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# Supercomputer at SSCC

## 320 mini computers make mega mainframe

**By Southern State**  
For The Times-Gazette

A supercomputer capable of searching the outer limits of space for alien life and helping stop the spread of COVID-19 is located close to home at Southern State Community College, where computer science students learned valuable knowledge and skills in their field by building it themselves.

“This is an amazing example of student-selected, project-based learning,” said SSCC Computer Science Professor Josh Montgomery. “This project took a wide range of skills to complete.”

According to Montgomery, the supercomputer is composed of 320 Raspberry Pi 3 mini computers with access to 1,280 processing cores and 320 gigabytes of Random Access Memory (RAM) storage, making it a powerful device with many capabilities.

Montgomery said the computer has crunched data for programs like the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, which is an effort to detect evidence of technological civilizations that may exist elsewhere in the universe, particularly in our galaxy. He said the computer analyzes radio waves from space in hopes of detecting other life forms, and that the computer was used during the COVID-19 pandemic to crunch data on the virus in hopes of slowing its spread.

Students who were interested in the project could work on it for credit toward certain exams that were tied to the learning objectives of Montgomery’s courses, Montgomery said.

SSCC students Derick Caplinger and Chad Park came up with the idea in 2019, Montgomery said, and using \$40,000 in grant funding from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE),

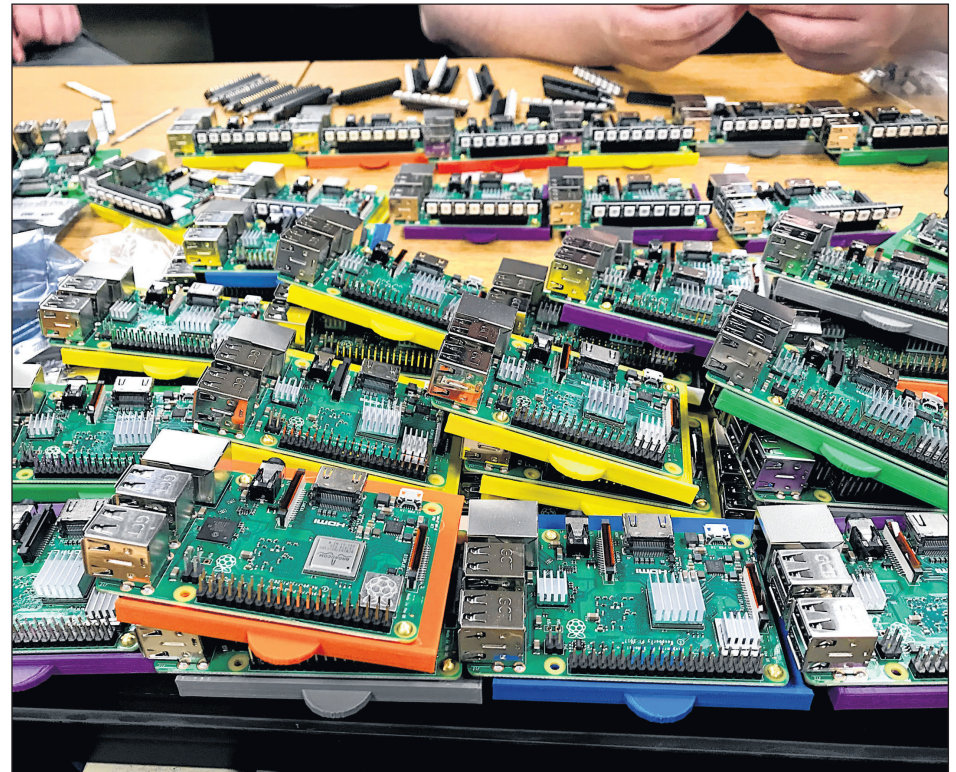


The new supercomputer at Southern State Community College, with 2,560 individual LEDs, lights up science professor Josh Montgomery’s classroom window.

Montgomery helped his students bring the idea to fruition. More than 30 students have contributed to the project and received credit, though Montgomery credited Park and Seth Lewis with developing the core programming and completing most of the work.

Students constructed the computer cases themselves using aluminum and 3D-printed parts from the computer lab designed to fit in the classroom window, which is 8.5 feet tall and 3 feet wide.

“I wanted the computer to sit in my classroom window,” Montgomery said. “Students went through five different computer case design ideas for how the computer would physically come together, because accommodating that requirement was very challenging.”



Submitted photos  
Some of the 320 Raspberry Pi 3 mini computers that make up Southern State Community College’s new supercomputer are shown in this picture.

The computer is powered by a custom-built electric system using more than 3,300 feet of cables, the length of nearly 10 football fields, said Montgomery. The computers are networked together using CISCO switches provided by Highland District Hospital. Montgomery thanked Tim Bogard, IT director, for assistance.

Each Raspberry Pi computer has an LED strip on the side indicating the status of processor utilization and connection to different online services, Montgomery said. In total, the supercomputer boasts an impressive display of 2,560 individual LEDs.

“It does a great job of lighting up the entire hallway by the computer lab,” Montgomery said.

The project was paid for with funding from the Regionally Aligned Priorities Delivering Skills grant, which supports and strengthens

industry sectors in need at the regional level, driving equipment dependent workplace education, training and skills, according to the ODE. In 2020, the federal Perkins Grant helped buy small parts and pieces along the way, Montgomery said.

“Having a dream, passion or interest in something should drive learning,” Montgomery said. “Learning should not be focused on just finding a job to earn more money. While that’s part of it, you can develop greater critical thinking skills while working on projects you want to complete in a learning environment that’s fun and impactful.”

For more information about Southern State and its course offerings, visit [sscc.edu](http://sscc.edu).

This story was submitted by David Wright, the social media coordinator at Southern State Community College.



# Tips for dorm room and campus safety



Life on a college campus can be exciting, especially for freshmen enjoying their first taste of life away from home. As exciting as campus life can be, it also can be a bit nervewracking for students who have never before had to fend for themselves. Administrators and security personnel work to make school environments as safe as possible, but incidents can happen on any campus. **A recent report from Campus Safety and Security, there were 38,100 reported criminal offenses, including burglary and identity theft, on college campuses in the United States in 2017.**

Students need not live in fear on campus, but embracing various safety measures can make life at school that much safer.

**Hide or lock up valuables.** You never know what may catch the eye of a thief. Devices and cash are near the top of lists of most commonly stolen possessions, but a desperate student may steal notes or even expensive textbooks if he or she is struggling. Always close doors and lock dorm rooms when leaving. Keep valuables out of sight at school. Consider buying a dorm room safe and lock your locker at all times.

**Prepare for emergencies.** Research the school's policies on emergency preparedness. Some have text alert systems for emergency situations like adverse weather conditions, while others have clear guidelines on what students should do if they feel threatened in any way. Participate in fire drills and learn the nearest exits and protocols for emergency evacuations.

**Utilize the buddy system.** Most campuses are safe to move around, but it can't hurt to schedule certain classes, particularly if they take place after dark, with a friend so you can walk to and from classes together. Security experts say that elevators and stairwells are common places for assailants to target victims. If you ever feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts and err on the side of caution.

**Install window alarms.** Many retailers sell battery-operated window alarms that can be adhered to windows. The alarms will activate if the window is opened or the glass breaks. These alarms can provide extra security even if your dorm room isn't on the ground floor.

**Be alert when ridesharing.** The safety resource Safety.com says rideshare crimes are on the rise. Always identify your driver and vehicle before getting in and ask the driver to identify your name, as he or she will have it and your destination. Wait for the ride in a safe place, and try to avoid riding alone.

**Maintain personal health.** Be sure to visit the doctor and stay current on necessary vaccinations, such as the one for meningococcal disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the risk for meningococcal disease in college students is slightly higher than the risk in other teens and young adults who are not attending college. Other communicative diseases can spread more easily on campus as well. Campus and dorm safety is multifaceted. Informed students can reduce their risk of being involved in accidents or being targeted by criminals.

# Follow form and function when outfitting your dorm room



College campuses are a home away from home for much of the year for students who go away to school. According to Azusa Pacific University, many universities, APU included, require students to live on campus during their freshman and sophomore years. Doing so provides many students opportunities to fully immerse themselves in their school communities and enjoy a little independence at the same time. Dorm rooms afford students a chance to impart their own unique touches on their living spaces. A dorm room need not be drab. In fact, with a little creativity and some design tips, a dorm room become a space to be proud of.

**Coordinate your vision.** Once you meet your roommate, discuss how you see the dorm room evolving. Choosing a color palette is a great place to start. If you can't agree on bedding patterns, work with a color scheme so your side of the room and your roommate's will coordinate.

**Invest in high-quality linens and bedding.** Focus your attention on making the one area of the room where you'll spend most of your time as comfortable and attractive as it can be. Look for high thread counts on sheets and pillowcases. HGTV recommends a duvet cover that can be swapped out to change the look of your bed when the mood strikes. Throw pillows

and a throw blanket are ideal for lounging in style, and they can be arranged to make a tradition XL twin bed look like a daybed or chaise.

**Opt for multi-use furniture.** If your dorm room only has the basics and you can add a few pieces, maximize space and function with items that serve multiple purposes. Storage ottomans can keep belongings organized and also serve as extra seating for guests. A mirror behind your desk can serve as a vanity for getting ready when the shared bathroom is occupied.

**Set aside a kitchen area.** While you may not be cooking a four-course meal inside your dorm room — and most schools limit which types of cooking can take place in dorm rooms — set up a kitchen station with some essentials. According to the storage and organizational company Spacewise, a rolling utility cart equipped with a coffee maker, small microwave, mini fridge, and some cube storage containers is the perfect place to have snacks and beverages at the ready.

**Maximize storage.** Shelves over a bed, underbed storage, bedskirt organizers, closet caddies, and additional organizational gadgets can keep rooms tidy and functional.

Dorm rooms can be customized with some simple additions to make these spaces feel more like home.



# How students can transition to life on a college campus

Much has been made of the challenges that have faced students and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to remote learning and shortened school days was difficult for many families, forcing students to adapt to virtual school on the fly as their parents adjusted to working from home full-time while doing their best to keep kids engaged in their studies and occupied when school let out each day. Given those challenges, it's no wonder so many families are looking forward to what figures to be a more normal school year in 2021-22. But that return will pose its own unique challenges as well. Some students may be a little anxious as they prepare to return to campus this fall. That transition could be especially difficult for incoming college freshmen, who must overcome any pandemic-related concerns about returning to campus while also making the transition to life on a college campus. The following are some ways to make that transition go smoothly.

**Engage in the community.** The Health, Counseling and Disability Access Services at the University of Missouri-St. Louis urges students to take advantage of opportunities to engage in their new communities as early as possible. The HCDAS notes that first-year experiences are designed to help students connect with their new life on campus and make new friends. All incoming freshmen are facing the same set of unique circumstances as the 2021-22 school year begins. That includes the adjustment from remote learning with limited social contact with peers to a return to more traditional academic and



social settings. Navigating that transition alongside other incoming freshmen can make it a little easier to handle.

**Plan ahead.** Parents and their college-bound children can prepare for the coming school year by learning about on-campus policies over the summer. Will masks be mandated? Will classrooms remain socially distanced? Are vaccinations required to attend class in person? The sooner families learn these policies, the sooner they can begin planning for life on campus. Parents also can look into on-campus resources designed to help students readjust to being back among their peers. Knowing where to go for help should students need it can ensure any issues that arise are addressed promptly.

**Encourage students to share their concerns.** Opening up about any concerns they may have can help students as they emerge from the



pandemic. Many parents were concerned about returning to the office in person, and they can share those concerns and the ultimate outcomes of their returns with students concerned about moving onto a college campus. Parents are urged to periodically check in with college students about any anxieties they may have about being on campus. Returning to full-time, in-person learning after the pandemic may be especially challenging for incoming college freshmen. Such students can work with their parents over the summer to conquer their fears and prepare for the coming school year.

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# To all in our medical community, thank you

**By Christine Raber**

Interim Associate Provost at  
Shawnee State University

**A**t Shawnee State, we have a long tradition of preparing future health care professionals. Since long before we became a four-year university, we earned a reputation for excellence in education for nurses, respiratory therapy technologists, occupational therapy assistants, medical laboratory technologists, radiologic technologists, physical therapy assistants, emergency medical technologists, and dental hygienists.

We continue that tradition today with our two-year associate's degree programs; bachelor's degrees in biomedical sciences

(pre-med), chemistry (pre-pharmacy), healthcare administration, and nursing; and master's and doctorate degrees in occupational therapy.

We're proud of these degrees and the impact they have on our medical community's ability to provide the best care possible to all who live in our region. At no point in our long history, however, have we been prouder than right now.

COVID-19 has affected all of our lives — and our health care professionals have been on the frontlines since the beginning. Their unwavering service and care for this community can only be described as heroic. Shawnee State graduates are saving lives. They're protecting friends and neighbors. They're providing comfort to families who have lost loved ones. They are supporting

each other — no matter what role they play in the vast health care ecosystem.

To our past, present and future graduates, I want to say thank you on behalf of the faculty involved in your education. We see you. We are with you and we know the sacrifices you have made this year. Please know that we're preparing reinforcements for you as quickly as possible.

To our hospitals and clinical sites who partner with us to prepare the next wave of heroes, thank you for your continued support of our students with everything you are managing within your facilities.

To every high school student exploring ways to make a difference and every person out there considering a new career in health care, we're ready for you — and are eager to help you get started.



Submitted photos

## Shawnee State announces nursing, cybersecurity and computer engineering technology scholarships for spring starts

**By Shawnee State University**

for the Portsmouth Daily Times

"Scholarships for incoming freshmen are traditionally awarded in the fall semester, but these aren't traditional times," Eric Braun, Vice President for Advancement and Enrollment Management at Shawnee State University, said. "We want to help students who may have postponed their education get back on track."

Braun announced that a limited number of scholarships will be awarded to incoming first-time freshmen who enroll in Shawnee State's associate's degree in nursing, associate's or bachelor's degree in information security (cybersecurity) or bachelor's degree in computer engineering technology programs for Spring Semester, which begins January 10, 2022.

"The SSU Development Foundation is supporting these scholarships to help fill vital workforce needs in our region," Braun said.

The critical demand for nurses is widely known. The need for nurses was great before the pandemic and will continue long after the current crisis.

"Our two-year associate's degree program is the fastest path toward a nursing career,"



Braun said. "We want to support future nurses by helping to make their education even more affordable now."

Computer engineering technology and related areas, such as cybersecurity, are also in demand. Shawnee State's Information Security degree was developed last year. It prepares students to specialize in data protection, information assurance and network security fields.



Submitted photos

"Like nursing, our spring-start scholarships will help provide a fast path to in-demand IT careers and help local students who are interested in computer-related fields," Braun said.

Students from Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia are eligible to apply for Shawnee State's Spring Start Scholarships. Find more information at [www.shawnee.edu/scholarships](http://www.shawnee.edu/scholarships).



# SSU gaming stays strong with experienced faculty, programs

**By Shawnee State University**  
for the Portsmouth Daily Times

It's no secret that Shawnee State University's gaming program is one of the best in the world. In 2021, SSU was named for the 11th consecutive year to The Princeton Review's Top Undergraduate Schools for Game Design. SSU placed in the top 10 for the second year in a row.

At its core, the program has remained strong because of a combination of the faculty and the care that they take with each student, along with the accessibility available. With only 16 students per class, the program takes the learner on a deep dive into the studies and work.

The faculty in SSU's program are all professionals with impressive prior experience in their fields, working for nationally and globally known studios and publishers.

These instructors stay current and connected to the industry, helping SSU stand up against some much larger programs and offer an affordable opportunity for students in the region.

Game development is very much like producing a blockbuster film, but sometimes with even greater pressure. This can include entire teams of artists who work just on certain items, such as environments, weapons, clothing and others. SSU's program helps prepare students for that kind of specialization in design.

Shawnee State offers four-year degrees for different aspects of game design, including the artistic and programming sides. The four-year degrees for each are in Digital Simulation and Gaming Engineering Technology (Bachelor of Science) and Gaming and Simulation Development Arts (Bachelor of Fine arts).

Duane Skaggs, associate professor of gaming technology, teaches on the programming side. He noted that part of the SSU program's strength is having two paths for those interested in the field.

"A lot of those larger programs



Submitted photos

don't have both an art and a programming side," Skaggs said. "Or if they do, they are not as closely integrated. At SSU, art students do take programming courses and programming students take several art courses."

Now in his 25th year of teaching and bringing extensive experience in theory as well as research in the field, Skaggs said the programming degree is a computer science degree but with a strong focus on gaming, creating games and digital simulation.

"The students who come through our program are prepared for any kind of software development or software engineering," he said. "In fact, a number of students who graduate from our program

choose not to go directly to game companies."

Skaggs said one of the important aspects of the program's instruction is being able to communicate effectively.

"The students are experienced with being able to transition from programmer language to being able to communicate with other people about the programs," he said, noting that the curriculum includes several required presentations and collaborative work.

As one of the top programs in the country SSU holds numerous events to engage current students with alumni and notable leaders in the field. The student culture also fosters teamwork and strong

relationships. The gaming students belong to groups known as "houses" named after the faculty members and they engage in friendly competition throughout the year.

"We have competitions – house challenges," Skaggs said. "These have included a variety of competitions, with awards, among the houses. These are groups a student normally stays with from freshman to senior. We also have homework nights, where you might find a freshman being helped by a senior or vice versa. Networking and connections are built and it's really more than just a class cohort. It's four years doing a lot together."

The faculty in SSU's program

are optimistic about the career opportunities for their graduates.

"Most of our programming majors are working using their degree within six months of graduating," Skaggs said. "This may not be in game studios, which can be very stressful when going from one project to another. The graduates do weigh the pay and security in non-studio jobs against those in gaming."

The Princeton Review chose the schools based on its 2020 survey of administrators at 150 institutions in the U.S., Canada, and abroad offering game design courses, majors, or degree programs. For more information about Shawnee's gaming program, visit [www.shawnee.edu/gaming](http://www.shawnee.edu/gaming).



## The threat of anxiety and depression among college students

The moment young people arrive on college campuses and begin their lives as college students marks a significant milestone. College provides many young people with their first taste of independence, and that newfound freedom can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when it's coupled with academic challenges that are much more rigorous than they were in high school. According to data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 80 percent of college students feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities as a student. NAMI data also indicates that 50 percent of college students rate their mental health as below average or poor. Anxiety and depression are two mental health issues that affect many college students as they try to juggle the various demands associated with being students. Anyone who suspects they or a student they know is experiencing either of these issues should reach out to a mental health professional immediately.

### Depression

Depression among college students may have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2020 survey conducted by the Healthy Minds Network in collaboration with the American College Health Association found that the rate of depression among college students has increased since the onset of the pandemic. Though students typically have readily available access to mental health professionals on campus, that access has been compromised during the pandemic as students, counselors

and educators learn and work remotely. College mental health counselors were available via video conferencing during the pandemic, but students may not be aware of that, while others might be uncomfortable discussing their mental health in dorm rooms or apartments they share with fellow students. Symptoms of depression include feelings of sadness or hopelessness, loss of motivation, sleeplessness, trouble concentrating, changes in appetite and body weight, and loss of interest in social activities.

### Anxiety

A 2017 report from Penn State University's Center for Collegiate Mental Health found that anxiety is one of the two most common reasons college students seek mental health services (the other is depression). In fact, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America reports that 13 percent of college students have been diagnosed with a mental health condition linked to anxiety. Anxiety among college students can be triggered by social and/or academic pressures. Being in constant fear, experiencing frequent headaches, exhibiting shortness of breath, difficulty concentrating, constant feelings of stress or irritability, irregular heartbeat, and muscle pain or tension are some symptoms associated with anxiety. Help is available to students dealing with depression or anxiety. Mental health professionals on campus can be invaluable resources as students try to overcome issues that can affect their quality of life while on campus.



## How to help students improve their focus on their studies

Teachers strive to create supportive and challenging classroom environments for their students. Such settings can bring out the best in students and help them overcome obstacles, including an inability to focus. The struggles students can have with focusing on their studies was apparent during the pandemic. **A 2020 survey of more than 400 college students found that 64 percent were concerned about their ability to maintain their focus and discipline in remote instructional environments.** Though educators, students and parents are hopeful that remote learning will soon be a thing of the past, no one is certain about what lies ahead in regard to the 2021-22 school year. Ideally, students will be back in school time full-time five days per week by the start of the new academic year. However, there's no guarantee that will be the case, and students may need help focusing on their studies.

**Emphasize one activity at a time.** Various studies have shown that multitasking adversely affects performance and makes



it hard to concentrate. A recent study from researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that performing two or three activities simultaneously puts

significantly more demand on the brain than simply doing those tasks one after another. All students, and especially those who are struggling with focus, should be

encouraged to take on one task at a time.

**Take breaks.** The Cleveland Clinic notes that various studies have found that periodic breaks improve mood, boost performance and increase a person's ability to concentrate and pay attention. Many students are well acquainted with lengthy cramming sessions on the eve of a big exam, which can feel like a rite of passage for high schoolers and college students. Parents and educators can emphasize the importance of taking breaks during such sessions and how periodic rest can help improve performance.

**Take a piecemeal approach to big tasks.** The Child Mind Institute notes that breaking big tasks down into smaller, more manageable pieces can help kids effectively tackle more challenging tasks. The piecemeal approach can make big tasks seem less daunting, and the success kids have at each smaller task can provide some needed momentum as they draw closer to solving the problem. Many students struggle to focus on their studies. Some simple strategies can help students overcome such challenges and fulfill their academic potential.



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