

# ONLINE PROGRAM LEADS TO ROCK SOLID JOBS

by Heather DARROW

Edward William's friend earned a degree in HIM. William did not understand the acronym. He only knew it had something to do with coding. Years later, he wished he had paid more attention. William was unfulfilled in his customer service job for a call center. The grass looked a lot greener for his friend whose dynamic job was offering a much higher salary.

Belatedly, William began to learn about Health Information Management (HIM). He wanted to be like his friend—he wanted a job like HIM.

"When I compared my job and HIM, for me there was no comparison. My friend was doing much better.

His career was so good. It was stable, and there was so much diversity," William said.

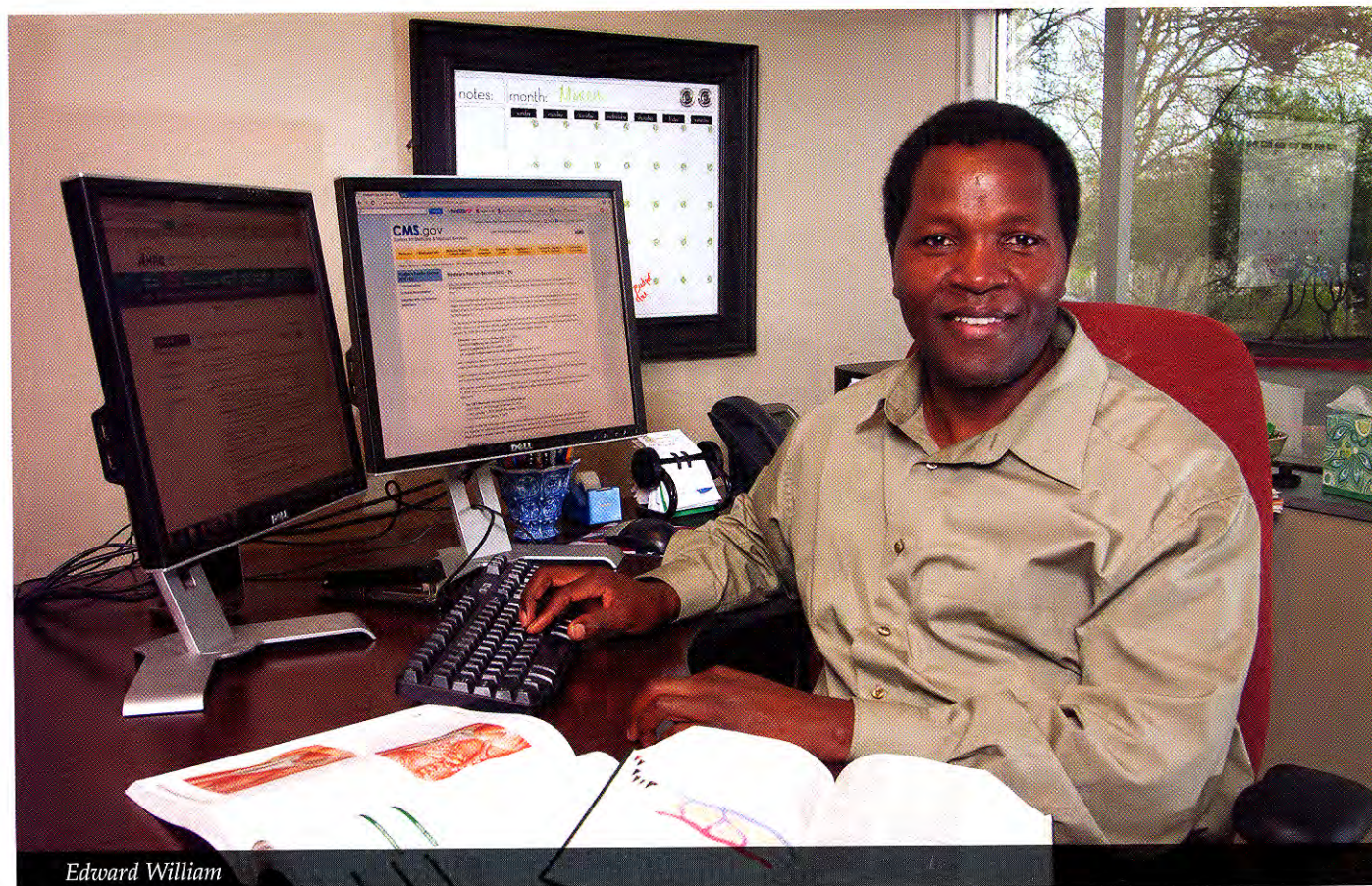
## THE PEOPLE WITH THE ANSWERS

According to Michelle Millen, Collin College director of HIM, most people are completely unaware of this promising profession.

"As a child, no one says I want to be in HIM. Why? We don't wear the scrubs or white coats, so people assume we are administrative staff. People in this field were called medical records technicians, but today it is

much bigger than that. Electronic medical records have created a ripple effect that has brought the need for an evidence-based practice. Doctors understand the clinical aspect of their areas. We have to touch every area to make sure we have a complete record. If you are looking for something, you call the HIM person," she said.

According to Millen, the college's program is filled with students who are re-careering. Prospective students may be surprised to learn that this 60-credit-hour degree is completely online. Students can earn an associate degree in two years, if they attend full time, or they can take





a couple of classes each semester and enjoy a slower pace. After earning a degree, students are encouraged to take a national exam to become certified in HIM.

"There was a time when people in HIM were not credentialed, but that time is ending because of compliance. Our students learn practical information they will be using every day. Because the nature of health information is technology driven, it is important for our students to be comfortable with technology. We reinforce the kind of netiquette that is necessary," Millen added.

## JOB SECURITY AND DIVERSITY

Today, William is the director of HIM at Glen Oaks Hospital in Greenville. A 2012 Collin College graduate, he says he would not have been able to switch careers if he had to attend classes during the day.

"The fact that it was online was the biggest convenience of all time. I left work at 8 p.m. and completed my coursework at night. I had the opportunity to be in school and work at the same time," he said.

William said what he learned at Collin College was practical knowledge that is relevant to his job today.

"The education at Collin was excellent. The performance improvement, release of information security and privacy I deal with at work mirrors what is being taught at the college. I really enjoyed the management class. I learned a lot about how you measure success, implementing new ideas, benchmarks and research. In management, you collect data, discover issues and why they occur and present proposals illustrating potential solutions."

Independence and a secure career with flexibility are the hallmarks of success for William.

"An accountant can only be an accountant. In HIM, there is room for everyone. If you don't like manage-



*Kim Rodenbusch*

ment, you can be an expert in documentation or medical coding. If you like helping people, it is a great way to help patients. This is a job you can always depend on. Hospitals are not going anywhere. You really can't go wrong, and the pay is good," William said.

## FROM STAY-AT-HOME MOM TO DIRECTOR

A mother of four, Kim Rodenbusch did not want to work outside the home until her youngest child was in middle school, so she worked at home as a medical transcriptionist. She chose Collin College for her HIM degree because she was pleased with the previous transcription training she received at the college. A 2013 Collin HIM graduate, Rodenbusch says she could have continued to work from home as an HIM coder, but she was ready to work in the field. Today, she is the director of HIM at Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital in Allen.

"This field is interesting. I don't

have the patience to be a practitioner, but biology and the medical sciences have always fascinated me. This is an ancillary way to be involved in medicine. With HIM you can go in several directions. You can choose information, coding, performance improvement and more.

Rodenbusch could not be happier about her career change. She looks forward to heading to the office each morning.

"This job has benefits, and I am making three times as much as I did as a transcriptionist. Of course, transcription is production based. I love working in medicine because I learn something new every, single day. We are dealing with people and medical issues, and no two people are the same, so there is always something to learn. It is awesome," she said.

For more information about HIM at Collin, visit [www.collin.edu/him](http://www.collin.edu/him). ♦

*Heather Darrow is a public information writer for Collin College.*

*Photos, Nick Young, Collin College.*