



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

# INSIGHT

WINTER 2021



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## WELCOME MESSAGE



*Jami Frazier, President and CEO  
of Concorde Career Colleges*

What an extraordinary year 2020 has been. In January, no one could have foreseen what lay ahead for our country. In the Spring, a global pandemic, forcing a nationwide shutdown, led to an economic recession. Social justice issues rising to the forefront of our nation, challenged us to critically think about how minority and other marginalized citizens are treated. Throughout 2020, Concorde alumni, students and associates have addressed these issues head on while trying to maintain order in their lives. Concorde has continued, during these crises, to support its students in achieving their goals as a future healthcare professionals. That support has not come without some challenges.

When the country shut down in late March, Concorde moved all coursework online, with great efforts by our faculty. Eventually, students returned to their campuses for labs only. To make each campus safer, Concorde installed thermal temperature scanners at each main entrance, adopted a symptom questionnaire, required personal protective equipment be worn at all times, and maintain social distancing protocols.

When the social justice movement swept the nation, Concorde reinforced its core value of Respect for the Individual. Concorde fundamentally believes that all persons must be treated with kindness, care and compassion regardless of color, race, gender, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive disability. To support this core belief, Concorde formed a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Steering Committee to guide our work with students and associates, ensuring each is equitably treated.

I am extremely proud of how the Concorde alumni, students and associates weathered the challenges of 2020. It is a true testament to their perseverance and resilience.

I wish you and your family a safe, healthy and successful new year.

Jami Frazier  
President and CEO Concorde Career Colleges

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### Concorde Insight

Alumni Newsletter  
Issue 15 | Quarter 1  
Winter 2021

### Digital Newsletter

To access a digital version  
of this newsletter, visit  
[concorde.edu/alumni](http://concorde.edu/alumni).

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KEEP SAFE!



## PROGRAM NEWS

## A Program with Heart: New Cardiovascular Sonography Program offered at Concorde



*Dr. Javaid Ajmal is the Program Director for the Cardiovascular Sonography program at Concorde Dallas.*

In the midst of the pandemic, the newest program at Concorde Career College continues to prepare its students for their future. The Dallas inaugural class for the Associate of Science in Cardiovascular Sonography (CVS) began in May 2020. We checked in with Dallas CVS Program Director Dr. Javaid Ajmal to learn more about what the program teaches, the difference CVS technologists can make, and what sort of personality a CVS student should bring to the table.

### What Is Cardiovascular Sonography?

Cardiovascular sonography is the use of non-invasive ultrasound imaging to study the function and structure

of the human heart. It is one of two primary imaging techniques students in the CVS program learn, along with electrocardiograms (EKGs, also called “heart traces”).

EKGs have a long history. A London physiologist recorded the first human EKG in 1877, and by the early part of the 20th century, EKGs were being used for clinical purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Echocardiograms are much newer. In fact, Dr. Ajmal notes that the first images in the U.S. were only taken in the 1960s, and that the American physician who led efforts to adopt echocardiograms, Harvey Feigenbaum, is still alive.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ajmal was honored to meet Dr. Feigenbaum in 2008.

### Why CVS Matters

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), one American adult dies of heart disease every 36 seconds.<sup>3</sup>

Cardiovascular conditions affect young people, too. The CDC reports that congenital heart defects (CHDs) are the most commonly diagnosed birth defect, affecting approximately 40,000 babies born each year. Of those 40,000 babies, 10,000 will have a critical CHD which requires surgery or other invasive procedures within the first year of life.<sup>4</sup>

CVS technicians play an important role in helping physicians and cardiologists understand their patients’ conditions. The images and recordings they provide make effective treatment possible. Technicians can also contribute to research efforts in the field by conducting study images.

### The CVS Program Format – Intensive and Hands-On

The CVS program is a 21-month, full-time associate degree program that blends virtual learning and hands-on classroom learning with extensive clinical experience. “Our students will complete over 900 hours [of clinical experience] in a variety of different clinical sites,” says Dr. Ajmal.

He explains that the varied clinical placements offer students practical experience for the workplace. CVS graduates could go on to work in cardiology practices, hospitals, laboratories, chain clinics, or even mobile imaging services that travel to different sites.

### What Our CVS Students Are Learning

Along with EKGs and echocardiograms, students also gain some knowledge of vascular imaging. Vascular imaging allows the examination of arteries and other parts of the circulatory system to help diagnose strokes, blood clots, embolisms and other conditions.

In addition to hands-on experience with EKGs and imaging, students study cardiac anatomy, cardiopathology, and other foundational health science concepts. They learn to write reports of their imaging sessions for physicians, monitor the various machines and equipment they will use for malfunction, and—most importantly—learn how to treat patients with respect and professionalism.

At the end of their program, Dr. Ajmal says, students complete a registry exam review. This prepares students to earn the Registered Diagnostic Cardiac Sonographer® (RDCS) credential from the American

<sup>1</sup>[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3714093/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3714093/)

<sup>2</sup>[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2170493/#\\_\\_sec11title](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2170493/#__sec11title)

<sup>3</sup>[www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm)

<sup>4</sup>[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/features/kf-chd-estimates-us.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/features/kf-chd-estimates-us.html)

Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography® after graduation. The RDCS designation can help Concorde graduates stand out in the job market.

#### Who Should Apply?

The CVS program is looking to enroll more students for March and August 2021. Dr. Ajmal says there are a few key traits a prospective student should have. "First and foremost, we want a motivation or an attitude to serve patients," he explains. Students should also enjoy learning about science and be capable of paying attention to detail. "If you're a technology-oriented person, that can help, too," Dr. Ajmal adds, because CVS technology continues to evolve rapidly.

Students who are training now will be able to take part in the fight against cardiovascular disease and help improve our understanding of the human heart.

For more information about the CVS program at Concorde in Dallas, visit <https://www.concorde.edu/patient-care-programs/cardiovascular-sonography>.

#### Around the Country

Concorde's CVS program is also offered at our Tampa, Jacksonville, and Kansas City campuses.

## CAMPUS PRESIDENT SPOTLIGHT



*Sam Lynn, President of Concorde Orlando*

### Orlando Welcomes Sam Lynn as New Campus President

This year has been one of consistent uncertainty for all of us, but our Orlando campus has certainly found a great new Campus President in Sam Lynn. Education wasn't always in Sam's future, but life has a way of getting you where you need to be.

Sam enlisted in the US Army right out of high school, serving at both Ft Bragg and Ft Lewis, and fought in Desert Storm. After leaving the Army, Sam got his professional career started off with a little-known new company named Home Depot (not so little anymore). During his 12 year career with Home Depot Sam explains, "My family and I moved 17 times amongst 7 states opening stores across the US."

In 2002, he was recruited to go work at Circuit City as a District Manager in Florida where he stayed until he took a call from a recruiter for an opportunity in education. This call has changed Sam's life for the better, "I was looking for a better life balance and the retail industry just doesn't allow it. I decided to take the job and worked as a Regional VP of Operations supporting dozens of campuses all over the country." Earlier this year, "I was blessed to find an opportunity to come on board with Concorde, and the ability to work and stay in Orlando where we have established roots was a bonus!"

Sam's glad to be with Concorde, "I couldn't be happier personally with the decision I made professionally to join such an amazing organization. Concorde is a company who lives what it believes, leading with 'integrity' and 'respect for the individual' is evident in all we do."

He continues, "being able to come to work every day and know that everything we do here in the Orlando campus has a direct or indirect impact on the ability for a student to complete their school and change their life for the better is so rewarding. As a Campus President, I get to be in the front row and be a more involved participant in their journey."

When asked about his first year Sam said, "The unprecedented times with COVID have caused a lot of struggles to navigate through waters that have never been seen before. Maintaining the safety and well-being of students and employees while making good on the promise to educate and prepare students for rewarding careers in a timely fashion has been a unique challenge."

Sam then emphasized, "The amazing thing is watching a family of employees across all campuses and our CSC actually come together and support one another as we have learned, has been nothing short of amazing."

## FROM THE COVER

## From Kazakhstan to Concorde Career College: Kira Almazayen's Story



*Kira Almazayen, a graduate of Concorde's Dental Hygiene Program, is the recipient of the 2020 Clinical Excellence Award!*

Every year, the faculty at Concorde Career College in Dallas vote for a recipient of the Concorde Clinical Excellence Award. They aim to choose a student from the graduating class who best embodies the Concorde Core Values: teamwork, respect for the individual, achievement, integrity and customer service. The awardee receives the honor at the graduate pinning ceremony.

This year, for the first time ever, the faculty voted unanimously.

Kira Almazayen, a 2020 graduate of the Associate of Science in Dental Hygiene program, is this year's Clinical Excellence Award winner. Her story shows that persistence, determination, and an enterprising spirit can overcome the very toughest obstacles life can throw at you.

### From Kazakhstan to America

Kira was born in Kazakhstan while it was still part of the former Soviet Union. She grew up speaking Russian and Kazakh. In 1994, she finished dental school and began practicing in her native country. Over the next ten years she continued to work as a dentist, got married and started her family.

In 2004, she and her husband decided to move to Syria to be closer to his family. Kira learned Arabic and continued to work as a dentist there. Syria was a growing country in the Middle East until political unrest led to the beginning of civil war in 2011—a civil war that continues to this day. According to the United Nations, the violence in Syria has forced more than 5.6 million people from their homes since the start of the war. Kira, her husband and their four children are among them. Her family emigrated to the United States in 2014.

The U.S. offered Kira and her family safety and opportunity. The one thing it didn't offer was a license to practice dentistry. Kira learned that her previous training as a dentist in Kazakhstan—and her 20 years of experience—was not recognized by authorities here.

### Starting from Scratch

"They said I basically have to do my dental education over again," Kira explains. Along with the issue of her qualifications, there was also the language barrier: Kira was working to learn her fourth language, English, but it took time to become proficient.

As soon as she was able to work, she found a job as a dental assistant. The job kept her involved in dentistry, and it also helped her develop as an English speaker. It wasn't very satisfying, though. Kira's husband encouraged her to go back to school so she could begin practicing at a higher level. Kira became interested in qualifying as a dental hygienist.

"People I worked with recommended Concorde," says Kira, "So I tried to get in. It was hard because my English then was completely zero."

In fact, Concorde didn't accept Kira on her first try because of her lack of English speaking skills. "I had six months to improve, and I improved," she said. She applied a

second time. “I still didn’t get in, but they gave me more consideration.” Encouraged, she applied a third time, and was accepted at last.

### College Culture Shock

Getting into the program was the first challenge. Completing it successfully would be a greater one. According to Tammy Fisher, Program Director for the Dallas Dental Hygiene program until this year, the A.S. in Dental Hygiene involves seven terms of intensive didactic and clinical training.

In addition to memorizing and assimilating massive amounts of material, students must complete clinical training on 40 patients. What’s more, they book those patients themselves. “This can be challenging for students who are from out of town and do not have a strong base of friends and family,” Fisher explained, “In other words, students like Kira.”

Kira found the class work difficult at first—much more difficult than she expected, given her professional background. In Kazakhstan, she explains, many exams at her dental school were administered orally or as essays rather than in multiple-choice format. “You have a chance then to explain your point of view. But you can’t argue with a computer.”

She received a 64 on her first exam, which left her wondering if she could stick it out. However, she had tried three times to get into this program, and she was determined to finish. Plus, she was no longer working alone. The Concorde Dallas support network had already swung into action.

### “They Push You Forward”

“Honestly, it was hard,” Fisher says when recalling Kira’s first term at the school. But “the faculty and students were all willing to work with her.” Classmates began to review with Kira after class, which helped her improve her English further (and helped her classmates review more, too). Along with Dental Hygiene clinic coordinator [Rita Hernandez, Fisher kept tabs on Kira, too. “Everyone was so friendly,” Kira says. “7:00, 8:00 at night they were on the phone helping me. I was a person who needed help, and I got help.”

With support, Kira’s aptitude for dentistry began to shine through in her work. “I remember one time she answered her anatomy assignments with the Latin terms,” Fisher says. “Lucky for us, that instructor could read the Latin!”

Kira becomes emotional remembering the way her Concorde family stepped up to



help her excel in her program. “When you have people who support you, trust you, believe in your power,” she says, “they push you forward.”

Fisher was likewise impressed by Kira. “She never, NEVER complained about the hardships she was overcoming,” Fisher wrote. “She was always prompt and professional.” Fisher also notes that while many parents struggle to balance school and family, Kira’s children “are her driving force to get through school.” Kira herself proudly states that her husband and children were fully invested in her decision to complete her degree.

### Advice to Concorde Students

Asked what advice she would give to other students, Kira says, “Lots of people wonder, ‘How do you do it with children?’” She explained that the key is having them buy in to what you are doing and why. Even when the pandemic forced schools to go fully

remote, Kira and her children all worked together to ensure everyone completed their assignments.

Kira also says it’s important to accept that you must work hard and make sacrifices. “You have to think about the time commitment. I was studying all day, late at night and early in the morning. But the result I have now, it’s worth it.”

And what was that result? After graduating in July, Kira took her board exams—an eight-hour multiple choice test of the kind she used to find confusing. She received the highest possible score on the exam.

### Inspirational Determination

Kira Almazayen’s story is an inspiration, says Fisher. “Her kind, quiet, professional spirit is admired by everyone with whom she comes in contact,” she wrote. “Most of us will never know the type of struggle Kira has experienced in her personal life. But we can all aspire to emulate her values.”

Congratulations to Kira Almazayen, the 2020 Concorde Clinical Excellence Award winner. Best wishes for success in your career as a dental hygienist—and whatever you decide to accomplish next.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## From Acting to PT Assistant - Samantha Gold's Story



*Samantha Gold is a 2020 graduate of Concorde's Physical Therapist Assistant Program in North Hollywood, CA.*

"What's my motivation?" It's the question actors famously ask directors when they want to understand why their character is doing something. Samantha Gold had moved from Chicago to Los Angeles to pursue her dream of becoming an actor and comedian. But in 2017, her motivation suddenly changed.

That year, Samantha was diagnosed with cancer of the thyroid gland. Situated in the neck just in front of the windpipe, the thyroid gland plays an important role in regulating the body's metabolism. Samantha's thyroid needed to be removed. She underwent a thyroidectomy, which involved a modified radical neck dissection.

While this surgery saved her from cancer, it also caused complications. During the procedure, Samantha suffered a spinal nerve injury. She would need intensive physical therapy (PT) to recover. Little did she know that she'd be discovering a new purpose in life while completing PT exercises.

Samantha's experience with physical therapy inspired her. She began to see a way she could add value to the rehab industry as a former PT patient who could also bring strong communication skills, empathy and a sense of humor to her work. She asked her physical therapist for advice about training as a physical therapist assistant (PTA). Her physical therapist recommended Concorde in North Hollywood.

"I found Concorde to have incredible customer service throughout the administration from the first contact I had made with them," Samantha recalled in an e-mail. "[The program offered] built-in gen

eds, and a close commute from my apartment (as a bonus). It all came together so perfectly."

North Hollywood was the first Concorde campus to offer the PTA program, according to Program Director Dr. Yelena Verba. It's a challenging eight-term program which combines classroom instruction, hands-on training, and 720 hours of clinical experience. Graduates earn an Associate of Science and qualify to sit for the National Physical Therapist Assistant Board exam. After graduation, PTA students also prepare for a state examination, a necessary step towards practicing as a PTA in California.

Dr. Verba says that education is key to being a PTA, and that she relishes playing a role in helping young professionals find their feet in their role. "Teaching allows us to see students evolve into professionals and develop and personally as well as clinically. It is very rewarding, and I love being part of the student's journey to achieve their goals."

Samantha enjoyed her time at Concorde. "One of my favorite memories was when we were learning pelvic floor health, and had plank competitions to see who could last the longest!" She also enjoyed study groups, making time to connect with fellow students while reviewing material. She



credits her instructors with keeping her going during challenging times.

“Dr. Karapetyan helped me by believing in me during times I definitely didn’t believe in myself,” she said. “Mrs. Raney gave me perspective and grounded me; Mr. Shabbat helped me to think outside the box and look at the bigger picture; and Dr. Verba pushed me to take myself to my next level even when I didn’t think I could. The whole team lifted me up and supported me to be the best student I could have been. As corny as it sounds, it’s the truth!”

Her persistence and positive energy helped her stand out in her cohort. “Samantha is a very driven person,” Dr. Verba said. “She always went out of her way to inspire other students. Her exact words were, ‘You cannot look at school as work.’”

Dr. Verba also expressed admiration for Samantha’s open-mindedness. “Samantha’s ability to always be willing to take in the information and learn from everyone has been a big reason for her success. She truly wants to help people get better and achieve their goals. Her passion and enthusiasm for the field of physical therapy will drive the rehabilitation of many patients.”

That passion and enthusiasm shine through in Samantha’s advice to future PTA students. “Make the choice to put in positive energy and effort into this program,” she wrote. “Even if it gets tough, because that’s when the staff supports you. Yes, it is challenging, and this is a good thing. It will help you grow, be disciplined, and prepare you for this honorable and purposeful job. Always remember you *get* to do this program; you don’t *have* to do it.”

Powered by her motivation, positive energy, and hard work, Samantha graduated in May 2020 and she recently became a licensed physical therapist assistant, achieving a rare perfect score of 800 on her PTA licensure examination. Congratulations, Samantha Gold! We are all so proud to have you representing Concorde Career College as you start your “honorable and purposeful” career.

#### Want to tell your story?

We would love to hear from you! If you would like to share how Concorde played a part in your journey to a new future, please reach out to [alumni@concorde.edu](mailto:alumni@concorde.edu).



PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

# Graduate Assistance: *Helping Students Prepare for Interviews During Covid*

As part of our commitment to our student success, Concorde offers graduate assistance to all of our students regardless of program enrolled in. We understand that students might need some extra help at various points during their education and we are here to help.

Students often use the resources when they are preparing to graduate and start interviewing for jobs. The idea of interviewing can be scary for students and the graduate employment specialist is there to help ease the process with resume preparation, interview techniques, assistance in placement, and career opportunities.

“Things have been going really well,” says Monica Carlos, Garden Grove Graduate Employment Specialist, “I will say at the beginning of the pandemic things were a little rough with job opportunities, but now they are going really well. The graduates have been

very responsive and understanding of what is going on.”

Brianna Hodge, 2019 Medical Assistant graduate from Miramar, wasn’t having much luck finding a job after graduation, “After completing the program, it was extremely difficult for me to find a job or simply get an interview. Then in November of 2019, Reina Resnik (Miramar Sr. Graduate Employment Specialist) contacted me with multiple job opportunities.”

Brianna discusses her experience in further detail:

“Reina helped submit my resume to different offices, and she kept in contact with me about offices that we were hiring. In doing so, she kept me in good spirits when I was going to give up. I had an interview at a doctor’s office at the very beginning of everyone learning of Covid-19, but the office ended up closing. Despite this setback Reina made sure I stayed positive and kept telling me that whatever office I work



at will be the right one for me and it will fit. I ended up interviewing at the same office a few months later and it didn’t feel like a great fit. Then in late August, Reina sent my resume to a doctor’s office in Pembroke Pine. A few days later I had my interview and I heard from them the next day saying I got the job. Even after getting the job Reina still calls and texts to check on me to be sure that I am okay and doing well in my new role. I love the job, it’s absolutely the

best place for me to be. Reina is simply amazing, and I really can’t thank her enough for all her help and support. I wish everyone could have a Reina on their side.”

**Need Help?**

To learn more about the services alumni and students can use, contact your campus student affairs team. Also check out our resources page at [concorde.edu/admissions/resources](https://concorde.edu/admissions/resources).



## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR ALUMNI BENEFITS

Concorde is proud to offer alumni discounts and rewards through Working Advantage. Save up to 60% on ticketed events and online shopping by going to [workingadvantage.com](https://workingadvantage.com). ID# 253238577

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



*Nikki Fox, Director of Online and Academic Affairs*

## A Message from our Online Team

As Director of Online and Academic Affairs, my role is to ensure that our curriculum and platform(s) used for delivering our curriculum are the best they can be for our students. When COVID impacted us in March, we had to figure out a way to ensure our students could still receive a quality education from the safety and comfort of their homes. Closing and not affording our student the opportunity to succeed, was not an option.

Our team worked many long nights and early mornings to move curriculum into a one-stop-shop for each program that Concorde offers. We held numerous training sessions for our faculty and staff to ensure they had the quick-tips and necessary tools to continue teaching in this very new environment. Within a week, we delivered trainings and curriculum to over 800 live course sections and allowed our 7,000+ student population the ability to continue their education.

There really are no words to express how grateful I am to work with this amazing team and faculty. Most importantly, to be able to see the fruits of our labor with students continued success in graduating each month, even during this pandemic, and becoming part of the essential workforce!

## Aurora Partners with Computer Non-Profit to Support Students

During normal times, students often need assistance for any number of reasons such as transportation or childcare. COVID has brought about different needs as students have transitioned to online learning for 50% or more of their learning. The need for computers at home for students to use, since school labs are closed, keeps growing.

Our Aurora campus was able to form the perfect partnership to deal with this exact issue. Dr. Vanessa Davis-Warner, Director of Student Affairs explains, "Student Affairs began to notice that we were getting more requests than normal for computers in February, and so I started researching local computer companies to see if they could help us."

During the search, Davis-Warner came across a company called PCs for People and it was a perfect fit. PCs for People is a Microsoft Authorized third party computer refurbisher and a nonprofit as well. "I met with one of the store project managers and shared with her the diversity of our student population and that many of our full-time students are considered working poor while in school."

PCs for People's primary missions to provide affordable computers and internet access to those families that live below the poverty line. "After our talk, PCs for People decided that it would be happy to partner with us to support the college and its students. Each time a student requests a computer, we forward an email to the company with the student name, school ID, and program of study," Dr. Davis-Warner's continues, "then students receive an email with the location for the closest PCs for People



*Brenda Corral, a medical assistant student at Concorde Aurora is pictured with Dr. Vanessa Davis-Warner, Director of Student Affairs. Brenda recently purchased an Apple laptop from PC's for People.*

in the Denver community and each student picks up their own computer and pays the company."

The cost of a desktop or laptop can range from \$30-100 dollars which includes the keyboard and mouse, and for an additional \$20 they get a camera. "To date we have requested approximately 50 computers, and we expect more as the year goes on."

Dr. Davis-Warner lauds, "The partnership with PCs for People has allowed the college to retain students during the pandemic, allowing the option of offering students affordable computers and internet. We couldn't be happier with how it all turned out."

### Have an idea?

Where in your community is there an opportunity for Concorde to shine? Drop an email with your ideas to [alumni@concorde.edu](mailto:alumni@concorde.edu).

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## JANUARY 2021

- 1 **New Year's Day** • All Campuses Closed
- 18 **Martin Luther King Day** • All Campuses Closed
- 20 **Medical Assistant Employer Expo** • Portland

## FEBRUARY 2021

- Heart Health Month**
- Black History Month**
- 5 **Give Kids A Smile Event** • Aurora
- 7 - 13 **Pharmacy Tech Safety Awareness Week** • San Diego

## MARCH 2021

- 8 - 12 **93<sup>rd</sup> Dental Assistant Recognition Week**
- 17 **St. Patrick's Day Celebrations**
- 22 - 28 **Health Information Professionals Week**
- 26 **Epilepsy Awareness Day** • Dallas

## APRIL 2021

- 17 **National Autism Awareness Month**
- 16 - 23 **Medical Office Associate/Medical Office Professional Week**
- 21 **Medical Office Professional Appreciation Day** • Southaven
- 23 **Virtual Career Fair** • Grand Prairie

## MAY 2021

- Vocational Nursing Month**
- Women's Health Month**
- 3 - 7 **Teacher Appreciation Week** • Aurora
- 5 **Cinco De Mayo Celebrations**
- 6 - 12 **National Nurses Week**
- 11 **Virtual Resource Fair** • Garden Grove
- 12 **National Nurses Day**
- 20 **Military Appreciation Day**

## JUNE 2021

- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month**
- PTSD Awareness Month**
- Men's Health Month**
- 24 **Virtual Career Fair** • Portland

## Commencements: Virtual Style!



*Pictured above is Concorde's drive-thru commencement event at the Orlando campus.*

"COVID doesn't stop Concorde!" exclaims Nancy Jones-Vice President of Student Affairs, when talking about Concorde's virtual commencements it's been holding since COVID interrupted the education world. The pandemic forced schools across the country to get creative with their commencements due to the restrictions COVID created.

Commencement remains our favorite time of year and we always look forward to acknowledging and celebrating the academic accomplishments of our students. In order to keep the tradition of commencements a minor tweak had to occur, we had to go virtual. "Our virtual commencement ceremonies have been a great way to congratulate our graduates and remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic," says Student Affairs director at our Campus Support Center, Koula Foura.

Jones explained, "Each campus held a 'drive through' cap and gown event, where graduates received their regalia and a Concorde swag bag. Some campuses also held virtual pinning ceremonies." The drive through cap and gown pick up events also allowed for staff to take pictures of students to use for the virtual commencement ceremonies.

This spring, we held our first virtual commencement ceremonies and were honored to have a wonderful commencement speaker, Thaddeus Bullard. Mr. Bullard is a former pro wrestler and currently part of WWE- RAW known as Titus O'Neil. Bullard is heavily involved in charity work in the Tampa Bay area and has done some events with Concorde's Tampa campus. Mr. Bullard presented an inspiring speech to all Concorde graduates.

"I am very pleased and give kudos to all the campuses for coordinating memorable virtual commencements that the 2020 graduates will never forget!" Jones notes. "This has been a great option for Concorde to ensure we are keeping everyone safe during these unprecedented times," says Foura. "We look forward to the time when it's safe to resume in person commencement ceremony events, but until then we will continue to provide our graduates with the best possible virtual ceremonies."

## Let's Connect!

