



FALL 2022 Issue No. 12

# achieve.

REACH. EXCEED. **ACHIEVE.**



**GEER UP GRANTS HELP HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GRAB EVERY OPPORTUNITY**

**> page 4**



# Triumphs, Trials, and Transitions

## Dr. Ramage reflects on Parkland College

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This edition of *Achieve* is special for me: it is my last opportunity to communicate with you in this space before my retirement in December.

My 24 years at Parkland College, including the last 15 as president, have been nothing short of delightful. Receptions, celebrations, graduations, and convocations top the list of memorable events, as they all revolve around the *people* of Parkland College.



DR. THOMAS R. RAMAGE

Fifty-six years ago, Parkland College was invented. Now, the college has served more than 350,000 students and counting. You would be hard-pressed to find a family in our 3,000-square-mile district that Parkland hasn't engaged in learning.

So much has changed over the years, and recent times have demanded more than "business as usual." Yet Parkland's exceptional faculty, staff, and programs continue to make it a leading community college with a national reputation for excellence, held in high regard by its communities.

I vividly recall speaking to our staff shortly after being named president about the high regard Parkland enjoys. I assured them my chief goal would be to not screw it up. Hopefully, we've met or exceeded your expectations. I assure you, that was our intent.

Parkland College is the institution it is today because of you. Its technology, campus buildings, landscapes—they all reflect the people who spend their time here as students, trustees, employees, and community partners.

We are deeply proud of this not-so-little community college that sits quietly next to the University giant, and of its history. We hope you are proud of your *community's college* as well.

It has been the honor of my life to have served you at Parkland College.

**Dr. Thomas R. Ramage**  
President, Parkland College

## what's inside

### 2 REMEMBER:

#### **Triumphs, Trials, and Transitions**

President Ramage reflects on College's past, future

### 3 ACHIEVE:

#### **From Parkland Automotive to Tesla**

Alumnus revved by new career

### 4-5 REACH:

#### **GEER Up: Grants Help Students Grab Opportunities**

Early College students seize the day

### 6-7 EXCEED:

#### **Cobras Athletic Successes**

In 2020-2022, our Cobras wouldn't quit

### back PLAN AHEAD:

#### **Upcoming Events**

*Achieve* is an annual publication for the residents of Parkland College District 505.

WRITER/EDITOR  
**Ashli Cean Landa**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
CONTRIBUTOR  
**Della Perrone**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
**W Jake Tatar**

PRESIDENT  
**Dr. Thomas R.  
Ramage**

#### PARKLAND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Bianca T. Green**  
(CHAMPAIGN)

**Dana D. Trimble**  
(NEWMAN)

**James L. Ayers**  
(MONTICELLO)

**Timothy V. Johnson**  
(URBANA)

**Jarrett Clem**  
(ST JOSEPH)

**Jim Voyles**  
(TUSCOLA)

**Maureen Banks**  
(SAVOY)

STUDENT TRUSTEE  
**Jayden Sortor**  
(SHERMAN)

**THE MISSION OF PARKLAND COLLEGE IS TO  
ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN LEARNING.**

# From Automotive Technology to Tesla

## *Parkland alumnus talks new career*

Scott Mochinski took Parkland College classes to supplement his love of old cars with hands-on knowledge. He had no idea it would lead him to a career at Tesla.

“When I started at Parkland, I had no intention of it having any special influence on my career or my life,” he says. “I was simply pursuing a hobby and interest in the way I always do.”

A lifelong learner with an already well-established career, Scott had just returned to Champaign from a job promotion in Chicago when he enrolled in Parkland’s Automotive Technology program.

“I’ve been working on cars from the sixties and seventies for decades as a hobby, but there was still a bunch of stuff I didn’t know, especially about modern cars,” Scott says. “Electric vehicles were something I had no experience with but was interested in knowing more about.”

The Automotive Technology AAS degree requires a semester of work experience, but Scott wasn’t interested in the traditional gasoline-powered vehicle industry at all. When Tesla’s service center in Chicago began offering a 12-week, full-time, paid internship, Scott seized the opportunity by applying.

Scott was accepted not only into the internship but into Tesla’s 12-week START training program for automotive technicians. Near the end of the program, he seized another opportunity, this time

a call for semi service technicians, and felt amazed to receive it.

“How I got here, as with most of the jobs I’ve ever had, was a total fluke,” Scott says, laughing. “I must have done well enough in the interviews though, because here I am.”

Scott is now an engineering technician on Tesla’s current semitruck project as a member of the Global Service Development group. He creates service manual procedures and supports the testing and development of the new truck.

Calling his new job “the best position I have ever been in,” Scott acknowledges the role Parkland faculty played in his recent achievements.



SCOTT MOCHINSKI

“I had the honor and pleasure of having the incredibly positive influence, support, guidance, and encouragement from Parkland as an institution and from three people specifically: [Automotive Faculty Chair] Jonathan Ross, [Associate Professor] Montserrat Oliveras-Heras, and [CobraVenture Program Coordinator] Marc Changnon.”

As an older college student, Scott encourages students his age to take chances. “I was the oldest person in all my classes by a huge number of years, but so what?” he says. “Be the oldest person in your class. It may be decades since you’ve taken a class but take it anyway! You are never, ever too old. You can do it!”



### **Free Training for New Early Childhood AAS**

Experienced in childcare? Advance your career through Parkland’s new, transferable Early Childhood Education AAS degree, and see if you qualify for training through the Illinois Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship.

**Learn more:**

**[parkland.edu/ece](http://parkland.edu/ece) | [isac.org/ECACEscholarship](http://isac.org/ECACEscholarship)**



# Interview



# GEER Up Grants Help High School Students Grab Every Opportunity

## *Early College students seize the day*

The significance of seizing new opportunities hasn't been lost on two high schoolers earning their Parkland College degrees before their diplomas this month.

"Initially, I just wanted to take a couple classes per semester to see what I'm interested in, but then I started to plan for my associate's degree earlier this fall," says Parkland Early College student Arika Sides, who is graduating with her political science degree.

During the height of the pandemic, in fall 2020, Arika decided to take advantage of her extra time and apply to Parkland's dual enrollment program for high school students. She took two to five Parkland classes each semester. "I loved the online and hybrid formats Parkland offered because I was able to work on my classes on my own time."

Arika also reached for a second opportunity during this time: she applied for GEER Up, Parkland's tuition-assistance program for high school students, aimed at relieving some of the financial stressors that arose from the pandemic. The grant covered all her tuition and textbooks while she balanced two jobs, her Centennial High School studies, and dual enrollment classes.

"It was very difficult," Arika admits. "It got very hectic, and although that was draining, I now know I can handle so much more that comes my way."

Despite her study challenges, Arika says Parkland's Early College Services staff provided strong support. "Every interaction I've had with Parkland staff has been so positive to help me reach all of my goals," she says. "They have always wanted me to succeed. Thanks to them, I've had the support to get my degree."

For summer 2020, home school student Mohammad Yaseen also decided to give Parkland's Early College Services a try and take advantage of GEER Up funds to cover tuition. He is earning his General Education Certificate (GEC) this spring.

"Most of my time with the Early College program has been through the GEER Up grant, and I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity," Mohammad says. "The Early College program is great for high schoolers looking to improve technical skills in any field and start their college career as early as they can. It's given me and many other young students the opportunity to get a head start in life."

Starting college classes at age 15 can present challenges, but Mohammad never felt singled out for his age, saying that he fit right in because he had to work just as hard as any other student. He gives big props to Parkland faculty and staff for helping him succeed.

"My experience at Parkland has been wonderful," he says. "I've met so many great people and incredible professors. Whenever I go to any of my professors' office hours, I'm always met with a willingness to help and to go the extra mile."

For both Arika and Mohammad, their early college experiences provided them with much more than degrees and certificates; they'll both be graduating with the knowledge that they can achieve their dreams.

"I've learned that I can accomplish a lot more than I thought," says Arika. "Being involved in this program has taught me the importance of perseverance."





ARIKI SIDES



MOHAMMAD YASEEN

“While I’ve been at Parkland, I’ve learned about my strengths, limits, and how to adjust myself to be better equipped for my classes,” Mohammad adds. “I’ve also learned that I have a lot more potential than I gave myself credit for.”

Ariki advises students interested in getting a head start on college to reach out to Parkland staff for help. “They know so much about what

students go through and give great advice to help students succeed in any circumstance.”

Mohammad also suggests that students look for hidden opportunities.

“Be as proactive as possible,” he says. “If you make sure to take every opportunity that’s given to you, then you can make light out of any situation.”

## Early College Services

Parkland’s Early College Services unit provides programs for high school juniors and seniors interested in getting a head start on earning college credit, including:

- **Dual Credit** allows eligible students to simultaneously earn college credit toward a specialized certification or degree and credit toward high school graduation requirements.
- **Dual Enrollment** is similar to dual credit, but students do not earn credit at the high school level, only toward college credentials.
- **Early College and Career Academy (ECCA)** offers nine career-specific programs for high school juniors and seniors to earn dual credit while gaining skills in specialized fields.
- New ECCA pathways include Precision Agriculture and Early Childhood Education! Visit [parkland.edu/ECCA](http://parkland.edu/ECCA) for more information.



**early college services**  
AT PARKLAND COLLEGE

[earlycollege@parkland.edu](mailto:earlycollege@parkland.edu) | 217/353-2663  
[parkland.edu/earlycollege](http://parkland.edu/earlycollege)



## Teaching Excellence: Manuel Rodriguez

Early College program student Mohammad Yaseen spoke highly of Manuel Rodriguez, associate professor of chemistry and winner of Parkland College’s 2022 Teaching Excellence Award.

“Upon beginning my chemistry class, I was not very confident,” said Mohammad. “After getting to know Professor Rodriguez and countless office visits, he helped change my views completely. I went from an average student in chemistry to one who loves learning about it.”

“Manny has an incredible ability to connect with his students, aided by his great sense of humor, humility, and laid-back persona,” a professor notes in his recommendation of Rodriguez for the award. “His rapport with students can be observed in frequent office visits, bantering in the Science Commons where he spends time tutoring, or simply sharing about life outside the classroom.”

A full-time faculty member since 2010, Rodriguez serves as assistant to the Natural Sciences Department chair and is a member of the Parkland College Association’s assessment and general education objectives committees.





# Cobra Success

***In 2021-2022 our Cobras wouldn't quit.***

From national championships to all-conference honors to the best coaches and athletic staff in the state, our Cobras can't stop.

## **Volleyball**

The Cobras volleyball team has always had a legacy of achievement, having reached the NJCAA National Tournament for a whopping 14 years in a row, the longest active streak in the NJCAA. Their star power resulted in a DII National Championship in November 2021, their first since 2016, finishing the season on a wild 38-match win-streak.

"It was such an amazing closing to a long and outstanding season," Head coach Cliff Hastings said. "We learned so much about ourselves as individuals and as a team, and that sense of accomplishment at the end to validate all the work and development is such a great feeling. Each and every one of these girls made important contributions on the year, and our coaching staff is so thankful for them, their families and their pride in Parkland College and Cobras volleyball."

Hastings has seen a significant amount of success over his career, having been selected as the NJCAA Division II Volleyball Coach of the Year for the third time in 2021. Mid-season, his team helped him surpass the 600-win mark, allowing him to end the season with 634 career wins to 56 losses for an impressive .91 winning percentage. He was also awarded the 2021 M-WAC Conference Coach of the Year.

In December, assistant coach Ron Hoppe-Hastings was also honored as the American Volleyball Coaches Association National Assistant Coach of the Year by the Two-Year College Volleyball All-America Selection Committee.



## **Basketball**

The men's basketball team reached new heights this year, earning their fourth Mid-West Athletic Conference title since 2015, and the #1 seed in the Region 24 Tournament. The Cobras took it all the way to the NJCAA National Tournament but fell to the defending champs in March. Head Coach Anthony Figueroa still sees it as a significant achievement for Parkland Athletics.

"To finish seventh in the country, out of about 130 teams at our level, I hope our guys just really understand what they did," he said. "I think we accomplished what we set out to do at the beginning of the year, which was to make sure everyone would remember us and Parkland, and know that we're a national program that can compete at that level."

The Cobras finished out the year with three straight postseason wins by an average of 16.7 points, the best postseason finish for the team since 2017, and the third time Figueroa has coached the Cobras to a top-eight finish at the NJCAA DII National Tournament.

exceed.





## 2021 NJCAA DIV II VOLLEYBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

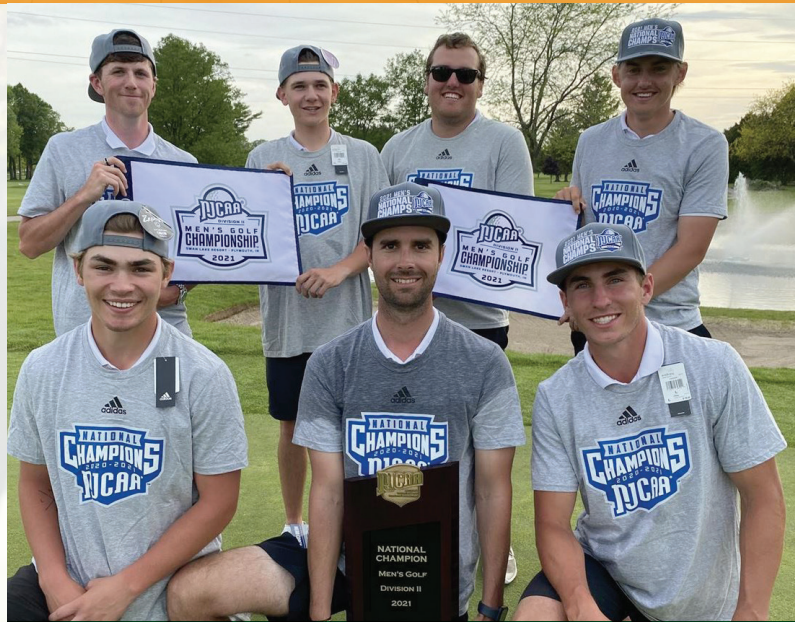
### Golf

The Cobras golf team was crowned the 2020-21 NJCAA DII National Champions by two strokes in May 2021, marking the program's first-ever championship win. In another first, five members of the team received All-America honors from the NJCAA, and three were recognized as All-Americans by the Golf Coaches Association of America.

Head coach Corbin Sebens was also honored as the winner of the 2021 Dave Williams National Coach of the Year Award for Division II, Coach of the Tournament at the 2021 National Championship, and 2020-21 Coach of the Year for both NJCAA Region 24 and the Mid-West Athletic Conference.

"I am extremely honored and humbled to be chosen as the National Coach of the Year," said Sebens. "A coach is only as good as their players, and I have been honored to coach some of the hardest working players that displayed unwavering determination and fight throughout the entire season. The motivation and perseverance that they displayed to win a national championship was truly inspirational!"

Since Sebens became the head golf coach at Parkland in 2013, the Cobras have qualified for the national championship five times, including three top-5 finishes and winning the title in 2021; won 34 tournaments, seven conference championships and four regional championships, and had 20 golfers earn All-America accolades.



## 2021 NJCAA DIV II GOLF NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Find more Cobras success stories at [athletics.parkland.edu](https://athletics.parkland.edu).

[Athletics news contributors: Nathan DeHaan, Sports Information Director; Joey Gruner (Sports Information Director until 9/2021)]





2400 West Bradley Ave., Champaign, IL 61821-1899  
[parkland.edu](http://parkland.edu) • 217/351-2200

ECRWSS  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Champaign, Illinois  
Permit No. 268

**it's your time.**

**Flexible Classes | Tuition Help | Transfer Credits**

**Register now for Summer 2022**  
[PARKLAND.EDU/summerfall22](http://PARKLAND.EDU/summerfall22)

## plan ahead FOR THESE SUMMER AND FALL EVENTS

### MUSIC ENSEMBLE CONCERTS [parkland.edu/musicensembles](http://parkland.edu/musicensembles)

Check back in the fall for new music ensemble performances!

### STAERKEL PLANETARIUM [parkland.edu/planetarium](http://parkland.edu/planetarium)

- **Spring/Summer Prairie Skies**  
Fridays at 6:30 pm (May) and 7 pm (June–September)
- **Unveiling the Invisible Universe**  
Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm (May)
- **Pink Floyd light show (It's back!)**  
First Friday of the month at 9 pm (May–December)
- **Flight Adventures**  
Saturdays at 6:30 pm (May–June 4)
- **Expanded View**  
Fridays at 8 pm (June)
- **Mexica Archaeoastronomy (new!)**  
Europe to the Stars (new show!), Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm (August)
- **Little Star That Could,**  
Saturdays at 7 pm (August)

### GIERTZ GALLERY [parkland.edu/gallery](http://parkland.edu/gallery)

The gallery is excited to return to in-person shows. Check out upcoming exhibitions at [parkland.edu/gallery](http://parkland.edu/gallery)!

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION [www.parkland.edu/ceRegister](http://www.parkland.edu/ceRegister)

Pick up a new class this summer! Visit [parkland.edu/ceRegister](http://parkland.edu/ceRegister) to check out the personal and professional development courses offered year round, and try [parkland.edu/btce](http://parkland.edu/btce) for college noncredit classes!

- **College for Kids**  
June 20–30 and July 11–21  
12:45–2:45 pm and 3–5 pm  
Two-week summer enrichment camps for kids 6–13
- **Summer Discovery:**  
June 6–July 28  
Spark, ignite, launch. Summer discovery camps are built for teens who are looking for an exciting, adventurous, and educational summer.

### PARKLAND THEATRE: [parkland.edu/theatre](http://parkland.edu/theatre)

The Parkland Theatre's 2022–2023 theatre season will include:

- **The Story (October)**
- **Comedy of Errors (November)**
- **A Christmas Story (December)**
- **Blithe Spirit (February)**
- **The Good Doctor (March)**
- **Sweeney Todd (April)**

### PARKLAND COLLEGE CLOSED [parkland.edu/catalog](http://parkland.edu/catalog)

May 30

July 4

All College offices closed on Fridays  
from June 10–July 29  
September 5

Parkland College ensures equal educational opportunities are offered to all students regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, gender expression, disability, sexual orientation, veteran/Vietnam veteran era, age, or religion, and is Section 504/ADA compliant. For additional information or accommodations, call 217/351-2551.