graduating from your program is how you receive the most value from attending ECPI University. In my 30 plus years with ECPI I haven't talked to one employer that asked to interview a non-graduate. Graduate and the path to a successful career is smoother.

I would also like students to take advantage of every opportunity that is offered and available here at ECPI University. In this edition of *eConnect*, you will read about a number of successful graduates. While they come from various walks of life and have pursued vastly different career paths, most share one thing in common: they got the most out of their ECPI University education.

If you're a new student, be disciplined and stay motivated. Develop good study habits early and stick with them. Many of the skills you learn in your Freshman Orientation class apply to all your courses. However, if you begin to struggle in any class, ask for assistance from the faculty or staff. Too often students wait too long. If you miss a class, work with your instructor to catch up. ECPI University's accelerated calendar means you have to keep up with the work. If you need help with a paper or a demanding math problem, visit the Writing Assistance Lab (WAC) or Math Assistance Lab (MAC) or use our Starfish student success platform to ask for assistance. There are tutors who are waiting to help.

Students, work with your program chair to identify professional certifications that you can earn during your program. At ECPI University, we offer over 100 different certifications and offer preparation to help students get industry recognition of skill levels. There has never been a better time to graduate with the advanced skills that ECPI University offers. Also, don't forget to spend some time with your career services advisor to identify potential externships sites, as well as improve your resume and interviewing skills.

ECPI University has built its reputation on accelerated delivery of our programs, student services, and one-on-one attention. As a student-centered college, our goal is to see you succeed. After you graduate, there will be very few times in your life that you have this many people dedicated to your success. Make the best use of our resources each day. Your "Best Decision" will be to use all the resources ECPI University has for you.

Sincerely,

Mark Dreyfus



## Online → On-the-Job Online Grad has New Degree and New Outlook on Himself and His Career

For many years, Michele Pistone simply did not consider himself "college material." So after high school, he joined the Navy. Six years soon passed and he decided it was time to join the private sector. He secured a job in the electronics industry and was doing well. However, he quickly learned that he could only advance so far without a college degree.

Not being quite sure where to begin, he did a great deal of research. "After searching many online colleges, I decided that ECPI University was one of the few online universities which could offer me the

degree I needed in the shortest amount of time and at a reasonable cost," says Michele. "I was intimidated at first but the abundant social interaction with fellow students, the encouragement from my professors and great support from the student

*"After two decades of thinking I was not 'college material,' I succeeded in graduating Summa Cum Laude with my Bachelors of Science degree in Electronics Engineering Technology."*

– Michele Pistone,  
Online Graduate



services staff allowed me to succeed. After two decades of thinking I was not 'college material,' I succeeded in graduating Summa Cum Laude with my Bachelors of Science degree in Electronics Engineering Technology."

Michele was even honored with the Outstanding Performance Award. Within 30 days of graduation, he was promoted to manager. Says Michele, "Now, I have a roadmap that has no limits!"



# Columbia Student Uses Military Discipline and Online Classes to Balance Life's Demands

Like most military veterans, Welcome Knox knows how to face down a challenge. She's been doing it her whole life. An Air Force veteran, Welcome spent more than four years on active duty and seven years in the reserves. Currently, she is working on her Bachelor of Science degree in Healthcare Administration at the Columbia, South Carolina campus, having already earned her associate's degree in the field. A great source of pride to her loved ones, Welcome is the first person in her family to graduate from both high school and college.

Shortly after enrolling at ECPI University, Welcome had to have surgery which would prevent her from attending on-campus classes. She requested online classes and soon discovered the faculty to be very helpful and understanding. "They were so very responsive. I'd send an email to them and they'd get back to me an hour or two later, not two days later," she says. "ECPI University is definitely the best decision I ever made!"

Welcome is currently working the third shift at Wal-Mart while attending school so she has to be highly-disciplined in planning her schedule. "After work, I'll take a shower, eat, and relax for a few minutes, and then get on the computer," she says. "I'll spend two to three hours doing classwork, then go to bed and sleep for six hours. After waking up and getting my bearings, I'll get back online and make a couple of posts or do an assignment." Her advice to first-time online students is simple: "Don't expect to master it all at once. It will take some getting used to,



but you'll get the hang of it. There are people there to help, and don't be afraid to ask.

*"ECPI University is definitely the best decision I ever made!"*

– Welcome Knox,  
Healthcare Administration  
Student

"My two biggest supporters are my mom and my daughter, Alyssa. "Having such strong support from my family has helped me through difficult times, and has provided a great foundation for future academic and career success."



## ◀ Focus on Faculty

**Name:** Dr. Ronnie L Bolick. Ph.D., CCI

**Title/Department/Campus:** EET Professor, CET, Greensboro

**Education:**

- Ph.D., Mechanical/Materials Engineering, North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro, N.C. jointly with NASA Langley Research Center, 2005
- M.S., Mechanical Engineering, North Carolina A&T State University, 2003
- B.S. in Physics, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, 1988
- A.S. in Pre Engineering, Western Piedmont Community, Morganton, N.C., 1981

**Started at ECPI University:** July 7, 2012

**What did you do prior to joining ECPI University?** I taught mechanical engineering and conducted research for various DOD facilities. I also worked in industry as a Test, Quality, Reliability, and Research and Development Engineer.

**Most Rewarding Professional Experience:** Seeing the final product of several of my research projects being used and knowing that they were mine

**Most Rewarding Personal Experience:** Birth of my daughter

**Greatest Accomplishment:** Being the first in my family to receive a Ph.D

**Favorite Book:** The Hobbit

**Biggest Pet Peeve:** People not following through on their promises and/or keeping their word

**Hobbies:** Kayaking, soccer, basketball, hiking, camping, fishing, and golf

**Favorite Food:** A toss-up between meatloaf and mashed potatoes or hamburgers and hot dogs off the grill

**My Most Treasured Possession:** My family

**A Talent I Wish I Had:** To have been an M.D. rather than a Ph.D. so I could help people in a different fashion

# Military Times Names ECPI University Best for Vets 4 Years in a Row

*Honor Caps another Year of Academic Excellence in Military and Veteran Education*

## Military Times

For the fourth straight year, ECPI University has been named “Best for Vets” by *Military Times*. Ranked number two nationwide among online and nontraditional schools, it has been rated among the top three since 2012.

As with all *Military Times* rankings, Best for Vets: Colleges 2015 is an editorially independent news project that evaluates the many factors that make an organization a good fit for service members, military veterans, and their families. “We factor in what is, to our knowledge, the most detailed school-by-school data on veteran students’ academic success

anywhere, including graduation, retention, persistence and course completion rates,” says Amanda Miller, editor of Best for Vets. “Two years ago, only 11 percent of the hundreds of schools surveyed could provide that level of detail. This year, that figure is up to 45 percent. By recognizing only the schools that do the most, we believe we’re helping to raise the bar in veteran student services.”

At ECPI University, faculty and staff are constantly striving to understand the unique needs of veteran students. “We provide the services and support that helps them complete their programs at a

higher rate, and be more successful with their next career,” says ECPI University Executive Director of Military Education Bob Larned.

“Many of our veteran students have full-time jobs and/or families, so they are very busy. We are always looking for ways to help them work through challenges that may arise so they keep moving toward their goal of graduation.”



## Military Advanced Education

*Military Advanced Education* (MAE) magazine has once again designated ECPI University as a “Top School.” Each year, the MAE Guide spotlights colleges and universities that adhere to the highest principles and best practices in military and veterans’ education. It presents the results of a questionnaire aimed at the military-supportive policies enacted at more than 600 institutions of higher learning. MAE’s 2015 Guide to Colleges & Universities

arms students with information about institutions that go out of their way to give back to men and women in uniform.

This year, schools were evaluated on:

- Military Culture
- Financial Aid
- Flexibility
- On-campus Support
- Online support services

The resulting information will enable prospective students to quickly target schools like ECPI University that follow best practices in military education, and then put these in context with other academic or career considerations.



## Military Friendly 2015

For the fifth-straight year, *Victory Media* has named ECPI University a 2015 Military Friendly® School. The veteran-owned company surveys tens of thousands of people and adjudicating lists that capture

best practices in recruitment and retention of military personnel as civilian employees and students. Colleges and universities on its list are recognized for having gone above and beyond in provide transitioning

veterans the best possible experience in higher education.



## Virginia Values Veterans

The Virginia Values Veterans Initiative has once again certified ECPI University for its commitment to recruit, hire, and train, Virginia’s veterans. In 2014 alone, the University hired more than 70 veterans as faculty and staff members.

For ECPI University, hiring vets is an easy decision. They are dependable and dedicated. They also provide a reassuring presence on campus. Veteran students know they don’t have to look far to find someone who knows what it’s like to

walk in their shoes.



## MAKING THEIR MARK



**James Spinks**, a member of the mathematics faculty at the Greensboro campus, has just co-published two papers in the *International Journal of Climate*: “Variability of the Subtropical Highs, African Easterly Jet

and Easterly Wave Intensities over North Africa and Arabian Peninsula in Late Summer” and “Effects of the Subtropical Anticyclones over North Africa and Arabian Peninsula on the African Easterly Jet.” He also recently built a weather forecasting machine on campus.



**Dr. Glenn Corillo**, a member of the Arts & Sciences faculty at the Virginia Beach campus, recently presented at the annual conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Dr. Corillo spoke on “How to Effectively Construct and Conduct a Press Conference.” Dr. Corillo is a retired television news anchor who served on the news desk of a CBS affiliate in a top 40 market for more than 20 years.



**Jacob Pope**, President of the Richmond/Innsbrook campus, and his dog, Hammer, were selected to represent the United States as one of six dog/handler teams at the 2014 WUSV World Championships in Haguenau, France. The U.S. team posted an impressive 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish.



**Brett Hall**, Director of Career Services at the Columbia campus, has been appointed to the South Carolina Association of Colleges and Employers (SCACE) Board of Directors, a professional organization that provides continuing education opportunities in cooperative education, career planning, recruitment, planning, and job placement. SCACE members come from business and industry, as well as the state’s public and private colleges and universities, technical colleges, and junior colleges.

## MAKING THEIR MARK

### Richmond Faculty Member Has Perspective Few Can Match *Shannon Lillard Sees Healthcare through a Patient’s Eyes*

For such a young woman, Shannon Lillard brings a lifetime of experience to the classroom. She teaches Medical Assisting at the Richmond/Moorefield campus; and while she does have significant experience as a health provider, it’s what this 36-year-old mother of two has experienced as a patient that really resonates in the classroom.

Diagnosed with diabetes 26 years ago, she has since endured a series of health threats of a magnitude that’s almost impossible to overstate. First, she suffered a pulmonary embolism, then a heart attack, and just over a year ago she received a kidney transplant. Yet when talking with her, there’s not even the slightest hint of self-pity. Having always wanted to be a teacher, she’s grateful for her students and grateful to be alive.

“I try to use my personal experience with the healthcare system to make the lessons a bit more relevant,” says Shannon. “I hope my own stories give them some

perspective and allow them to understand the impact they can have on patient care.”

The impact she has had on her own students is without question. They know she cares deeply about them and so does everyone on campus. “The morning she was being prepped for her kidney transplant she was texting me to get updates on her students,” says Campus Director of Academic Affairs Ashley Richards. “Her dedication never ceases to amaze me! She always seems more worried about other people than herself.”

*“I try to use my personal experience with the healthcare system to make the lessons a bit more relevant. I hope my own stories give them some perspective and allow them to understand the impact they can have on patient care.”*

– Shannon Lillard, Medical Assisting Faculty Member

It should come as no surprise that many of her students came to visit her at the hospital and enthusiastically welcomed her back when she returned to campus just six weeks later. Now, she’s back teaching classes, setting up free health screenings all over town so her students can get hands-on experience, and waiting for yet another transplant. Doctors have told her she needs a new pancreas. Does the prospect of yet another surgery get her down? Not a bit.

Shannon is facing the next challenge as she has all the others. “She is incredible,” says Richards. “She is always so positive, always smiling. Her enthusiasm is contagious. Her students feel it every moment they are in her class. Hiring Shannon is without a doubt the best decision we ever made!”



# Charlotte Grad Making Room on her Wall for More Degrees

*Goal-Oriented and Driven, Kebe Agurs has a Plan*

Look up the word “driven” in the dictionary and it would be entirely appropriate if Kebe Agurs’s photo was prominently displayed. She’s a prime example of someone with an abundance of energy who is also focused enough to make the most of each day.

She arrived at ECPI University after having put her academic career on hold. Her father fell ill and she had to return home from college to help with his care. Soon after, she enrolled at the Charlotte campus where she earned her Medical Assistant degree in a speedy 17 months. Within weeks of graduation, she began her first job with Novant Health. Then, she enrolled at ECPI University’s Online campus to begin pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Healthcare Administration.

For most people, that would be enough. However, Kebe is not like most people. She was offered a second, part-time job with Carolinas Healthcare System. So

even with two jobs, she maintains a full class load and intends to graduate with her second degree by the middle of 2016. From there, she plans to continue on with a Master’s degree and then a Ph.D.

Kebe’s goal is to run a hospital or large healthcare practice...and since she doesn’t like to waste idle time, maybe teach college on the side. “I really like working with patients, and it certainly gives me a ground-level perspective on healthcare, but I really think I can do my best work in management,” she says. “I’m a huge fan of teambuilding and getting everyone to work together. Creating that kind of culture is really exciting.”

How does she manage to balance all the demands in her life? “I am a strict scheduler,” says Kebe. “I plan everything. Once I’ve finished everything I have to do each day, I start preparing for the next week.” Her advice for new students: stay focused, write every goal down on paper,



and don’t get discouraged. Most importantly, create a strong support system. Says Kebe, “for me, it’s all about God, family, and friends. Put all that together with the fantastic support I get at ECPI University, and I know I am capable of doing anything. ECPI University is the best decision I ever made!”

# Virginia Beach Grad Gives his Advisors a Big Thumbs Up

When Michael Mollenhauer decided it was time to go back to school, he shuddered at the thought of spending the next four years in college. He was looking for a hands-on career and the education to match. After sifting through all the choices among schools and career fields, he discovered ECPI University’s Mechatronics program. Once he learned he could earn his bachelor’s degree in 2.5 years, he knew he had found the right college.

After enrolling at the Virginia Beach campus, Michael was pleasantly surprised to discover there were so many people dedicated to helping him whenever he needed. “My time at ECPI University wasn’t exemplary or fantastic, but the support from the faculty, staff, and administrators helped tremendously in helping me get through the rough patches,” says Michael. “The faculty members in the Mechatronics department are an excellent group of professionals. For me, their knowledge, experience, personalities, and interests made learning in this

field interesting and enjoyable.

“The administrators were visible in the halls and in the classrooms, and kept themselves available to the students. The few times I had issues, I knew I could go to any of the administrators and ask for help. If they couldn’t take care of it they put me in touch with someone who could.”

With graduation on the horizon, Michael made sure to take advantage of all the resources available to him at ECPI University’s Career Services Department. “They helped me hone my resume to optimize how marketable I would appear ‘on paper’

*“I definitely felt that my career advisor had a vested interest in me and my success; I wasn’t just another face in the crowd. ECPI University is the best decision I ever made!”*

– Michael Mollenhauer,  
Mechatronics Graduate

and were instrumental in putting me in touch with my current employer and in helping me get through the interview and hiring process,” says Michael. “I definitely felt that my career advisor had a vested interest in me and my success; I wasn’t just another face in the crowd. ECPI University is the best decision I ever made!”



Once he is fully trained, Michael will be responsible for testing the proprietary navigation software of Kongsberg Maritime before systems are installed on customer vessels, as well as conducting software updates, calibrations, and corrections on ships equipped with company systems. His advice for current students: speak up! “You are your own best advocate, but you have to speak up. The help is there for taking; you just have to ask for it.”

# INNOVATE – EDUCATE – GRADUATE!

## ECPI University Fall Faculty Conference

By Dr. Kat Prince, Vice President of Academic Affairs

More than 300 faculty members participated in this year's Fall Faculty Conference. Our theme, "Innovate, Educate, Graduate," was selected to magnify three things for which we are most passionate. At ECPI University, we do really good work. We attract students who can benefit from the education we provide; we offer education that is affordable; our faculty members are both academically and experientially prepared; we care about what our students think; we have a healthy graduation rate, and the vast majority of our graduates are employed in their fields. This year's conference was designed for us to look beyond the needs of today's academic and professional environment and prepare for the future.

The goals of the Conference were:

- Share New Teaching Practices – many designed to be implemented immediately into the classroom
- Recognize Top Performers
- Introduce New Initiatives for 2015
- Develop Annual Program Plans for 2015

The highlights included a panel of five industry experts who drew an exciting picture of the future of education and enticed us with innovations in teaching and learning. The panel consisted of Dr. William Hoover, Chairperson of Anatomy and Physiology, Bunker Hill Community College in Boston; Dr. Jon Landis, U.S. Development Executive with Apple Inc.; Maria Flores-Harris, MSN, RN, CNE and Director of Nurse Consulting for Kaplan Test Prep; Julie Stegman, Vice President and Publisher for Nursing Education for Wolters Kluwer Health; and Warner Lewis, Senior Manager for Education at Google.

In his keynote address, Dr. Tom Angelo, Assistant Provost and Professor of Higher Education at Queens University of Charlotte, invited and challenged us to help our students become stronger, deeper learners by applying the research-based guidelines which he calls the "Seven Levers for Higher and Deeper Learning."

Most of the break-out sessions were prepared and delivered by our very own pool of talented faculty. Many of the sessions provided hands-on activities



that can be taken back to classrooms such as how to use Big Blue Button, using VPubs effectively, eBook use, motivation and retention techniques, and iPad apps. There were sessions on innovation like the gamification and badging being built into the new MSN program, and using Google glass.

From all accounts, this Conference met the mark by providing quality speakers, informative workshops, solid planning for 2015, and actionable ideas to take back to our campuses. Applying what we learned at this year's conference will surely keep us at the forefront of education.



## Keys to Success

*Tips from Faculty, Staff, and Alumni*

### All You Have to do is Ask!

By Ron Neil, Charleston Campus Director of Academic Affairs

The most successful students are those that know "when" to ask, meaning when to ask the question that helps clarify and further understanding. That question, in some instances, causes an "epiphany moment" for a student that completely breaks down everything for them and begins a rapport or – better yet – a bond with that instructor that lasts their entire tenure at ECPI University. Many times, I have found that some

students are reserved and not yet sure if their question will be perceived as one worthy to be answered. I assure them all the time that every question is a good question. The little known secret is that instructors thrive on questions. We like it when students pick our brains. We enjoy it when a few terms later a student has still retained that nugget of knowledge that we provided. So, ask away; let us help you!



# How Critical is Critical Thinking?

By Jim Rund, Columbia Campus President

ECPI University recently conducted numerous focus groups with industry advisors. Unanimously, employers from every group said they wanted to hire problem solvers capable of tackling complex issues using critical thinking skills. According to the career search site Indeed.com, the term “critical thinking” in job postings has doubled since 2009. Tens of thousands of employers are hunting to find employees that are problem solvers.

## What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking isn't a new concept. It is deeply rooted in history, as far back as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Socrates believed in the discipline of methodical questioning to gain better understanding. He argued that we should closely examine our reasoning, assumptions, and judgments. He affirmed that by training the mind to consider multiple perspectives and approaches, people would be able to reason through problems and derive solutions.

A simple definition of critical thinking is that it is a process by which an individual improves the quality of reasoning by using an analytical approach: constantly testing one's understanding of a situation or problem by asking effective questions and narrowing down possible solutions.

## Why is critical thinking so important to employers?

As many simple and repetitive jobs have been assumed by automation, employers expect that graduates today will have advanced cognitive skills, particularly in relation to the fields of technology and healthcare. The days of rote memorization and uninspired didactic teaching are over. Education cannot be based on knowledge of facts without wisdom. Effective learning should train students *how* to think and not merely *what* to think.

Organizations want employees who can reason, understand, and develop creative approaches to problems. Ideas and solutions must be constantly reshaped and reformed through the analytic approach of sound reasoning. Change is constant in all industries and therefore businesses must adapt, improvise, and be innovative to survive. They do this with critical thinking skills.

## What does this mean for today's college student?

The world is changing at an accelerated rate. New information is being introduced at an unprecedented speed and with a shorter life cycle. What you learn in your first college classes may be outdated by the time you graduate. More and more, it's less about the data you know, and more about the cognitive reasoning skills you develop that will help you in your career. Ideas should be questioned, and facts must be checked. Students should view problems from all perspectives and gain a greater understanding of the truth. The result will be more effective learning and also more productive living. Graduates must adapt to the world's constantly accelerating transformation through a steadfast approach to critical thinking and reasoning.

## How does ECPI University promote critical thinking?

ECPI University students and faculty members engage in critical thinking



as a fundamental strategy of learning. Enabling students to think deeply about the process of reasoning is necessary to find the most effective approach to solving problems. Motivating students to take more responsibility for their own learning by actively analyzing information is a key trait of great educators.

ECPI University faculty members are committed to the value of critical thinking and incorporate these techniques in the classroom. From medical assisting classes in which students are asked to consider why a body system may respond in an unusual manner to standard stimuli, to network security classes where students are asked to ponder the multiple methods by which an intruder may engineer access to a network, faculty members work to move beyond rote memorization and enable students to create new approaches to solving challenges. Graduates who master critical thinking will be the top choice by employers for the best jobs.

*Education cannot be based on knowledge of facts without wisdom. Effective learning should train students how to think and not merely what to think.*



## Career Services Helps Charleston Vet Make Big Transition

As a soldier, Kirsis Cabrera was highly experienced in advanced planning. She spent 14 years in the field of logistics in support of Army operations. Throughout her career, she carefully planned each move. When she left the Army, she was hired as a government contractor. When she realized she needed more education to advance, she enrolled at ECPI University's Charleston campus to pursue her Bachelor's degree in Business Management.

Of course, part of logistics involves dealing with the unexpected. Just prior to graduating, she learned her contract at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command would be coming to an end. Needing to support her family, she knew she would have to act fast and turned to the Career Services Department at ECPI University's Charleston campus.

The very next day, her Career Advisor got a call about a job with a valued community partner, GeoWireless, which was

seeking to fill a junior engineering position. Before the conversation was over, the advisor had talked her way into also getting a rare job order for a logistician. Upon reviewing her resume, GeoWireless immediately interviewed Kirsis and was wowed by her education, experience, and drive. She was hired and never lost a day of work.

What's more, Kirsis got the opportunity she'd been wanting –

*“GeoWireless is sold on ECPI University. We’ve now hired two graduates and hope to hire more.”*

– Scott Higgens,  
GeoWireless Charleston  
Operations Manager



Kirsis Cabrera and Scott Higgens

the ability to take on more responsibility and advance. Within three weeks on the job, Kirsis was promoted from Logistics Analyst to Project Manager with additional duties that included website management and supporting other projects. “GeoWireless is sold on ECPI University,” says Charleston Operations Manager Scott Higgens. “We’ve now hired two graduates and hope to hire more.” Kirsis is living proof that when one door closes, another, better door may open.

### REACHING OUT

## Virginia Beach Students Come to the Rescue for Homeless Dogs

Chalk up another victory for Facebook. Once again, the social media site has proven powerful in helping people connect with worthy causes. Recently, an organization called Go Rescue Pet Adoption Center reached out to ECPI University through its Facebook page. The struggling charity was having difficulty raising funds and organizers were certain that a shiny new website would help those efforts.

Coordinating through the Virginia Beach campus' Computer and Information Science Department, ECPI University found three willing volunteers eager to help. Stu-

dents Mariah Dukes, Ron Pierce, and Bryant Garcia jumped right in and built the site. Visitors can get a look at their work by visiting [www.gorescuedogs.com](http://www.gorescuedogs.com). Since 2011, Go Rescue has been saving dogs from kill shelters around the East Coast. With its new website, its leaders hope to get a new lease on life, much like the dogs they save.



# Reaching Out: ECPI

## South Carolina



**Columbia Campus** – The Medical Assisting Club hosted a food drive with all donations going to the Oliver Gospel Mission. With the help of students, staff, and neighboring businesses near campus, more than 200 can goods were donated (a special thank you to Dr. Sarju Raiyani for all of his help).

**Columbia Campus** – Students, faculty, and staff donated toys and gifts for the Salvation Army Toy Drive.



Staff members Kiara Cancer and Tracy Wright with Director of Nursing Yvette Spees

**Charleston Campus** – The Heroes of Health Sciences Club hosted an American Red Cross blood drive, collecting 18 pints of blood.



**Charleston Campus** – The Technology Club and Honour Society hosted a free beginning Excel course to 18 senior citizens from the City of Hanahan Senior Center. The event was so well-received, the campus

and senior center plan to make computer classes a regular quarterly event.

**Charleston Campus** – The Honour Society hosted a food drive competition with the winning classes (day and night) each receiving a pizza party. Students collected a grand total of more than 1,500 pounds of food and \$155 in cash that they donated to the Lowcountry Food Bank.



## North Carolina



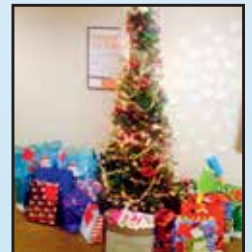
**Charlotte Campus** – The Student Veterans of America chapter celebrated Veterans Day by staging a penny war. Each class competed to collect the most pennies in a jar with a pizza party going to the winner. Ms. Gitten's MED158 night class won. More importantly, however, the classes combined to collect more than \$500 that they donated to the Wounded Warriors Project.

**Charlotte Campus** – The Medical Professionals Club assisted at the Total Wellness Extravaganza Expo, taking blood pressures, body mass indexes, and other vital signs.



**Greensboro Campus** – The Careers Services Department teamed up with ATCOM Business Technology Solutions to collect donations for the Adopt-a-Soldier program. All items are sent overseas and are used to fill backpacks for soldiers who spend extended periods of time away from base.

**Raleigh Campus** – People throughout campus adopted 31 children of ECPI University students who could not afford to buy their children Christmas presents.



## Virginia

**Richmond/Innsbrook Campus** – Staff, faculty, and fellow students collected holiday toys for the children of students who were having difficulty making ends meet. There were enough items donated to bring Christmas to 12 children.



**Richmond/Innsbrook Campus** – ECPI University sponsored Code VA's Hour of Code in Richmond. The event was part of Computer Science week and is dedicated to teaching code to young people.

# in the Community

**Richmond/Innsbrook Campus** – A group of nine faculty and staff members volunteered with Junior Achievement to teach personal finance to more than 50 teenagers from Caroline High School.



**Richmond/Innsbrook Campus** – With ECPI University as its top sponsor, the annual Legal Information Network for Cancer (LINC) Golf Tournament in Richmond logged another very successful year, raising more than \$13,000.



Co-chaired by University Director of Career Services Kenton Scarce, LINC provides information, education and referral services for legal, financial, and community resources to individuals confronted with the overwhelming issues that arise from the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

**Richmond/Moorefield Campus** – Students, faculty, and staff rolled up their sleeves to donate 21 pints of blood to Virginia Blood Services.



IT Management student  
Jacob Schollaert

**Richmond/Moorefield Campus** – Members of the campus community collected and signed 154 holiday cards for the American Red Cross as part of the Holiday Mail for Heroes program. All cards are sent to troops stationed overseas during the holiday season.



Moorefield Campus Criminal Justice Club officers Adolfo Orelana, Eric Grund, David Bacsa and Nathanael Willsey

**Richmond/Moorefield Campus** – People throughout campus donated generously to the annual Toys for Tots campaign.



Freshman Admissions Advisor Nick Kopsinis

**Newport News Campus** – More than 40 young ladies from Newport News and Hampton public schools attended an educational event on campus called “Girls Get IT.” Sponsored by ECPI University, the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development, and CISCO Networking Academy, this twice-yearly gathering is designed to encourage and nurture young women who may be considering a career in the Information Technology or Engineering fields.



**Virginia Beach Campus** – Campus Student Services Coordinator Martha Cerkez orchestrated another successful blood drive this holiday season, attracting enough donors to collect 37 pints for the American Red Cross!



**Virginia Beach Campus** – The campus chapter of Student Veterans of America (SVA) worked with the U.S. Marines to collect donations for Toys for Tots.

SVA Chapter President Susan King with GySgt. Eric Orth

## Campus-wide

As they do every year, students, faculty, and staff raised money and awareness for breast cancer research during the month of October, collecting a combined \$2,100.



Raleigh Campus

Charlotte/Concord Campus



Virginia Beach Campus



# Destination: Europe

## Study Abroad Students Enjoy Two Weeks of Learning and Leisure

By Dr. Glenn Corillo, Virginia Beach Campus Arts & Science Faculty

The Study Abroad program at ECPI University celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> year by taking a group of students to Germany, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland. The students visited Dachau, the first concentration camp built by the Nazis during World War II. The camp is known for its entrance of wrought iron with the saying "Work will set you free" built into the top of the gate. A few weeks after the visit, that gate was stolen. It has not yet been found.

Fifteen students and faculty made the two-week journey which enabled them to experience the culture and diversity

of Western Europe while sampling German sausage, Italian pasta, and Swiss fondue.

One of the stops was Mt. Pilatus in Switzerland, some 7,000 feet above sea level. The railroad to the top has been in operation for more than 100 years. While in Italy, students experienced riding in a Gondola along the main canal in Venice. Program organizers are considering a trip to South America for 2015 which would make it the fourth of six inhabitable continents visited since the program was launched in 2000.



Study Abroad students enjoy a gondola ride.

## LIBRARY CORNER

# Over 1,000 Views Recorded in First Month

## New Online Library Research Guides Are Big Hit

From its launch at the November Faculty Conference, the online library research guides are a big hit with students and faculty alike. The guides, which resemble mini-websites, are known as 'LibGuides' and are produced by the library staff with Springshare software technology. Daily usage reports show dramatic use by students, with over 1,000 views recorded in the first month.

Library Director Rebecca Tabakin praised LibGuides project manager and Greenville Campus Librarian Ben Shorb and his committee of librarians for developing an easy-to-use interface that showcases the selected resources. The most popular guide developed to date has been the APA Citation Style Format guide, produced by co-authors Heather Mitchell-Botts, Raleigh Campus Librarian and Jennifer Bell, Charleston Campus Librarian. The APA guide was debuted at the Conference and received instant positive reviews from the Arts & Science faculty.

LibGuides are planned for each academic program as well as for specific topics and courses, tutorials, and career

services. The Library has also been producing mini-video tutorials as part of its ongoing information literacy initiative

projects. LibGuides are available from Moodle and the Online Library at <http://ecpi.ent.sirsi.net>.

The screenshot shows the ECPI University Libraries website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the ECPI University Libraries logo, a search bar, and links for 'Catalog', 'Log In', 'My Account', and 'My Lists'. Below the navigation bar, there is a 'Library Catalog' section with a search bar and a 'Search' button. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'GENERAL INFORMATION' (Campus Libraries: Info & Hours, Library News, Services & Policies), 'HELP' (Ask a Librarian For Help, Login Help, Online Library Tutorial (Videos)), 'RESEARCH' (APA Citations & Style Guides, ALL Databases (By Subject), ALL Databases (A to Z), FIND Background Information, FIND Books & Videos, FIND E-Books, FIND Full-text Articles, LibGuides (Guides to Research), List of ECPI Print Periodicals, Recommended Websites), and 'ADDITIONAL INFO' (Certifications @ ECPI, For Alumni, For Faculty and Staff, For the Online Campus, Information Literacy). A 'New Library Additions' section is highlighted, featuring a book cover for 'We're not monsters: teens speak out about teens in trouble' by Weil, Sabrina Solin, published in 2002 with ISBN 038067033. A 'Find In My Library' button is visible next to the book information. At the bottom of the page, a large red banner contains the quote: "Whenever you read a good book, somewhere in the world a door opens to allow in more light."

# Roanoke Campus Partners with Carilion Clinic

ECPI University's Roanoke campus is pleased to announce its new partnership with Carilion Clinic, the largest hospital in the Roanoke Valley and surrounding counties. Nursing students will have tremendous opportunities for clinical rotations in the following areas: Neuro trauma Progressive Step-Down Unit, Vascular Progressive Step-Down Unit, and Cardiac Progressive Step-Down Unit where they can apply their acute care skills learned in the classroom.



# Charleston Campus Teams Up with Stingrays and Local High Schools to Support STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> Magazine's Classroom Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup>

There's nothing like a game to get teenagers' competitive juices flowing, and when you combine it with a little bit of STEM knowledge, big things can happen. That's exactly why ECPI University teamed up with the South Carolina Stingrays and some nearby high schools to stage STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> magazine's Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup> Challenge.

There is a big national push to fortify STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education in high schools throughout the country. South Carolina is no different. STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> magazine is a new resource for high school students, and it has listed ECPI University under "Schools that Train" for several careers including Data Security Analyst, Robotics Machinist, and Automation Technician.

Students from Hanahan and Fort Dorchester High Schools formed teams during their lunch and competed in a Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup> game based on content clues from STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> magazine. Winners from each school were rewarded with tickets to see the South Carolina Stingrays and a picture with "Cool Ray" the team mascot.

Twenty two students emerged from the playoffs into the STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup> Finals and four students at each school were crowned winners. "Our region has a



lack of skilled talent that is vital to fill the many STEM-related jobs being created in the Lowcountry," said Hanahan Academy

*"The STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> Classroom Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup> competition is a fun way for our students to get excited about careers in STEM as we meet the challenge to help build the talent pipeline that will provide employers in our region a highly-qualified workforce."*

– Dr. Laura Kick,  
Hanahan Academy

Coach Dr. Laura Kick. "The STEM Jobs<sup>SM</sup> Classroom Jeopardy!<sup>®</sup> competition is a fun way for our students to get excited about careers in STEM as we meet the challenge to help build the talent pipeline that will provide employers in our region a highly-qualified workforce."

Fort Dorchester High School Counselor Ms. Meredith Gadsden echoed that sentiment, saying "This is a fun and engaging way to help our kids learn about the exciting opportunities they have after high school. I hope this will become an annual event that will continue to grow and get better as the years go by."

# Culinary Grad Makes Final 2 in Hell's Kitchen

For the better part of the fall television season, members of the ECPI University community have been rooting hard for one of their own. Culinary graduate Bryant Gallaher edged-out fellow contestants week after week on the popular *Hell's Kitchen* show on the Fox Network. The reality cooking competition is hosted by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay and features 16 contestants who compete against one another, first in teams and then, individually.

In December's season finale, it all came down to him and one other person, La Tasha McCutchen of Winter Haven, Florida. In the end, it was McCutchen who got the nod, along with a \$250,000 salary as head chef at Ramsay's new Pub & Grill in Atlantic City. Although Gallaher did not win, he's a winner to everyone at



his alma mater, ECPI University's College of Culinary Arts, Culinary Institute of Virginia. Moreover, if exposure is worth something, it would not be surprising if

there were some impressive job offers heading his way!

## THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

# Newport News Students Honored by Virginia Peninsula Chamber

Four students from the Newport News campus were honored by the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce (VPCC) at its annual meeting. They received the President's Award for their work in developing a news website for the VPCC. "We wanted a site that would be very user-friendly so our staff could easily update and add content without IT support," says VPCC President and CEO Mike Kuhns. "They did an outstanding job!"

The site was built in consultation with VPCC staffers, and the project served as an externship for the students. During the presentation, Kuhns noted not only the quality of their work but the fact that they devoted well beyond the 135 hours required for their externships.



ECPI University students Marques Mitchell and Eleanor Humphrey, VPCC President and CEO Mike Kuhns, ECPI University student Kristopher Todd, and ECPI University Newport News Campus President Dr. John Olson (not pictured: Rachel Lewis)

## HANDS-ON LEARNING

**Richmond/Innsbrook Campus** – Computer and Information Science students assemble new computers that will be used in an Electronics Engineering Technology class.



**Richmond/Moorefield Campus** – Surgical Technology students practice abdominal surgery techniques.



**Richmond/Moorefield Campus** – Surgical Technology students practice plaster casting.



**Northern Virginia Campus** – Mechatronics student Paul Warlitrner designed and built “Piano Gloves” for his EET 411 project. The idea: to create a simulated piano that can be played

anywhere. The fingers of the gloves have momentary contact switches embedded. By pressing a glove finger on a solid object, the switch is engaged and a signal is sent to an Arduino processor. The program takes the input, and generates a digital tone which is converted to analog and sent to a speaker. Multiple octaves can be supported by the project which makes it even more like a real piano.

**Virginia Beach Campus** – Faculty member Larry Saccoia’s CIS 207 class works in a Router Lab where they built a computer network comprised of 8 routers, 16 switches, and 24 hosts.



## ON CAMPUS



**Greenville Campus** – Employers from two local medical centers – New Horizon Family Health Services and The Charles Lea Center – visited campus to meet with 15 nursing students after they took their final exam.



**Charlotte** – Faculty and staff put out a spread of food and refreshments as part of a holiday student appreciation event. They shared a cheerful spirit and had time to reflect on a successful year and look forward to another to come!

# Nothing Could Stop Him, Not Even Saddam Hussein

*New Richmond Faculty Member Defies All Odds to Earn Ph.D.*

This is a story about a 30-year odyssey that began in the hellish confines of an Iraqi prison, yet happily ended in Richmond, Virginia. The year was 1983. Jamal Aldajaei sat among his classmates waiting to begin a graduate chemistry course when the secret police arrived and whisked him away.



Aldajaei had recently refused to sign a document pledging allegiance to Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party. For the next 10 months, he was subjected to various forms of torture. The sting of a whip against his bare skin became commonplace as were more sadistic sorts of brutality, the most painful of which involved being hung upside down from a revolving fan for hours on end.

Once released from a civilian court, he secured work as a chemist in the pharmaceutical industry but was denied the opportunity to earn a graduate degree. He married and had two children. Even as the Hussein regime became more oppressive, he could not remain silent. He began joining protests and was jailed twice more. Still, he would not break. "It is like this: the more you push, the more resistance you get," says Aldajaei. "Even in science it's this way. Every action creates an opposite reaction. In prison, they try to make you weak and you become

stronger. I became stronger."

He knew it was time to flee the country soon after he was released for the final time. In 1995, a general came to visit. As a chemist, he was told his talents were required by the military. "I refused," says Aldajaei. "I became a chemist to heal people, not kill people." He was jailed for 100 days, wasted away to skin and bones, and returned to his family unable to work as a chemist. Forced to drive a cab, he soon made his move and escaped to Syria. Using fake passports, his family ultimately joined him under the hopes of immigrating to America through

*"Many of our students are struggling to balance work, family, and academics. I try to share my story with them in order to provide encouragement. I say, 'if I can do it, so can you!'"*

– Dr. Jamal Aldajaei,  
Chemistry Faculty

a United Nations program.

Once again, disappointment followed. Years passed with no action on the family's application. In 2005, word came that it had finally been approved. Even upon arrival in the U.S., success would remain many years away. Unable to find work in his profession, he and

his wife were advised to seek jobs in the service sector. While enduring life in high-crime neighborhoods, Aldajaei still, however, remained optimistic. "Throughout my life, it always seems like a guardian angel is sent my way when I need one most," he says.

That guardian angel took the form of a local nurse who helped Aldajaei identify helpful resources, learn the language, and – most importantly – enroll in graduate school. It took many years. Often-times, he had to work three jobs to make ends meet. Yet, he persevered. In May of 2014, he became Dr. Jamal Aldajaei. A month later, he began teaching at ECPI University's Richmond/Emerywood campus.

"I love teaching at ECPI University," says Dr. Aldajaei. "Many of our students are struggling to balance work, family, and academics. "I try to share my story with them in order to provide encouragement. I say, 'If I can do it, so can you!'"

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