

Coding: Not Just for Geeks

Apple selects six community colleges to receive curriculum on creating apps. One president took the course and said it was easy to learn -- even though she hadn't taken a programming course in 30 years.

By [Jean Dimeo](#) // May 31, 2017



https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/media/Apple%20Unit%201_2.jpg

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The new App Development with Swift curriculum is being offered at community colleges and high schools.

When Houston Community College was considering offering [Apple's App Development with Swift](https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2017/05/apple-launches-app-development-curriculum-for-high-school-community-college-students/) curriculum, Madeline Burillo took the course.

"I said 'I'm going to learn that. If I can learn this, then all my students from diverse backgrounds can learn this,'" said Burillo, president of Houston's Southwest campus.

Burillo said that the App Development with Swift curriculum is easy to learn. "Historically, computer programming has been seen as difficult to do – unintentionally uninviting," she said. "If the U.S. is going to stay competitive, we have to teach programming in a different way. What I am really excited about is [Apple's curriculum] makes computer programming accessible and approachable."

App Development with Swift is a two-semester course designed by Apple engineers and educators to teach students the elements of app design using Swift, a popular programming language used worldwide. Students will learn to code and design fully functional apps, which Apple officials say will help them gain critical job skills in software development and information technology.

App Development with Swift is an extension of Apple's existing K-12 [Everyone Can Code](https://www.apple.com/education/everyone-can-code/) curriculum. Swift is Apple's programming language that company officials say allows coders to easily create app software. Websites including Airbnb, Kayak, TripAdvisor, Venmo and Yelp used Swift to create their apps.

Starting this fall, six community college systems serving nearly 500,000 students will be the first to offer the App Development with Swift curriculum. The goal is roll the program out to other institutions over time.

"The app economy and software development are among the fastest-growing job sectors in America," Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, said in a statement. "Community colleges play a critical role in helping students ... and we hope these courses will open doors for people of all ages and backgrounds."

"This is a changing marketplace," Burillo agreed. "I said [Houston Community College] can't continue to be relevant if we don't do something with apps."

In addition to Houston Community College, the App Development with Swift curriculum will be offered at the Alabama Community College System, Columbus State Community College, Harrisburg Area Community College, Mesa Community College and San Mateo Community College District. In addition, some high schools will

Representatives of the six colleges will travel to Apple's headquarters in California this summer for training. The hope, said Susan Yvette Price, vice chancellor of the Alabama system, is that the colleges will form a cohort and share ideas on an ongoing basis.

Burillo said that Houston, which created the iOS Coding and Design School to teach the Apple curriculum, has a head start on the program, offering a 90-hour continuing education course this summer.

The App Development with Swift initiative is significant, Burillo said, because jobs are plentiful for people with app-development skills. "The speed of innovation and knowledge are changing rapidly," she said. "Higher ed has to work hand and hand with companies such as Apple so we make sure students have the skills they need."

Houston Chancellor Cesar Maldonado said the Apple curriculum "will especially help us bridge the gap in computer science training for minorities and women."

The Alabama system has three colleges involved in the initiative, including Wallace State Community College, in Selma. Price said administrators were particularly interested in having Wallace participate because residents of the region are very poor, and many are African-American.

"Not a lot of businesses are moving there, and people want to stay" to be close to family, she said. "If you can learn to code, you can set up your own business remotely." (Price noted that Apple CEO Cook is an Alabama native, and has done a lot of work with colleges and businesses in the state.)

The main challenge to learning App Development with Swift is making the commitment to learn it, Burillo said. "For me, it was the easiest computer program I've seen," she said, noting she took a Fortran programming language course as an undergraduate. "Is it a walk in the park – no? But I felt it was doable."

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