

LAMAR INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY

# THE PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

May 2021 | Student Success Edition | VOL. 4 • ISSUE 1

## Spring 2021 Commencement: Up from 387 last year to over 600 awards (Record Breaking)

During President Lonnie Howard's remarks to the LIT Spring Graduating Class of 2021, he compared their hardships to a quote from the author Nicholas Sparks. Sparks wrote, "**Just when you think it can't get any worse, it can.**" This graduating class had to overcome Tropical Storm Imelda (2019), TPC Plant Explosion (2019), COVID-19 (2020), Hurricane Laura (2020), Hurricane Delta (2020), and most recently a Winter Ice Storm (2021).

### LIT Spring Graduating Class of 2021

- 565 graduates (unduplicated) who earned **605** degrees and certificates.
- They range in age from 17 to 63 years old.
- 49% are women, 78% 1st in their family to attend college, and 53% are students of color.
- 1 of 3 are still in high school. They all will earn a college degree or certificate before receiving their high school diploma.

Tiffany Murphy, Channel 6 KFDM News Anchor, was the Commencement Speaker. She encouraged the graduates to keep persevering when confronted with unexpected obstacles. Murphy shared her successful journey from childhood. Then President Howard closed the event with the same Nicholas Sparks quote. Howard says this quote actually ends positively with, "**Just when you think it can't get any better, it can.**" He concludes, LIT Spring Class of 2021, because you're graduating today, your lives have instantly gotten better...but so have the lives of your children, and your children's children for generations to come. Congratulations!

# Special Edition

## Spring 2021 Commencement

★ **Employee  
of the Month**



Randle "Randy" Dry  
Process/Instrumentation  
Lab Technician



Photos by Donna Burnside,  
Amber Clark,  
Jennifer Jackson and  
Rhonda Mitchell



# PRESIDENTIAL briefing

## Again Spring 2021 Enrollment Up (12%)

Despite the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple natural disasters, under Dr. Howard's leadership, LIT has had an enrollment increase in twelve semesters of his five-year history with the institution. LIT had another record-breaking spring enrollment of **3,885 students**, which represents a 12% increase from last year, and an enrollment increase five years in a row.

## LIT Ranked #7 out of nearly 1,000 community colleges in the U.S.



LIT has claimed yet another accolade for 2021, having just been named #7 in the top 50 of nearly 1,000 community colleges in the U.S. LIT was named number one in Texas by AcademicInfluence.com, as cited by Forbes Magazine in its March 7 issue. Forbes said of Academic Influence's first-ever ranking, "The system uses artificial intelligence technology to search massive databases and measure the impact of work by individuals who've been affiliated with colleges and universities throughout the world. Its approach is based on the premise that the people affiliated with a school determine its quality."

## LIT is now a Minority Serving Institution (MSI)

I am delighted to announce that LIT is now officially designated as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and eligible to participate in Title III: Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program (MSEIP) and Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) grant opportunities. The MSEIP assists predominantly minority institutions in affecting long-range improvement in science and engineering education programs and increasing the flow of underrepresented ethnic minorities, particularly minority women, into science and engineering careers. The SIP helps eligible Institutions of Higher Education to become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions.

## A Helping Hand from the LIT Foundation (LIT CARES, \$500,000)

The LIT Foundation has donated \$500K to support students impacted by COVID-19. This is the largest single donation ever given in the history of the LIT Foundation. Conceptualized by the president, LIT CARES is a unique and innovative program that helps the unemployed, under-skilled and recent high school graduates. The Foundation membership soared to this critical occasion to help our students. This generous donation from LIT Foundation will be utilized for students in need.

## Last Year's Virtual Commencement/Drive-Thru Recessional

Fall 2020 Virtual Commencement exercises held via [Facebook Live](#) exceeded expectations with over 15,000 people reached, and over 5,500 social media engagements. Our ceremony was followed by a drive-thru recessional with the graduates in their cars. Students decorated their cars, brought signs, and many wore their cap and gown! Thanks to all of our amazing faculty, staff, and foundation members for providing much-needed support.



A graduate enjoys engaging with LIT staff and faculty during the drive-thru recessional.

## LIT Receives \$307,000 (Texas Reskilling Grant)

LIT was awarded \$307K in grant funds to serve at least 200 students as part of the Governor's Emergency Educational Relief (GEER) Fund initiative. Reskilling grants will allow Texas public colleges, technical schools, and universities to provide financial assistance to Texas students covering tuition and fees. The grants are designed to support displaced Texas workers who need to reskill or upskill to get back into the workforce, and to support students who have previously stopped out of higher education to complete a postsecondary credential. Dr. Howard accepted a check from Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Commissioner Alvarez.



# 'Women in Technology' video series kicks off #WomensHistoryMonth

What more appropriate time to introduce a series on 'Women in Technology' at LIT, than during #WomensHistoryMonth?

This idea was the brainchild of Technology Department Chair Tiffany Williams-Parker, although the video was not initially planned to run in conjunction with Women's History Month.

She said, "My inspiration for this video was all the women in our programs. Seeing them (participate) in the classes offered in our Technology Department—knowing they will be working in a male-dominated field—inspired me to give them the recognition they deserve, especially with it being Women's History Month."

Together, with the Marketing Department, the idea of a video series was produced and became a reality. Williams-Parker said, "I enjoyed making this video and being able to celebrate the women in our programs, both past and present. Having worked in a male-dominated field myself, I felt that this video was important. Women being able to see other women learning and training through our programs will encourage them to be a part of the industry and join our programs, as well."

Williams-Parker added, she sees the videos being used as an introduction to her programs, for student orientation and recruitment. You can watch the videos on our [YouTube channel](#).



## LIT Dental Hygienist Student Wins Coveted State Award

Brittany Stollsteimer, a Lake Charles resident and LIT Dental Hygiene student, recently received state recognition at the virtual state convention of the Texas Dental Hygienists' Association's (TDHA). Stollsteimer was nominated by faculty members Michelle DeMoss and Dr. Kristina Mendoza. She was selected by the organization's leaders to receive the 2021 'TDHA Student of Compassion Award' for her exceptional compassion and ethics demonstrated while treating patients.



TDHA award winner

## LIT ranked nationally in top 25 for OSHA program

LIT was named one of the nation's elite, top 25 colleges for its Online Occupational Safety and Health Certificate program by Value Colleges. As the only college in Texas named to this honor, we join the ranks of such prestigious schools as Tulane University, Johns Hopkins University, California State University, University of Alabama, Auburn University and Rochester Institute of Technology.

In its independent online guide to the best values in undergraduate and graduate education, "Value Colleges focused specifically on fully accredited colleges and universities with an established reputation for quality," according to the company. Valuecolleges.com said, ranking is based "according to their cost, reputation and salary potential, using current data from IPEDS and Niche.com." [Read more here.](#)



## Radiologic Tech students earn awards

Radiologic Technology second-year students participated virtually in the Annual Texas Society Radiologic Technologists Educational Symposium.

Evie Hill won second place and Kryshea' Dawsey placed fourth (see photo) in a Student Educational Bee competition. Both will graduate in May. Each Radiology Program in Texas was given the opportunity to enter two to three students.

First-year radiology students received three of four total TSRT-awarded scholarships for \$1000 each. They are: Loryn Johnson, Ashley Cruthirds and Elizabeth Roy.



(L to R) Kryshea' Dawsey and Evie Hill, Radiologic Tech award recipients.

## STUDENTS CAN APPLY NOW FOR SUMMER AND FALL 2021 SCHOLARSHIPS

LIT students, do you need help with paying your tuition? The Summer and Fall 2021 Scholarship Application is now open. There are a number of scholarship opportunities for students in all majors. The application is available on the LIT website at [lit.edu/foundation/scholarships](http://lit.edu/foundation/scholarships). If you need assistance or have questions, please call 409-880-2379 or email [scholarships@lit.edu](mailto:scholarships@lit.edu).

## LIT names Black History Scholarship winners

Congratulations, DeKaylea Richard and Renwick Byerly Jr. on receiving \$500 Black History Scholarships!

DeKaylea, born and raised in Beaumont, is a Respiratory Care student. "Thank you for choosing me as a recipient of this scholarship," DeKaylea said. "It gives me more drive to make sure I hold myself accountable to continue to be great and perfect my skills. I started my LIT journey in 2020. I've enjoyed and learned so much about the program on and off campus. The staff in the Respiratory Department are amazing and give you the motivation and excitement to learn."



DeKaylea Richard | Respiratory Care



Renwick Byerly, Jr. | Utility Line Tech.

From Renwick, a Utility Line Technology major: "I would like to thank you, the people who made this scholarship possible, and for choosing me to be awarded this Black History Scholarship. I am very appreciative and it will go a long way as I finish out my college career."

## Four students receive Edmund P. Kuempel Scholarship



Lucas Bostwick  
Business Technology



DeKaylea Richard  
Respiratory Care



Layne Lewis  
Computer Drafting



Caroline Ogden  
Radiologic Technology

Congratulations to the four LIT recipients of the Edmund P. Kuempel Scholarship for \$5,000 each! The scholarship program provides financial assistance to worthy, deserving students and recognizes student leadership and achievements, while encouraging academic excellence. Through this program, students in any associate or baccalaureate degree program at any TSUS institution may apply to receive financial assistance.

## Additional classes and hours announced for Fall 2021

To further accommodate students who are working with busy schedules, LIT is offering additional classes during **weekend** and **evening** hours, as well as fast-track courses.

Students can now earn a Process Operating degree in less than two years, and there are new 8-week and hybrid courses for HVAC. The following classes will be offered on Saturdays: Advanced Engine Technology, General Education and Industrial Technology. Evening classes are now held in Truck driving and Welding. For individual schedules, visit [lit.edu/programs](http://lit.edu/programs) or visit [lit.edu/go](http://lit.edu/go).

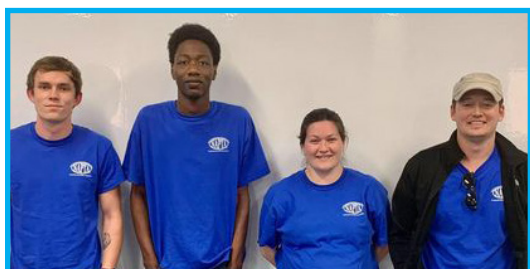
## LIT Ranks #15 Nationally for 2021's Most Affordable Technical and Trade Schools

LIT has just been ranked #15 nationally for the Most Affordable Technical & Trade Schools-2021, announced by College Consensus. The Institute is one of two Southeast Texas colleges named to the top 50 list. The other school is San Jacinto College (#23) in Pasadena.

According to the website, "The ranking offers the best schools for a return on investment. These trade schools review the best synthesis of educational quality, market reputation and potential for rewarding income."

Dr. Howard said this honor validates the Institute's importance and value, not only to incoming students, but also within the community. "Every single accolade is so meaningful to us, and we are truly honored by this latest acknowledgement."

According to College Consensus, the following metrics were used to rank the accredited institutions: Cost - current National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS); Reputation - Niche.com data; and Success - PayScale.com data.



LIT team "High Octane" took third place in TSC IV 2021.

## LIT "High Octane" team places third in TSC IV National Troubleshooting Skills Competition

LIT's ("High Octane") team won 3rd place in the nation recently during North American Process Technology Alliance Troubleshooting Skills Competition! Eight students from LIT participated. Each member of the winning team received a medal and the Institute received a trophy. Congratulations to Instructor Thomas Day and his entire "High Octane" team! (Pictured from L to R: Oliver Knipe, Deandre Davis, Katrina Scott, Aaron Brugette.)