



Bruce Willis back for revenge
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DISTRICT

Students ill-prepared for emergency

By Kathryn Kelman
editor-in-chief

In the weeks following a high-profile school shooting in Florida, many TCC students say they feel safe on their respective campuses but not necessarily prepared to face an emergency situation.

As the school shooting has dominated headlines, many campuses across the country have evaluated their own preparedness.

At TCC, some students say they have never participated in an emergency drill or training while at TCC.

Kai Marion has been a student on NW and TR campuses for two years but has never participated in an emergency drill or training.

“No, I don’t feel prepared,” she said. “I don’t know what to do.”

She said doing drills, especially after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, should be important for the college. At the same time, she said she doesn’t feel unsafe.



“I see lots of cops around, but it would be nice to know what to do in an emergency,” she said.

TCC conducts drills on every campus, every semester, according to emergency management director Kirk Driver.

In 2016, the college conducted 16 emergency drills across all five campuses and other properties, according to TCC police’s annual crime report.

“Those drills are conducted by TCC police and are a way to test some of our notification systems,” Driver said.

Campus police determine what drills to do, when and what campus building to evacuate because they can’t conduct a drill across the entire campus at one time, he said.

SE student Inez De La Cruz has also never participated in an emergency drill or training session. She is worried about not knowing TCC’s protocols, she said.

“If something bad were to happen, it would be chaotic if you didn’t know where to go or what to do,” she said.

Ricardo Guijosa, who’s been a student on TR and TR East for three years, has also never participated in an emergency drill or training, he said. For Guijosa, the only reason he feels prepared to face an emergency while on campus is because of the training he received in the Navy, but he would like to see more drills happen at TCC, he said.

“I think most people should know what to do in case of any form of emergency,” he said. “Drills help with that.”

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Alertus app

Alertus Login Information

1. Download the Alertus app
2. Sign up with your TCC email
3. Enter in the organizational code TCCD
4. Enter the PIN code 8911

When searching for the app in the Apple App Store or Google Play the results offer two options. Students, faculty and staff need to download the yellow “recipient” app.

SOUTHEAST

Kinesiology department chair on SE dies at 39

By Jamil Oakford
managing editor

A month after the Feb. 5 death of SE kinesiology department chair Danny Lee Aguirre, officials still have not determined the cause. He was 39.

The cause of death is pending toxicology results, according to the Dallas County Medical Examiner’s office.

Aguirre, a Grand Prairie resident, is survived by his wife, his parents, two brothers and a niece and nephew. A funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 10.

SE Campus administrators remembered Aguirre as a loyal and dedicated employee and colleague.

Campus president Bill Coppola said the campus feels the loss of his presence strongly.

“Danny was a very important member of the SE family,” he said. “He was the type of individual that any president would want on their campus.”

Coppola said he was always willing to go the distance if it meant someone received the help they needed.

“Danny was fun, loving and dedicated to helping others,” he said. “He never hesitated to jump in whenever needed.”

Aguirre began working at TCC 20 years ago as SE’s intramural sports director. After six and a half years, he became the kinesiology department chair.

Tommy Awtry, SE mathematics, engineering, science and HPE divisional dean, said his colleague was someone who looked at his work with purpose.

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Collegian file photo

SE kinesiology department chair Danny Aguirre died Feb. 5 at age 39.

TRINITY RIVER

He, too

TR instructor shares his story as sexual assault victim

By Kathryn Kelman
editor-in-chief



Sheldon Smart has battled poverty, homelessness and immigration and survived.

The Trinidad and Tobago native is the first in his family to attend college and has earned a doctorate. He’s been a full-time TR speech instructor since 2013, a mentor with the Men of Color mentoring program, a life coach and educational technician at a substance abuse rehabilitation clinic, a YouTuber and he’s hoping to publish a novel at the end of this year.

But it was a casual conversation with a friend while watching TV last fall that he realized he needed to speak up about something else — the fact that he was sexually assaulted.

“I was sitting there watching it, and me and my best friend were talking about it and he knew what I’d been through, and I’m watching it and we’re talking about it and I’m realizing, ‘Geez man, I fit into this category, but I’m not saying anything and they are,’” he said.

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TR instructor Sheldon Smart was born in Trinidad and Tobago and immigrated at 22 to continue his education.
Lacey Phillips/The Collegian

SOUTHEAST

Coding class offers more than technology

By Jamil Oakford
managing editor

Students with autism are learning a new language to prepare for the workforce, thanks to SE Campus’ Community & Industry Education office.

CIE is offering a Python coding class for students with autism to help prepare them for jobs. After working for years with students with special needs, CIE vice president Carrie Tunson said the most underserved group she saw was students with autism. While they’re highly proficient in many academic areas, they needed help in other areas.

“They go to college just like any other student, but they lack the interpersonal skills to keep a job,” Tunson said.

She said this class is designed to not only offer the students an edge in the practical skills area of their resumes but to give them guidance in an area where students with autism typically struggle.

“Most of the students who take these classes are highly skilled in mathematics,” CIE director Vickie Moss said. “So when they get into these classes, one of the ways they deal with social skills is by working in teams.”

In these teams, students will help develop code for various products, she said. The class can also effectively help students with autism work on their interpersonal skills by



Robert Burn/The Collegian

SE coding instructor Joe Charles sits with student Jordan Carter as he works. This class is offered through the campus’ Community & Industry Education office.

having a small, manageable class size.

Python, a coding language used for web programming and desktop applications, was chosen over other coding languages because of the need for Python-fluent coders in the workforce, Moss said.

“We were trying to meet the need of the Texas Workforce Commission to include and provide a service to the students that can be used in the workforce immediately after

completing this class,” she said.

Some of the students are finding this coding language to be a breeze.

“This is my first coding class,” SE student Conor Tysinger said. “So far, this has been pretty easy. Nothing too complicated.”

For SE student Ellen Clinton who is in her 50s and already a professional, she finds this class to be exciting.

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Lacey Phillips/The Collegian

TR speech instructor Sheldon Smart lectures prior to his students presenting during his Thursday afternoon class March 1 on TR Campus.

speaking up about their struggles with sexual assault.

“We always get more stats where women are concerned, but I think there are a lot of men out there who are hurting and they don’t report it,” he said. “I think men a lot of times stay too silent because we think it’s not masculine if we do or say certain things, but men have emotions and men have feelings.”

Smart said he hopes by sharing his story, it will make it easier for others to share theirs.

“When you speak up and speak out, I think it’s easier to come to terms with what has happened to you and to really find yourself,” he said. “Then you empower others to do the same.”

Following the assaults, Smart continued to pursue his education. After high school, he worked for a few years to save money because his family didn’t have the funds to send him to college and he refused to let his grandmother take out a loan to help pay for it.

In addition to struggling financially, Smart also lacked support from other family members. Although they loved him, they didn’t believe in him and made jokes about his dreams.

“When you grow up in a family where no one has ever accomplished anything, their expectations for you match their expectations for themselves,” he said.

Smart wanted to prove them wrong, and he did. In fact, two weeks ago, he sent an uncle \$1,000 to get his car fixed, he said.

“You’ve got to keep on dreaming, I think, even when people don’t believe in your dreams,” he said. “What’s most important is you believing in them.”

After being accepted to Clarendon College in Clarendon, Texas, Smart decided to chance it. He came to the U.S. in 1999 at 22 with only \$300 in his pocket.

“Sometimes when you’re young, ignorance is good because I showed up thinking, ‘Well, I saw it on TV and other people can go to America and they could make it,’” he said.

When his flight landed in Miami, Smart purchased a \$10 calling card and used it to let his family know he’d made it to the U.S.

In Clarendon, Smart worked several jobs off campus and tutored and mentored other students for free while taking classes.

“I came prepared to work because I’d always heard from everyone that lived in the U.S. and came back home, ‘America’s hard. You’ve got to work,’” he said. “One thing was for sure, I did not want to fail, and I was willing to work as hard as possible to do whatever to make sure I did not fail.”

Smart said even though he has his doctorate now, he most values his associate degree.

“For me, it meant confirmation and affirmation that I could do this and that I had accomplished something that no one ever thought that I would accomplish coming from the family that I came from,” he said.

While at Clarendon, Smart met Itai Chihamo, who was born and raised in Zimbabwe before finishing high school in London and coming to Clarendon in 2000.

“It was a small town and a small school,” she said. “All the international students could sit at one table together.”

Though she doesn’t remember the first time they met, Smart is like an older brother to Chihamo, and for 18 years has been a calming and grounding force in her life. He was one of the first people that empowered her, she said.

“I wish there were more Sheldons in the world,” she said. “I always knew he was going to do something great.”

When Smart became a full-time faculty member at TCC in 2013, he joined the Men of Color mentoring program at TR shortly after. Tre’Zjon Cothran attended TCC from 2013-2015 and found Smart to be a mentor.

“He always knew the answers and helped guide me and motivate me to do more than just pass a class,” he said.

Smart helped Cothran open up by sharing about himself and his journey including all of the hardships he faced, Cothran said.

“You don’t realize the journey he went through,” he said. “When he shared, I remember thinking, ‘Man, if he can make it, I can make it,’ and I wanted to know how he made it through.”

Today, Chihamo describes Smart as a “world changer.” He uses YouTube and his classroom to share his stories to inspire others.

“I believe sharing stories empowers people and makes them feel less alone,” he said.

Emergency (continued from page 1)

SE student Jonathan Torres has attended the campus part time since 2014 and has also never participated in any drills. But he isn’t too worried about it, he said.

“We’ve been practicing that stuff since elementary school,” he said. “Depending on the emergency, I think I’d be OK.”

Both Torres and Guijosa said they feel safe on their campuses because of the high police presence and because they’ve never encountered anything bad or serious while there.

Assistant police chief Chanissa Dietrich said drills are up to each campus, and officials rotate which drills they choose to do each term.

“They won’t do a fire drill and then another fire drill or a lockdown drill and the next semester another lockdown drill,” she said. “They try and change it up so that they’re not doing the same thing, and we keep the different protocols on everybody’s mind.”

The information regarding the protocols, and informational videos like one called “Shots Fired,” which provides active shooter training, can be found at www.tccd.edu/about/emergency-information/know-what-to-do/active-shooter/, and a districtwide email is sent out each

semester, she said.

“Now whether anyone slows down and takes a look at it, I couldn’t say, but we get it out to everybody and we direct everybody back to the website,” she said. “Please come to the website. This is good information. We keep it updated. Please come and look at it.”

At a minimum, Dietrich said she would prefer people watch the “Shots Fired” video and read the information.

“The active shooter information is good, but there’s also other incidents that people need to be prepared for, and on that emergency management site, there’s a lot of good information for different scenarios,” she said.

The website has the most accurate information, Dietrich said.

“If there was a new best practice for how we want people to react, we would go in and update it,” she said.

According to the college’s website, the protocols were last updated in August 2016, but all of the protocols and drills are up to the national standard, Driver said.

“We constantly continue to assess to ensure the drills are effective and then that our

protocols remain with what the national standard is,” he said. “Currently, the national standard is ‘Run, Hide and Fight,’ which is something you can take outside of an institution of learning.”

The important thing for students, faculty and staff to do is update their myTCC alert profiles, he said. All students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive myTCC alerts through email, but legally, the college can’t enroll anyone to receive the alerts via text.

“We would rather have students update their profile and opt into receive the text messages because texts are serviced much quicker through your cellphone provider, and most people are more apt to read their texts than an email or listen to a phone message,” he said.

Guijosa hasn’t set up his myTCC alerts yet but does remember getting the emails to do so. “It usually catches me at the wrong time,” he said. “It’s more on the purpose and the person and I should really sit down and do it.”

To update profiles, students can go to TCC’s home page and under the emergency and safety section find the link that says “myTCC alerts” and it will walk them through

how to do so, Driver said.

Everyone receives a welcome email that has the password to access their account.

“If you’ve lost that, we can reset the password and normally what we do is we just stay on the line and we walk the student or faculty member through the process to be sure that they don’t have any other issues,” he said.

MyTCC alerts are only one of the college’s systems used to notify people. Different systems are used depending on what’s going on and where, Driver said. One is Alertus, which has an app that is free to download, he said.

“This is useful for situations like for when people are in between their vehicles and a building and the app could alert them to not go into a particular building,” he said. “We would love for our staff, faculty and students to take advantage of that.”

None of the students interviewed knew about the app, but NW student Tasha Morrison said she likes the idea of it.

“I work full time, go to school full time and I’m a single mom so I don’t always check my email, so that would be good to have,” she said.



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