STAY CONNECTED:

• Alumnus brings explosive talents to new Discovery Channel show
• Health Science students gain invaluable experience with disaster simulation
• Astronomer Gordon Houston brings public closer to the stars

Texas A&M Engineering Academy at Blinn coming to Brenham in Fall 2015
Two months ago, I came to Blinn College as interim district president and discovered an institution with proud, deep roots in the communities it serves. Within weeks of taking the job, I met countless people, including many second- and third-generation Blinn alumni, who described what Blinn College has meant to them and their families throughout its long history of public service.

Rep. John Raney recently drafted several bills related to Blinn College, and while these bills relate to a variety of topics, they are ultimately about one thing—the return Blinn’s Bryan campus students receive in exchange for their hard-earned tuition dollars.

Students on our Bryan campus are already well aware of the exceptional value Blinn provides, which is why we continue to experience unparalleled growth in Brazos County and defy the statewide trend for Texas community colleges. Last fall, we attracted students from 1,553 zip codes, reflecting Blinn’s unique nature as a destination college not only for students throughout the state, but also the nation. These students choose Blinn because of our close relationship with the state’s leading four-year universities and our reputation for academic excellence, which has resulted in a 42 percent transfer rate—a mark that places Blinn approximately 20 percent above the state average and ranks us among the nation’s leaders.

Blinn has earned national recognition for affordability, and according to a recent study, students taking 30 credit hours during the 2014-15 academic year saved more than $4,000 at Blinn compared to the average Texas public university. On top of the low tuition and fees, Blinn offers more than 200 endowed scholarships to incoming and returning students from a wide range of backgrounds, majors, academic backgrounds and experiences.

As our academic quality and affordability draws more students to our Bryan campus, we are following through on a master plan to accommodate this historic enrollment growth. Blinn is currently in the midst of a $10 million, multi-stage renovation project on the Bryan campus that will upgrade our study/leisure spaces on campus, improve our food service options and provide additional multi-use classrooms in the fall. This project is part of a larger, multi-year initiative to expand our programs and course offerings, especially in science, technology, engineering and math.

As our academic quality and affordability draws more students to our Bryan campus, we continue to make in Bryan, we look forward to building upon that legacy with an even brighter future.

In the midst of this historic growth, we must also continue to support and advocate for the students who are already enrolled. As our academic quality and affordability draws more students to our Bryan campus, we are following through on a master plan to accommodate this historic enrollment growth. Blinn is currently in the midst of a $10 million, multi-stage renovation project on the Bryan campus that will upgrade our study/leisure spaces on campus, improve our food service options and provide additional multi-use classrooms in the fall. This project is part of a larger, multi-year initiative to expand our programs and course offerings, especially in science, technology, engineering and math.

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Texas A&M Engineering Academy at Blinn coming to Brenham in Fall 2015

Program allows students to pursue their engineering degree while co-enrolled at Texas A&M and Blinn

Blinn College and Texas A&M University’s Dwight Look College of Engineering are offering students a unique pathway to pursue an engineering degree from Texas A&M. Beginning this fall, the Texas A&M Engineering Academy at Blinn is coming to Blinn College’s Brenham campus, where it will establish a one-of-a-kind living and learning community. Participants in the Engineering Academy at Blinn-Brenham will live together in the Blinn College Park Apartments and will take their math, science and engineering classes together to create a strong, academic support network.

Engineering Academy students will take a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester, including two to three credit hours of Texas A&M engineering courses. The Texas A&M courses will be instructed by a Texas A&M professor on the Blinn-Brenham campus.

Only Engineering Academy students will be allowed to enroll in the engineering courses provided on the Brenham campus. These courses were previously reserved only for students admitted to the Look College, therefore Engineering Academy students will start their engineering academic courses at the same time as freshman engineering students at Texas A&M. Academy students have two years to successfully gain admission into an engineering degree granting major within the Dwight Look College of Engineering. Similar to all freshman Engineering students at Texas A&M, admission to a major is competitive and not guaranteed. However, Academy students who complete all program requirements with a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.0 will be guaranteed full admission to Texas A&M. Engineering Academy students will have access to Look College advisors who are dedicated to the program and who will assist them in exploring all their options for full admission into a major that aligns with their academic and career goals.

Students who participate in the program and take 15 credit hours will save approximately $5,500 each semester compared to a student taking all 15 credit hours at Texas A&M. Additionally, Blinn offers a variety of scholarships, including the Texas – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship for students from a Texas high school who graduated with a minimum 3.0 grade point average.

First-time and continuing college students who are pre-calculus or calculus ready are eligible to apply for the Engineering Academy at Blinn-Brenham via the ApplyTexas application. The Engineering Academy at Blinn-Brenham continues to build upon the partnership between the Look College and Blinn. Modeled after the Texas A&M Blinn TEAM (Transfer Enrollment at A&M) co-enrollment partnership, the Engineering Academy began as the TEAM-E pilot program in 2013. After beginning with more than 100 participants, the Engineering Academy now includes over 200 students on the Bryan campus. The Academy will expand to approximately 500 total students in 2015-16, including approximately 100 on the Blinn-Brenham campus.

Blinn is an affiliate partner of the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES), and is partnering with Look College to establish a co-aligned Associate of Science degree that will allow Blinn engineering students to seamlessly transfer credit hours into the college of engineering.

From the time he first learned to make gunpowder as a 7-year-old, Matt Barnett knew he wanted to work with explosives. But it wasn’t until he attended Blinn College that he learned how to turn that passion into a career.

Now the star of the new Discovery Channel show “Fire in the Hole,” Barnett owns Texplo Explosives based in Columbus. Barnett took his first step toward that career by enrolling at Blinn College in 1999, and he attributes the one-on-one attention he received during chemistry classes for his success as an explosives expert.

“At Blinn I had a feeling that I was grasping the subject matter at my own pace,” Barnett said. “I felt like part of the laboratory was comfortable at Blinn’s laboratories was Professor Kenneth French.

“One of the reasons Barnett felt so comfortable at Blinn’s laboratories was Professor Kenneth French. “Matt was a very motivated and a unique student,” French said. “He wanted to do things from scratch and we fully expected him to succeed.”

Said Barnett, “Dr. French would let me come in after hours and work in the laboratory. He spent a lot of one-on-one time with me and recently came down to Columbus to look at my current laboratory.”

Barnett transferred to Texas A&M University, where he graduated with a chemistry degree in 2005 and then earned his certification as an unexploded ordnance technician. In 2007, he opened Bonetti Explosives.

“I take all the small jobs that the big companies won’t touch,” Barnett said. “I also have an explosives range where people can come out and test just about anything they want.”

“Fire in the Hole” demonstrates Barnett’s skill in safely detonating everything from 250-pound World War II bombs to meth labs to bridges.

“Matt was a very motivated and a unique student,” French said. “He wanted to do things from scratch and we fully expected him to succeed.”

For more information on Texplo Explosives and “Fire in the Hole,” visit www.texploexplosives.com or www.discovery.com/pc/shows/fire-in-the-hole/
Health Science students gain invaluable experience with disaster simulation

More than 100 Blinn College students recently put their healthcare expertise to the test to aid 700 patients in the midst of a wildfire.

The disaster and resulting injuries were simulated—designed specifically to test student’s skills in a high-pressure environment—but the learning opportunity was very real.

“This event allows students to act out the role of their professions and really teaches them how to collaborate with other healthcare professionals in the event of a catastrophe,” said Sami Rahman, director of simulation at Blinn’s Health Science Center campus. “It’s an invaluable experience for their future.”

Disaster Day originated at Texas A&M with 20 students whose ailments were written on paper and stuck to their limbs. Over the past eight years, the event has developed into a true-to-life simulation in which several hundred students and community members volunteer to act as patients with conditions ranging from simple scrapes to life-threatening injuries.

Students from Blinn’s nursing, radiology and physical therapist assistant programs assumed roles as healthcare providers or patients impacted during the wildfire scenario, providing care inside the gymnasium of Central Baptist Church in College Station alongside students from Texas A&M University’s Health Science Center.

According to the scenario—kept secret until the event to provide a more realistic simulation—a wildfire and corresponding explosion devastated Bryan-College Station and left several hundred wounded. The fire engulfed two area hospitals, leaving 700 patients be cared for in the church gymnasium.

Volunteer patients, including several Blinn students, were painted with make-up to portray an array of injuries from minor burns to gaping wounds. The volunteers created an intense, lifelike scenario for the student healthcare providers, letting our shrieks, crying for help and panicking under the gravity of the crisis.

“It was an amazing experience,” said Courtney Gehrmann, a second-year nursing student from Nacogdoches. “It was stressful at first until we figured out how to work together and what our specific responsibilities would be. I learned a lot about prioritizing in an emergency situation and how to work with healthcare professionals at all levels.”

At the conclusion of the simulation, supervising faculty and healthcare providers led a debriefing session with the students, spotlighting successes and highlighting areas for improvement.

“The students continue to impress us year after year,” said Smiley Flores, dean of Health Sciences. “With this experience, students learn that collaboration and communication help them provide better patient care. If they can communicate well, the patient sees the benefits.”
‘He can teach the next Mozart’

John Dujka always knew he would teach music, but he never expected a substitute position at Blinn College would turn into a 25-year career.

“I knew I was going to teach piano one day,” Dujka said. “The teaching aspect all kind of fell in my lap.”

Dujka’s love of piano started well before he came to Blinn, as his mother’s side of the family had a rich musical tradition. Dujka started playing the piano while in kindergarten, and his talent showed itself early on.

“Folk music was always a part of my background,” Dujka said. “Eventually my brother Mark and I started working together as a musician.”

Dujka said he enjoys nurturing young talent and finding a diamond in the rough. “One thing about the community college level is that students are trying to find themselves,” Dujka said. “Sometimes the students go into music as a career and other times they go a different direction, but music is always a part of their lives.”

Dujka said he loves when students have “ah ha” moment and contribute to lively musical discussions.

“John is a wonderful musician and he can also teach students of all levels,” said fellow faculty member and Blinn College Teaching Assistant Gordon Houston.

For Houston, astronomy is something of a family tradition. “I remember back with my grandparents that we always went out to view the annual Perseid Meteor Shower,” he said. “My family always had somewhat more than a passing interest in astronomy.”

Every time a person looks at the moon, it looks different, Houston said. “I like hearing the word ‘wow’ when kids and adults look through that telescope,” he said. “You can see celestial events occurring right in front of you.”

Houston mentions that “ah ha” moments are not only great for the students but for the teacher as well. “It is rewarding to see students develop a love for something they had never considered before,” he said.

Houston points out the various constellations with a laser pointer, then gives attendees the opportunity to look at the constellations through a Celestron C-14 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope. The Schaefer Observatory was built in the 1940s by local hardware store owner H.P. Schaefer and his sons to view the moon’s surface. The family donated the 27-foot tall gavanized metal structure to the Schulenburg school district in 1991, and in 2008 Blinn received the observatory.

“We are happy to be involved in preserving an important part of Schulenburg history,” said Becky Garlick, Schulenburg campus director. “One of the common myths about children is that it looks so real in the telescope that they don’t believe it is real,” Houston said. “Some try to claim that we pasted a picture in the telescope.”

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Houston is currently working on a Ph.D. in archaeoastronomy overseas at Ilia State University in Tblisi, Georgia. Part of his work centers around pictographs in Paint Rock, Texas, and how ancient cultures used and studied astronomy.

Astronomer Gordon Houston BRINGS PUBLIC CLOSER TO THE STARS

For as long as he can remember, Gordon Houston has gazed into the night sky and studied the stars. Now the astronomer teaches Blinn College students and members of the community about those same constellations at the Schaefer Observatory on the Blinn-Schulenburg campus.

Blinn hosts two “star parties” each semester. Houston points out the various constellations with a laser pointer, then gives attendees the opportunity to look at the constellations through a Celestron C-14 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope. The Schaefer Observatory was built in the 1940s by local hardware store owner H.P. Schaefer and his sons to view the moon’s surface. The family donated the 27-foot tall galvanized metal structure to the Schulenburg school district in 1991, and in 2008 Blinn received the observatory.

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Blinn to offer dual-credit Czech classes in the fall

Students can earn college credit from their local high school campus

Blinn College will introduce a new generation of high school students to the beauty of the Czech language this fall with dual credit courses that will allow students to earn high school and college credit at the same time.

Thaddeus Polasek, director of the Schulenburg Public Library, will teach the course and lead the live sessions from the Blinn College – Schulenburg campus. Polasek instructs the community education Conversational Czech courses that are regularly taught at Blinn-Schulenburg.

“There is a lot of interest in this area for Czech language and culture because we had many who emigrated from that area,” said Blinn-Schulenburg Director Becky Garlick. “In many cases, it’s an opportunity for younger family members to learn more about their roots.”

High school students enrolled in dual credit courses will participate interactive video conferencing, allowing them to interact with their instructor and peers from their local high school campus.

“We hope to partner with high schools that are interested in putting the Czech language back in their curriculum,” Garlick said.

High school interested in offering the course should contact Garlick at 979-743-5222 or bgarlick@blinn.edu, and interested students should encourage their respective administrators to contact Blinn.

Nursing students raise funds, awareness as part of worldwide campaign

Former Blinn student, EMS director inspires students to fight malaria in Uganda

Jason Segner harnessed his passion of helping people in crisis for a decade as Blinn College’s Emergency Medical Services Program director. Three years ago, that same passion pulled Segner more than 8,000 miles from Bryan to Uganda.

“Blinn now qualifies for the opportunity to earn the same designations at the state conference in April,” said Michael Brandin of the Brenham campus SGA. “I am incredibly proud of these students,” said Erikk Brown, student clubs and activities coordinator. “They’ve worked hard to unite Region IV and their efforts have gained the attention of their peers. It’s been a great year of growth and I’m excited to see them further their leadership skills at the state conference.”

“Blinn is an amazing college and I’m excited to see our students represent the college and the nation,” said Brandin. “I am so proud of having these amazing students represent Blinn.”

Students from Blinn College’s Brenham, Bryan, Schulenburg and Sealy student government associations were elected to regional leadership positions and earned top awards at the Texas Junior College Student Government Association (TJCSGA) Region IV convention recently held on the Blinn-Brenham campus.

The Bryan campus Student Government Association (SGA) was named Region IV chapter of the year for its outstanding involvement in other local college activities, community service projects and Region IV initiatives. Kye Cockerham of the Brenham campus SGA earned student of the year for his extracurricular involvement, academic achievement and contributions to SGA. Garrett Smith, Bryan campus SGA advisor, was named the region’s advisor of the year for his role in local and regional SGA groups, the TJCSGA and community activities.

Blinn Alerts

“Submit Event” when you’re ready to get started.

Promote your events online for FREE, 24x7

Blinn’s online calendar works for you to draw attendance to your event, day and night, weekends, even during holidays. It’s your tool to use and your first step to host an event with a terrific turnout. Check it out. It’s easy to use. The price is right (FREE) and you decide how much or how little detail you want to add!
Students use expertise to connect with Special Olympics Texas athletes

Physical Therapist Assistant students conduct functional fitness screenings, provide personal exercise programs for athletes

It takes a FUNFitness village to groom a Special Olympic athlete, and students in Blinn College’s Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program know how to do just that. Twenty-four members of Blinn’s Student Physical Therapist Assistant Association (SPTAA) volunteered their time and expertise at the recent Special Olympics Texas Winter Games in Austin to ensure the athletes were in top-notch shape.

SPTAA members staffed the FUNFitness athletic village, developed in collaboration with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), to assess and address athletes’ functional needs and provide fitness education. “It’s always a joy to watch our students interact with the athletes and apply what they’ve learned in the classroom and clinical settings,” said Heather Lewis, PTA instructor and SPTAA advisor. “Running the FUNFitness events helps them hone their assessment and communication skills.”

Students conducted functional tests on more than 35 athletes, assessing strength, range of motion, balance, coordination and cardiovascular health. If a deficiency was identified, students outlined an exercise plan for the athlete and taught them to execute the exercises safely. “It’s such a great experience to connect with the athletes on a personal level,” said first-year student Megan Brandt, vice president of SPTAA. “The work our students get to perform with really talented singers but they also get to bond with a lot of other people that are all about music,” said Dr. Joel Plaag, choir director.

New organization prepares Blinn students for professional scientific research

American Chemical Society student chapter promotes research, leadership, community service

Blinn College students have a new opportunity to expand their undergraduate research and leadership skills thanks to a new student organization they won’t find at most two-year colleges.

The new Blinn College American Chemical Society (ACS) student chapter allows students to qualify for chapter awards, present research at national ACS meetings, apply for grant support to fund community service projects and apply for internships and summer research programs. The ACS is the world’s largest nonprofit scientific organization and a leading source of authoritative scientific information. Founded in 1876, it has more than 156,000 members at all degree levels across chemistry-related fields.

“I am really excited for our students,” said Dr. Hanan Abudoob, chemistry instructor and ACS club advisor. “Not only can students display their passion for chemistry through this organization, but they’ll have tremendous opportunities to get involved in research that they likely wouldn’t get at other two-year institutions.”

The 15-member student chapter held its first meeting earlier this month. The chapter plans to invite speakers to discuss their careers and research, and take educational trips to national labs. The students will facilitate fundraisers to mitigate conference costs, including serving ice cream—kept cold with liquid nitrogen—at a party planned for finals week. Students will facilitate fundraisers to mitigate conference costs, including serving ice cream—kept cold with liquid nitrogen—at a party planned for finals week. Students will also facilitate fundraisers to mitigate conference costs, including serving ice cream—kept cold with liquid nitrogen—at a party planned for finals week. Students will also facilitate fundraisers to mitigate conference costs, including serving ice cream—kept cold with liquid nitrogen—at a party planned for finals week. Students will also facilitate fundraisers to mitigate conference costs, including serving ice cream—kept cold with liquid nitrogen—at a party planned for finals week.

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BOARD NOTES

Regular board meeting March 24, 2015, Brenham, Texas

The board received or heard reports from:

• Dr. Ana M. “Cha” Guzmán, interim district president, on administrative announcements.
• Sylvia McMullen, president of Brazos County campuses, on updates from Brazos County campuses.
• Cathy Boeker, associate vice president for Government and Public Affairs, on the 84th session of the Texas Legislature.
• The board reviewed the financial statement and list of checks for the period ending February 28, 2015.

The board voted to:

• Approve the minutes for the February 6, 2015 special meeting, the February 17, 2015 regular meeting and the February 19, 2015 special meeting.
• Adopt notice of the May 9, 2015 general election of the Blinn College Board of Trustee members representing Precinct Positions 1 and 4 to serve full six-year terms and Precinct Position 3 to serve remaining two years of unexpired term.
• Appoint members to the A.W. Hodde Jr. Technical Education Center advisory committee.
• Set tuition and general fees for Fiscal Year 2015-16.
• Approve Workforce Education, general, testing, program and course/lab fees.
• Authorize the administration to seek Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) for professional architectural and engineering services related to the development of a master facilities plan and traffic impact analysis for the Blinn College campus consisting of 95.29 acres at F.M. 2818 and Leonard Road.
• Suggest modifications to House Bill 1903.

To submit a story idea for an upcoming issue of the Connection, please complete a Marketing Request Form located at www.blinn.edu/marketing.

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Five Buccaneers earn postseason accolades

Nancy Warioba was top Region XIV vote-getter for Blinn College

Five players from the Blinn College women’s basketball team have been named to the All-Region XIV and All-Region XIV Conference Tournament teams.

Nancy Warioba was the top vote-getter for the Buccaneers, earning all-region and all-tournament honors. On the year, Warioba averaged a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds.

“Nancy improved a lot from the beginning of the year to the end,” said coach Jeff Jenkins. “She will only get better in her next two years of basketball.”

Katelynn Johnson was named to the all-region team after hitting 85 shots from beyond the 3-point line for the Buccaneers.

“Katelynn was the leading scorer for us at 13.5 points per game,” Jenkins said. “It’s been a long time since I have had a player make 85 3-pointers.”

Three other Buccaneers were named all-conference. Alexus Freeman averaged 11 points and five rebounds a game, Chant Lewis averaged 9.7 points and 4.5 rebounds while leading the Buccaneers with 4.1 assists, and Shakera Barnes averaged 7.5 points, four rebounds and four assists.

Blinn compiled a 20-11 overall record and finished 13-7 in conference. The Buccaneers lost in the quarterfinals of the Region XIV Tournament to Bossier Parish Community College to end the season.

Three Buccaneers earn postseason accolades

Leslie, Hawkins each earn second-team honors

Three players on the Blinn College men’s basketball team have been named All-Region XIV team for the 2014-15 season.

Lionheart Leslie and Ja’Cardo Hawkins were each named to the second-team All-Region XIV Conference South Zone team while Jalan McCloud was listed as honorable mention.

“Having three guys recognized for the All-Conference team is due to the fact that we had a successful regular season,” said coach Scott Schumacher.

Leslie averaged a team-leading 14.7 points per game to go along with 5.7 assists and 5.1 rebounds a game.

Hawkins nearly averaged a double-double during the season with 12.9 points and 9.6 rebounds as a freshman.

McCloud averaged 11.7 points on the year.

Blinn compiled a 20-11 overall record and finished 13-7 in conference. The Buccaneers beat Paris Junior College in the first round of the Region XIV Tournament, 80-79, but lost to Angelo State University 80-74 in the quarterfinals.

By John Patrick Shanley

An Evening of One-Acts

Directed by Jean Daniels & Greg Wise

April 16-18, 2015

Curtain at 7:30 p.m.

Barbara L. Pearson Banquet Room
Blinn College-Bryan Student Center

Admission is Free
This play contains adult language.

BLINN COLLEGE - BRYAN THEATRE PRESENTS

Welcome to the Moon
& Other Plays

BLUNN CONNECTION
Brenham, Bryan, Schulenburg, Sealy MARCH 2015
AROUND THE CAMPUSES

NEW HIRES

Brenham Campus, Full-time
Nicholas Toliver, student information specialist and Ian Troub, apartment manager.

Brenham Campus, Part-time
Mark Bohiman, Instructor; Jay Easley, instructor; and Jeriad Wood, Instructor.

Bryan Campus, Full-time
Brittney Irvin, admissions and records clerk.

Bryan Campus, Part-time
Jennifer Bradford, instructor; Jennifer Jung, tutor; and Rex Mitchell, instructor.

Health Science Center, Full-time
Mally Hance, administrative assistant.

PERSONAL NOTES

The Writing Center on the Bryan campus is welcoming two new tutors to its staff. Morgan Pesek earned a B.A. degree in English at Texas A&M University. She has taught in public schools in Bryan and Houston, and has extensive tutoring experience. Jamie Saucier has a Ph.D. in history from the University of Rochester, and received a B.A. in history at Louisiana State University. Jamie has taught and tutored at the college level, and he has experience in designing writing courses.

Mark your Calendar

APRIL 2 ..........Brenham Campus Housing remains open Brenham campus dining hall closes @ 5:30pm

APRIL 3 ..........HOLIDAY Brenham Campus Housing remains open

APRIL 9-10 ..........Brenham Theatre Production “I Never Saw Another Butterfly

APRIL 16..........“A Night at the Opera” - Brenham Campus

APRIL 16-19........Bryan Theatre Production “Welcome to the Moon”

APRIL 17 ..........Last day to drop classes w/ a “Q” - Spring 2015

APRIL 23 ..........Blinn College Advising Day Bryan Advising Offices Closed

APRIL 24..........Clay Shootout sponsored by the Blinn College Alumni & Friends and the Buccaneer Alumni Letterman Association

APRIL 24.......... Regional Academic UIL & OAP

APRIL 25 ..........Regional Academic UIL & OAP – Brenham Campus

APRIL 30 ..........Last day to drop classes w/a “Q” - Second 8-week session Blinn College Advising Day

Bryan Advising Offices Closed

As part of its commitment to student success, Blinn is implementing a Quality Enhancement Plan titled, “Destination Success: First-Year Focus,” which utilizes learning communities to support first-year college students. Find out more at www.blinn.edu/QEP

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