

# Student Essay Contest Winners

The annual Student Essay Contest, sponsored by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, is open to all currently enrolled students. Essays must be 500 words or less and address the topic "How College of DuPage Has Changed My Life." The first place winner receives \$100 and the opportunity to enter the statewide competition, for which the winner receives \$500. The second place winner receives \$50, third place \$25, honorable mention \$10.

## First Place

### How College of DuPage Opened My Eyes

It is an honor to describe how one specific event, which took place fifteen years ago at the College of DuPage, opened my eyes and changed my life. The experience still motivates me.

In 1994, I enrolled at the College of DuPage with minimal secondary education. I had received failing grades in high school due to my own foolishness. I was sent to an alternative program for sophomore year. When I returned to the mainstream, I could not catch up. I am ashamed to say that I ranked 463 out of 494 in my class and did not graduate. To my credit, I did start working when I was 15 years old and have continued to be a hard worker my whole life. I also earned my G.E.D. right away.

I never thought of college while I was growing up. My family didn't make education a priority; we were laborers. We paid little attention to world events, politics or news. In time, the ignorance of my youth became a horrible realization.

In the 1990s I worked for a company that offered tuition reimbursement. I longed for knowledge and all that I had missed in high school. I decided to enroll at the College of DuPage. I cannot recall how I selected my classes all those years ago, but to my good fortune I ended up in Anthropology 100, Intro to Cultural Anthropology, with Dr. Lesli Beltran. This course was fascinating to me! I never knew the world was such an incredibly diverse place.

Once, and only once, Dr. Beltran came into the class and stated that she wanted to share a student's paper. She began reading out loud and I soon recognized that the paper was mine. I was shocked! When she finished reading, everyone clapped and we had a discussion about my paper. I received the highest grade. Since I had little experience with writing anything prior to that time, I was elated.

That was the proudest moment in my life up to that point. The situation made me realize that I was ex-

actly where I was meant to be. I was able to find confidence I never knew was inside of me, and it was a force that pushed me forward. Unfortunately, I developed some medical issues and could only attend one semester.

Life went on as it does and last year I came across that paper. It made me smile. I realized there was still information out there, waiting for me to learn it. The need to go back to school became intense. I thank Dr. Beltran for giving me the pride and encouragement to continue even after fifteen years have passed.

My lifelong dream is to become a geologist. I might be 50 before that happens, but I can't wait! With the start I've gotten at C.O.D., I continue to be inspired and excited about the education I naively brushed aside earlier in my life.

- Heather Gruber

## Second Place

### How the Last Open Seat at College of DuPage Changed My Life

As I sat at the computer in the spring of 2008, just a few days prior to the summer session, little did I know how much my life would change in a short click on an icon called Submit. Prior to enrolling in my first class, I would sit and electronically page through C.O.D.'s course book, lamenting and regretting past mistakes that I had made in regard to my education, or lack thereof. I dwelled on the fact that I was 52 years old and without so much as an Associate of Arts degree, and thought of endless reasons why going back to school would not work. I cringed thinking of my many shortcomings and the lack of self-confidence that had developed as the years marched by.

Though every day I reminded my children how important an education is, I could only think about the degree I did not have. Every now and again, I would enter the C.O.D. site and spend time thinking just how could I manage working and going to school along with a husband and four busy boys in my life? Maybe I could take just one class.

Then just days before the summer session began, I bolstered enough courage to search one more time for my first class, but alas the class was filled to capacity. Fate had taken its toll again, and I would be forced to put off that fateful submission. Just by chance, the next day, I sat at the computer and searched for the same class that was full just one day prior. To my

astonishment, there was one open seat. Was it fate, or just dumb luck, or a combination of both? Without hesitation, I immediately registered for the class, and hit that fateful Submit icon. Instantly, I felt I had taken control of my life once again. For so many years, nineteen to be exact, my children have dominated such a large portion of my life. This time, I was in control. I was making a choice for me, no one else.

It was the beginning of pursuing a dream that I had for over thirty years. A dream that was never practical, never fit into the timeline of my life, but this time it fit. It was perfectly scheduled, and I was ready to begin the journey that was very overdue. I welcomed the challenge wholeheartedly.

My C.O.D. experience has given me a new beginning, and a current insight and appreciation for what my son is experiencing in his journey through the college years, as well as the ability to prepare my second son for his freshman year of college this fall. My College of DuPage experience has changed my life, and given me a new and challenging one, that continues to fulfill some very long awaited goals and dreams. I am very grateful for that last open seat.

- Darlene Salerno

## Third Place

### Picture This

Imagine, if you can – it's 1996, the month is June and you're graduating from high school. You've served your time in several educational institutions already, but now you're free. No one is telling you what to do anymore! You can do whatever you want. That idea is so enticing that you decide to put off any decisions about college to spend the summer partying with your friends. You get a full-time job at a local video store and fall into a routine of working, partying and sleeping in. You forget about furthering your education. Time goes by.

It's the first day of 2009 and your alarm clock is demanding that you get out of bed – it's 5:30 a.m. You groan and mumble some curse words and grudgingly get out of bed, take a shower and head off to work. You're 30 years old and this job eerily resembles the last seven that you've had. On occasion, when people ask what you do, you tell them that you're a writer. That you've written a few small screenplays and a ton of movie reviews but when they ask if you've been published, you have to shake your head. You've always dreamt of being involved in

the motion picture industry but you've never taken any steps toward attaining that goal. At the end of the work day, on the first day of 2009, your employer informs you that your services are no longer needed. Great. Now what?

One morning you wake up to a sudden revelation. You have to do something different or pass your life away in a series of meaningless, degrading jobs until you reach an age when you're too old to do it anymore...and then what? That thought scares you so much that you get in your car and drive 15 miles over to Glen Ellyn – to the College of DuPage. You grit your teeth and walk into the SRC.

You learn that classes are starting on January 14, which is only a few weeks away. You talk to an advisor, you take home a catalog. You decide to try something different, but to take it slow at first. You pick two classes in the Motion Picture/Television department and the next day you return to the college to pay for tuition and your two chosen classes. It wasn't expensive at all. You can't believe it.

Once you're in class, you're editing a project on a Mac, using technology that you'd never even heard of two months ago. You finish and then decide to watch what you've created. It's beautiful. You feel like you are finally living your dream even though this is just the start. You smile. This is just the beginning. The sky's the limit. You realize that although it took some time, you've finally made the best decision of your life. All it took was enough courage to walk in the doors of C.O.D.

- James Mixon

## Honorable Mention

### How College of DuPage has Given Me a Second Chance

I started here at the College of DuPage during the summer of 2008. Ever since then I have loved coming to school, something that I never thought would happen. I cannot imagine not continuing my schooling – I want to keep learning new things, even in the summer. Being in my first class has opened my eyes – and my mind – and has given me hope for the future to come.

My story started in high school and honestly, I can say I was just an average student. I never thought I would go to college just because I did not know what to do with my life. So with that set in my mind I just did what I had to, pass and get my diploma. After I tried working a full-time job at a calendar store I realized

that this was not what I wanted to do all my life, but there was no way I could just walk into schools like DePaul University or Elmhurst College with my high school transcripts. That's when I started at C.O.D. When I went to my first class I was so nervous! I didn't know anyone and didn't know what to expect. But after a few classes I met new friends, young and old, and learned about their lives and dreams. I became more tolerant of others and especially thought better of myself – knowing I could do better in college than high school.

The teachers here at C.O.D. really want to help their students. I needed that support since I was not receiving it at home. My parents wanted nothing to do with my schooling, just because I did not do well in high school. My brother was smart – an honor roll student – and went to NIU, but he only went for one year then ended up working for our father. My younger sister is intelligent as well – another honor roll student – and they thought she would be the ONLY one to go and FINISH college.

So now it is up to me to prove them wrong. Now with the help of the College of DuPage I know can do better. That's really how C.O.D. changed my life. The staff here has really helped my motivation to get into a great college, to show that even though I wasn't the best student back then, that right now is my time to show what I really can do to prove to my parents, to my brother and, more importantly, to myself that I will end up where I want to be.

- Toni DiSilvestro

## Honorable Mention

### SISU: The Act of Working Hard for Something and Never Giving up

I had never considered that placing a simple phone call could completely change my life.

A flyer was posted concerning joining the cross country team at College of DuPage and nervously, I decided to give the coach a call. We discussed what I had done in high school and what I had accomplished since then.

I had played soccer all four years, running cross country only my senior year. In the two years since high school, I had been going to C.O.D. part time and had run two marathons on my own.

Unfortunately, since then I had gotten extremely out of shape, barely running two miles at a time. I liked to run

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# FEATURES

## Oh, the classes you'll take

Counselors are ready and willing to help you make a decision about a major

By Alex Glas  
Features Editor

With the growing economic hardships, it is becoming pertinent that students know what they want to do for a career. This covers not just what they want to end up becoming but how they

plan on getting to that goal. Barbara B. Fried, part time counselor, Sandra Werner and Dana Thompson full-time counselors have seen how the economy has affected class selection. "I have seen an increase in both traditional and non-traditional students," Fried said. "Many parents are asking their kids to consider community colleges as an option," Thompson said.

Before a student can even decide on a major they have to decide on what school they'll attend. Rising costs and a lack of money have caused some students and families to rethink where they're going to college. "Regardless of the economy students are still focusing on what's nearby," Thompson said. Community colleges offer an inexpensive and good education, especially here. "You get a high quality education for a good price with extremely good articulation," Werner said.

The cost per credit hour here is \$116, whereas at Northern Illinois University the cost per credit hour is \$249 and ranges from \$510 to \$665 at DePaul depending on what major you're in. "Taking the first two years here is far less expensive than at a private school and less than a state school," Thompson said. What's not to like about something good and inexpensive and once you're done with it you can go anywhere. "Go anywhere," is a term that the counselors here like to use. "A lot of people have a misconception of COD start here and go nowhere, but we like to think of it as 'start here and go anywhere,'" Thompson said.

The counselors have been dealing with more than just the traditional students. "There are a lot of non-traditional students coming back to school to complete programs, update their skills, or go into an entirely new field," Fried said. Most of the non-traditional students are looking for an immedi-

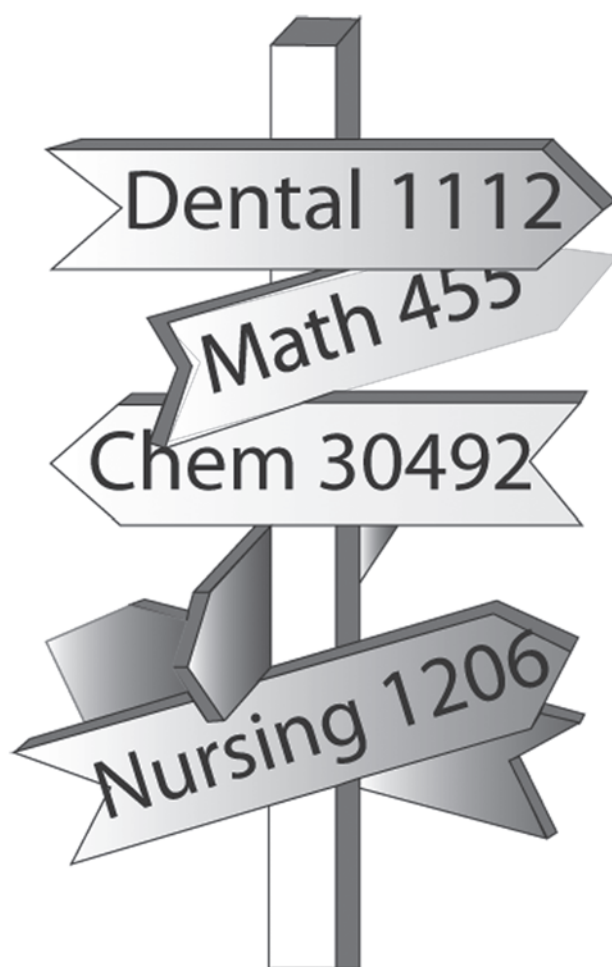
ate education for a better chance at employment. For the traditional student majors are being examined in conjunction with student's interests and career goals. "Even in DuPage County many people from different sectors are losing jobs," Werner said. With the increasing amount of students and a decreasing job market counselors have become more important than ever.

With the current economy, selecting the right major is important. According to information provided by Thompson and Werner there are still some majors out there that are in high demand. These include health care, education, counseling, hospitality and majors involved in "green careers." The state and the country are in desperate need of secondary education and special education teachers. Health care majors such as nursing are also seeing a rise in popularity. "The only problem in health sciences, specifically nursing, is that the clinical placements may not be there," Fried said.

The role of a counselor expands beyond just telling students what classes they need to get a degree. "We're here to get you started and to find direction to establish your goals," Thompson said. The counselors will sit down with a student and go over various topics such as interests, goals, and perceived style of living. Based on the answers the counselor's get they will recommend majors that the student might succeed in. If students can fit EDU 1105 into their schedule they should think about taking it. EDU 1105 has students getting involved in different job fields where they will shadow, perform informational interviews and experience different jobs. "I suggest 1105 for career exploration," Fried said.

The counselors in conjunction with career services and the faculty also run

Student Success Workshops. These workshops address issues that students may have that would inhibit their overall educational experience. Each session runs for an hour and is designed to help students in particular areas. These areas range from time management and test taking strategies to transfer degree requirements and jobs, trends and the economy. "These workshops are open to students, community members, faculty and the staff," Werner said.



## Uncle Sam wants to thank you

There is money and help available to the veterans who served their nation

By Alex Glas  
Features Editor

Soldiers returning from a war zone have seen horrible things. Many just wish to forget and move on, for some it's easy for others it's harder. Monday will be the 2nd Annual Veteran Benefits Fair "Making Veterans' Education Possible" where any veteran of our military forces is invited to learn about opportunities and benefits afforded to them. Speakers will discuss a wide range of topics from money for an education to housing to PTSD. Bob Hazard coordinator of this group hopes to see as many veterans come out as possible. "I see at least three or four people a year who are veterans that aren't taking advantage of any of their GI benefits," Hazard said.

Last year there were 150 people attending the event. This year Hazard hopes that more veterans will come out. "Last year there were about 700 veterans attending, this year there are about 900," Hazard said. This event encourages veterans to come out and get an education. With the

GI bill changes coming into effect this August there is also new information to learn. "Pre-911 veterans would receive a stipend of money over the course of so many years, now veterans will receive money for living expenses and tuitions costs for the most expensive university in the state they live in," Hazard said. This new opportunity will allow returning soldiers to get back into civilian life with the knowledge that they can go wherever they want in terms of schools.

There will also be several keynote speakers coming to talk about various topics. Robert Young an education specialist for the Veteran Affairs will be present to explain the GI Bill changes and will answer questions after his speech. Janet Kamer PhD and Air Force Reserve Colonel will lead a discussion on PTSD and it's affects on soldiers returning from hostile conflicts. "She's (Kamer) very sharp and knows what she's talking about," Hazard said. Paul Herbert, Executive Director Cantigny 1st Division Foundation and Marcus Woodward who will represent the Illinois Department of VA will

also give lectures.

In conjunction with the speakers there will be 20 different service organizations willing to help answer any questions veterans may have. Free legal counseling will be provided for anyone wishing it, Disabled American Veterans or DAV will also be present. Health care registration, Illinois Veterans Grant Assistance, volunteer and housing opportunities will also be available. Veterans will be able to learn of money they can receive as well as learning about getting a job or starting/resuming a college career. "If you are a veteran or know one, this is an important event," Hazard said.

The fair will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday in SRC 2800. This event is not just limited to veterans attending school but to any veterans in the community who would like to learn more about what's available to them. Family and friends of veterans are also encouraged to come out. If you have any questions please contact Bob Hazard at 630-942-2402 or Jose Alferes at codvets@yahoo.com

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and assured the coach I would work hard if he let me join the team. He agreed, telling me to run more consistently over the summer and that he'd see me in the fall. I had wanted to join the team for more than just the running aspect.

Sure, I wanted to get back into shape and lose the extra weight, but mostly, I wanted to feel like I belonged. I wanted to be on a team again. I was a semi-depressed, out of shape and overweight, lackadaisical student with no guidance or motivation in life. Above all, I hoped by joining C.O.D.'s cross country team I would find what was lacking in my life, a sense of purpose.

The summer passed quickly and I found myself at the first day of practice, still completely out of shape. I had not really run over the summer and was much slower than the other runners. I vowed that by the end of the season, I would be running with everyone else, and worked daily to achieve that goal.

It did not happen overnight, but as the season progressed, my confidence and self-image grew, both at practice and in the classroom. As a student-athlete, we were required to be full-time students and to maintain a minimum GPA. I threw myself into my studies and began to do well in all my classes, making the Academic All-American team. At the end of the season, I was running not exactly alongside my teammates, but much closer. Also, I was named the most-improved athlete of the year.

That was fall of 2007. In those two years since, my life has been completely transformed. I continued running for C.O.D. in both cross country and track, being named captain for both the 2008 cross country season and the 2009 track season. I lead some of the workouts now and am no longer the apathetic student that coasts through life. I am confident and optimistic. This coming May, I will graduate from C.O.D. with my Associate's in Art. I owe this transformation to College of DuPage and the opportunities I was given as a student-athlete. Running has taught me to never give up, on the track, or in the classroom.

-Elizabeth Forster

**Honorable Mention**

**How College of DuPage has Changed My Life**

Every once in a while, things happen in your life that cause you to reevaluate your life and your career. I am 51 years old. I had been working as an accountant since I graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1979. I had been happily employed in the home building industry for the last 16 years of my career and very much enjoying it, but slowly the industry was dying. I was sitting in a home closing one afternoon with a customer and she talked about how she became a pastry chef through the program at C.O.D. and suddenly it just clicked with me. I needed to do something different with my life and that was it; I realized I wanted to study pastry and baking. Shortly after that day, I lost my job and I knew that this was really the right time for change in my life.

Since that time, I have found my passion. I started at C.O.D. in the spring of 2008 and have absolutely loved every minute of it. I've done many things in my life: worked many places, tried many hobbies and liked them all in some form or fashion. But I was never truly passionate about any of them. I have been in the baking program for

three semesters now and I can already tell that this is what I love.

This is my passion. Raising a family has been fulfilling for me, but now that my children are grown and on their own, I have something more on which to focus my attention and concentration. I know that I am headed in the right direction to fulfill my dreams. I strive to become the best pastry chef that I can be through my passion for baking and creating, and the College of DuPage is offering me the opportunity to do that. For these reasons, the College of DuPage has changed my life.

-Lynn Uvodich

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# Helping three times

Just one unit of blood can be broken down into three different substances

By Alex Glas  
Features Editor

On Wednesday LifeSource will be hosting their third blood drive. The Jan. 9 drive collected 95 units, a commendable amount. Gail Deckert coordinator of the drive hopes that people will come and give the gift of life.

According to LifeSource, donated blood can be separated into three different components. They are the plasma, platelets, and red blood cells each offering different benefits.

For example the plasma extracted from the donors blood will go towards creating clotting factors for patients will hemophilia or other blood conditions. Plasma can be stored frozen for up to a year and still be usable.

Platelets cause open wounds and lacerations to clot up. Patients who have just received a transplanted organ or that have undergone surgery will need these to help the healing process. Platelets can be kept refrigerated for up to five days, which means the supply of platelets always needs to be refreshed.

Red blood cells are what we most commonly refer to as blood. Red blood cells help carry oxygen throughout the body keeping the other cells alive and active. Red blood cells are often used when a patient needs to have their red cell

counts replenished quickly. This will usually occur during major surgeries, people in trauma, and for people with anemia. Red blood cells can be refrigerated for up to 42 days and once screened is available for immediate use.

All of the blood is screened upon donation having to pass a battery of 12 tests to pass. These tests will screen the blood type and look for various blood borne pathogens that could be found in the blood. If the tests due come up with something the donor is confidentially alerted and the blood will not be used for transfusions.

LifeSource is a nonprofit organization that distributes more than 550,000 units of blood and blood products. Those units are spread out amongst 160 area hospitals and health agencies. With the amount of blood required at each site there is never enough.

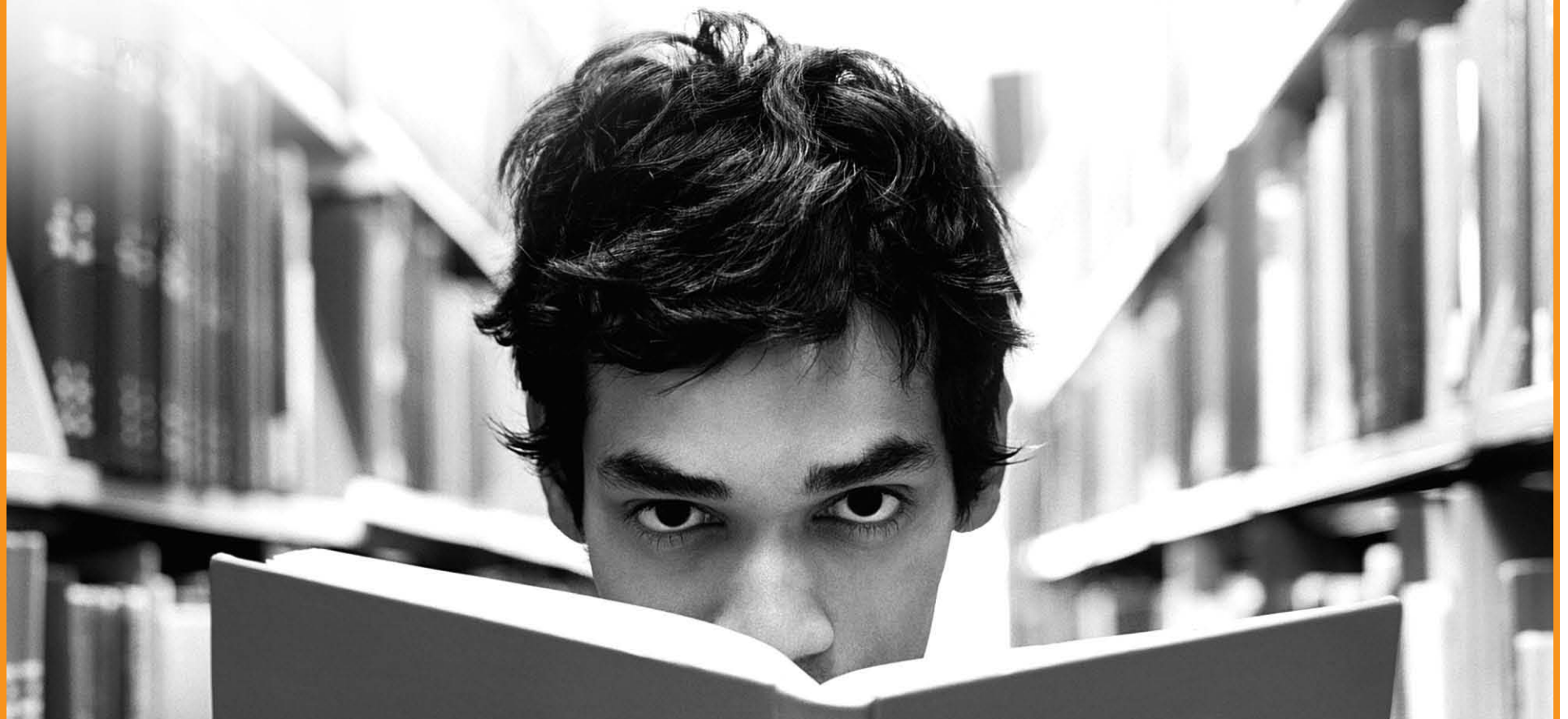
The drive will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in SRC 1450 A and B. To schedule an appointment please call Health Services at 630-942-2154. Appointments are recommended, but walk-ins are welcome as well. Remember when you get their to have a valid drivers license, state ID or LifeSource Donor Card.

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# Registration schedule for summer semester

60+ C.O.D. Earned Credits	March 23 or Later
40+ C.O.D. Earned Credits	March 25 or Later
20+ Earned Credits	March 27 or Later
0+ (Returning Students)	March 29 or Later
All Returning Students May Register	March 29 or Later
New Student Registration	April 6 or Later
Final Registration	May 11 or Later

Priority Registration NO LONGER includes transfer credit or demonstrated competency credit. Questions? Call the Registration office at 630-942-2377.

## For Your Information

### S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop

S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop: Citing Sources with NoodleBib Software. You will also be able to create a NoodleBib account and make a reference list with common types of sources. This workshop will be held from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Monday in SRC 3017. For more information please call (630) 942-3364.

### S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop

S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop: Research Basics for Students. This workshop is designed to teach the basics of library research. Students will learn how to navigate the C.O.D. Library and find resources, such as books and articles, to support your research. This event will run from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday in SRC 3017, located in the Library.

### Suburban Law Enforcement Academy Workshop

The Suburban Law Enforcement Academy in conjunction with the Illinois State Police Bureau of Investigation and the Illinois Association of Police Chiefs is conducting a Criminal History Record Information Training Symposium for Non-Criminal Justice Users. The workshop will run from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday in SRC 2800. There will be a \$25 fee per person which includes a continental breakfast.

### S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop

S.O.S. Research and Internet Workshop- Internet 1 Finding and Evaluating Information. Sign up for this workshop if you have some basic experience using search engines, but would like to build upon those skills. This workshop begins at 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday in SRC 3017. For more information please call (630) 942-3364.

### Student Success Workshop

Student Success Workshop: Student Success Skills and Autism. Students with Autism and Sparger's Syndrome are attending college more frequently than ever. Michael Duggan a counselor will be presenting this workshop. It will run from noon to 1 p.m. on Thursday in SRC 1450A. For more information please call (630) 942-2259.

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