

Technical colleges: providing new opportunities for success

As the new school year is officially upon us, many students are looking toward the career-driven educational environment provided by technical colleges, rather than a traditional four-year college or university. The motivation behind this transition is that this educational path allows students to enter the workforce in a more efficient time frame than what is available through the majority of colleges and universities. According to Florida's Public Technical College/Center System's "Career in a Year" website, "The mission of the Technical Centers in Florida is to provide quality training in specific occupational program areas to meet the employment needs of business and industry throughout the State." In the 2013-2014 school year, these programs served more than 200,000 students and generated a statewide average rate of 84 percent completion, 86 percent placement and 94 percent licensure.

The streamlined, high-quality education provided by technical colleges like Fort Myers Technical College offers students the ability to learn in small class sizes and work in a hands-on environment that prepares them for future careers. Post-secondary certification programs provided by Fort Myers Technical College give students the opportunity to enter a well-paying career in as little as a year, debt-free.

Misty Urrutia-Garcia's story is a common example of a student looking for a fast-paced, effective and affordable schooling experience. A long-time resident of the Southwest Florida community, Misty lives with her mother and her sister, Eileen, in Lehigh Acres. Raised in a close-knit family, Misty and Eileen also had a similar interest in the field of nursing. Like many students at Fort Myers Technical College, Misty was attracted to the technical college because it allowed her to prepare and enter the workforce at a significantly faster pace than what she could find at other colleges or universities. When Misty heard of the career-driven courses provided at Fort Myers Technical College, she soon decided to sit in on an orientation session, which resulted in her and her sister applying for the Practical Nursing program at Fort Myers Technical College. Misty's sister was accepted into the program first and during this time, Misty was able to observe her sister working through the material and quickly recognized that the program, while challenging, was also a great and effective approach to learning.

While awaiting her acceptance to the Practical Nursing program, Misty enrolled in the school's Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. Upon her acceptance into the Practical Nursing program, Misty was able to use this knowledge as a platform for her success and relied on her strong emotional support system of her mother, sister, best friend and boyfriend for encouragement throughout the process. During her time in the Practical Nursing program, Misty has worked in the housekeeping industry with her sister in order to pay for her living expenses and lighten the financial burden on their mother, who works to support her children's educations. Misty's mother asks her daughters to keep their grades up and to never give up, because when she leaves this world, she wants the satisfaction of knowing that she has given her girls an education. With the support and encouragement from their mother, Misty and her sister have worked diligently to succeed in their schooling and fulfill her wishes.

The programs at Fort Myers Technical College are not easy, and require students to be dedicated to their success. For Misty, the typical day of class begins at 8 a.m., where her instructors advise that if students are not at least five minutes early, then they are considered late for the morning. Two days a week, students are tested on recent material, listen to lecture and then participate in simulations that prepare them for the nursing field. With a small class sizes of approximately 15 students, classmates often work together to complete homework assignments and also participate in study groups when

outside of the classroom. Beyond bookwork, programs at Fort Myers Technical College gives students the hands-on training which results in graduates equipped with the skills to succeed in their future careers. On days that Misty does not have class, you are likely to find her on hospital rotation at local hospitals, where she gains firsthand experience of the field of nursing by applying the knowledge and skills she has been acquiring in the classroom setting.

In addition to the encouragement Misty has received from her family during her time at Fort Myers Technical College, Misty has also developed a strong support system through her instructors and school staff, and she is grateful for the advice and knowledge that has enabled her to succeed. She is thankful for her positive experience at Fort Myers Technical College and provides encouragement for students considering enrolling in a technical school.

“Once you start, give it your best. Try hard even if you think you’re doing the most you can. Try harder, keep going, nothing is impossible,” is Misty’s advice for potential students.

Misty plans to graduate this fall and after completing the Practical Nursing program at Fort Myers Technical College, she plans to continue her education by getting her board certification for Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), going to Registered Nurse (RN) school and then on from there. Misty’s path is limitless and she will continue to push herself towards success, academically and professionally.

Misty’s story is a common theme found in students of technical colleges who are not satisfied with the typical college experience and are willing to push themselves in order to succeed in their school, launching a bigger and brighter career path for their future. Fort Myers Technical College has enabled countless students to create a name for themselves in the field of their choosing and has equipped students to enter the workforce as a knowledgeable and skilled worker that is prepared to succeed in the industry. As we enter into the 2015-2016 school year, remember that it is essential to choose the educational path that is right for you and your future career. The instructors and staff at Fort Myers Technical College are dedicated to helping students achieve their goals at a pace that is effective for the students and at a price that is affordable as well. Consider the valuable resources provided by technical colleges and use this school year as an opportunity to jump-start your career and surpass all expectations.