Elgin Community College - IL

HLC ID 1086

OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review   Review Date: 12/9/2019

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

12/9/2019
Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Elgin Community College was established as part of the Public School District U-46 in 1949 and joined the American Association of Junior Colleges the following year. ECC operated under the direction of the U-46 School Board until 1965 when the Illinois General Assembly passed the Junior College Act creating the ICCB (Illinois Community College Board) which proceeded to form District 509, Elgin Community College, in the fall of that year. The U-46 Board of Education divested itself of Elgin Community College control on April 12, 1966. This left the college open to form its own publicly elected governing Board of Trustees, which was done in June 1966. In March of 1968 ECC received full accreditation from the North Central Association (now The Higher Learning Commission – HLC) and has maintained this status uninterrupted. The college's last full review was in 2015.

Elgin Community College is located between Chicago and Rockford, Illinois and is one of 39 community colleges in Illinois. The college service area encompasses portions of five counties, roughly 360 square miles, and includes both rural and urban populations. The main campus is located in Elgin, and the college also supports The Center for Emergency Services in Burlington and the Education and Work Center in Hanover Park.

ECC offers roughly 138 degree and certificate programs, and the college serves around 10,000 students in the fall term and roughly 14,500 unique students each year. In addition to career and transfer programs, the college offers high school equivalency and ESL courses. The college continues to grow its dual credit programs in area high schools. The college also provides services to a large adult audience including credit programs, special services for adults over 50, and dozens of continuing education courses.

As typical to an open access community college, the student population is quite diverse. The majority of students

attend classes or participate in programs in person, but the college also has roughly 21% who are fully enrolled in online courses. Also typical to many community colleges, the majority of students (69%) attend part-time.

The college is nationally recognized for outstanding initiatives in equity and inclusion. Included in these recognitions, ECC is a designated Hispanic Serving Institution and a Military Friendly School. The college is a member of the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative, an Achieving the Dream school, an Aspen Top 150 institution, and a Bellwether Award recipient.

The Board of Trustees is composed of seven elected officials, each elected to a six-year term, and one student trustee who serves a one year term. The Board selects the president and assigns operational authority to the president and the executive team. The faculty are responsible for the curriculum at the institution. The college strategic plan is mission driven and sets the goals for the college, and the operational plan implements strategies intended to accomplish the mission and goals for the region served. The college strategic plan drives the budget development and allocations which must demonstrate mission relevance. ECC states a strong commitment to continuous improvement, even when resources are challenged by State funding issues. The facilities and infrastructure are fairly new in many cases, and the college is currently developing a new Campus Master Facilities Plan. The college is in good standing with the HLC and also supports some 13 specialized third party accreditations.

Interactions with Constituencies

ALO for additional materials

Mid-cycle review--no interviews were held.

Additional Documents

Course Syllabuses--various modalities

Curriculum Maps--both existing and new program development

Board Minutes--various topics

Course Assessment Reports

General Education Assessment annual Report

Program Review Report

Master Course Outline

Board of Trustees Values Approval minutes

Operating Plan 2018-22

Performance Report--2017-18 and 2018-19

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Elgin Community College uses the mission, vision, philosophy on learning, and the values as their foundation principles, and together they guide the decision-making processes at the college. The mission statement frames the strategic plan developed in 2017, and different constituencies representing the broad service region were involved in the development of the strategic plan which will guide the college through 2022.

All programs and services are grounded in the mission statement which focuses on improving "people's lives through learning." Examples provided include the development of the 'adult friendly' online environment and specialized support services. The strategic planning process utilized an Environmental Scan in 2017 to help ensure that the college's programs were meeting the needs of the changing population of its service district, notably an increased median age and changing demographics among residents. ECC responded with enhancements to program offerings to fit workforce needs in addition to online/flexible course delivery options as well as additional services to promote equity. In conjunction with the implementation of the strategic plan, the use of an Operating Plan facilitates the execution of the broader goals on an annual basis.

Elgin Community College works to align budget priorities to support operational goals designed to fulfill the mission. As noted in the Assurance Argument, the results from the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz College Employees Satisfaction Survey indicated employee satisfaction with planning and budgeting at a higher level compared to national averages. The use of survey data as well as performance reporting help to inform the college community on progress and challenges.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The college provides mission relevant information to the public and students through the website, printed materials, public meetings, and college documents, like the Catalog or Student Handbook. Current information and college performance data are documented through publications like the Performance Report published every September, and through regular communications directed to specific populations. Examples provided include bi-weekly newsletters for employees, the student newspaper, and various videos which are displayed on monitors in public areas.

ECC has defined its strategic focus to include four major areas: Equity and learning, holistic programming, community partnerships, and service excellence and collaboration. Recognizing the changing diversity of the region served by the college, ECC's goals provide a variety of offerings and services along with an emphasis on instruction, scholarship, and research.

As a community college serving a diverse region, the college provides fine art offerings and support services in addition to academic and community programs of study. Specific services for limited demographics include TRIO Upward Bound, veteran services, and special services for citizens over 50. The variety of services affirms the college focus on equity and learning within the community and demonstrates a commitment to the stated college mission.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As the ECC student profile has become increasingly diverse, the college has been intentional about designing and developing services to meet the needs of their changing population. In 2014, ECC was awarded the Diversity and Equity Award by Illinois Community College Trustee Association, and the college is proud to be designated by the US Department of Education as an Hispanic Serving Institution. Mentioned previously, the college has special services designed for older adults and veterans, and full-time employees are assigned support responsibilities related to students with disabilities as well as low income populations, which were noted as typically high risk populations.

The ECC Strategic Plan notes that respect for diversity is a shared value, and both the Strategic Plan and the Operating Plan have designed activities that champion diversity. In 2019, ECC joined the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative with a goal to eliminate racial and socioeconomic completion gaps by 2025. Student focus groups helped to inform this initiative as described in the college assurance argument. ECC also supports student clubs and organizations that support diversity including Students Who Are Not Silent (SWANS), which focuses on LGBTQ advocacy.

The college conducts a variety of professional development activities that support equity and diversity for staff in addition to programming for students. Activities include Sensitivity Awareness, Advanced Institutional Leadership in Equity, as well as Safe Zone Training. ECC is also considering the addition of a Chief Equity Officer that would oversee the institution's equity efforts and support of the ECC Strategic Plan. All activities are grounded in mission relevance.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Elgin Community College gathers feedback from external stakeholders in a variety of ways including public forums, listening sessions, business after-hours, Board of Trustee meetings, advisory committee meetings, community breakfasts and round-tables, financial literacy workshops, clinical site agreements, job fairs, and the annual College Night forums. In 2017, the college took additional steps to formalize its efforts to connect with the public by establishing the Strategic Partnerships and Experiential Learning (SPEL) Office within its Workforce Development and Continuing Education Division. The ECC Community Report allows the local public to see how the programs being offered impact the local area, and the report includes information such as graduation rates and an overview of financial support for the college.

The college's mission focuses on service to students and student success. As such, ECC participates in the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative (ILEA) and is currently preparing an equity plan in alignment with the ECC Strategic Plan. Further, the college has enhanced its work to support student success through the HLC Student Success Academy. Recognizing the financial challenges many student face when attending college, ECC is working to address college affordability with scholarship enhancements, literacy programs, and dual credit opportunities.

ECC utilizes its SPEL office to strategize engagement and these activities related to community engagement are tracked using Salesforce CRM. Public facing activities are also enhanced by the participation of ECC personnel in external agencies maintained by the Community Engagement and Legislative Affairs Office. ECC also plans and sponsors a variety of events that connect with the community and are clearly mission relevant.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Rationale

Elgin Community College has demonstrated that its mission is clearly articulated, through a variety of mechanisms, to all of their stakeholders. As part of the institution's 2017 strategic planning process, the mission was updated in collaboration with stakeholders. The planning process also included an Environmental Scan which summarized the changing demographics of the college's service district and provided an opportunity for ECC to respond to these trends through both its Strategic Plan and Operating Plan. The college's budget and budgeting process is aligned with these plans to help ECC accomplish the stated goals. Furthermore, the college documents plan performance related to its stated goals through publications, like the Performance Report published every September.

Over the past several years, ECC's students have become increasingly diverse and in recognition of this changing demographic, the college has been intentional about designing and developing services to meet the needs of their service area population. In 2014, ECC was awarded the Diversity and Equity Award by Illinois Community College Trustee Association for their work to address the changing population's needs, and the college is also designated by the US Department of Education as an Hispanic Serving Institution. In 2019, ECC joined the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative with a goal to eliminate racial and socioeconomic completion gaps by 2025. In addition, the college also supports a wide variety of activities that promote a shared responsibility for inclusion, equity-mindedness, and increasing accountability.

The college continues to work with external stakeholders to advance its mission to improve people's lives through learning. In fact, ECC has taken steps to formalize its efforts to connect with the public by establishing the Strategic Partnerships and Experiential Learning (SPEL) Office within its Workforce Development and Continuing Education Division in 2017.

In summary, ECC has a wide variety of initiatives, activities, and processes that provide strong evidence that its mission is guiding the operations of the college. This work is clearly related to meeting the intent of the college mission and reflects well on the college values. The Strategic Plan clearly serves as a guiding document to benefit and guide the work of the college and board.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC has provided several examples of policies and procedures that affirm the college is acting responsibly and with integrity. The Board of Trustees Policy Handbook defines governance, Board/President Relationship, and the parameters for the actions of the president. Board members as well as all employees are bound by the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act which establishes several boundaries for employees in terms of actions and ethical conduct. In general, the college provides guidance to both employee and student groups related to acting with integrity and in an ethical manner.

ECC publishes their College Catalog which reflects their academic programs, courses, and student services, and the catalog reflects the work of the Teaching, Learning, and Student Development (TLSD) division. The college makes all approved policies and procedures relating to academic, personnel, and financial functions available to all employees via the portal, and the college also publishes hard copies of relevant information and makes those publications available to all employees.

Since its Reaffirmation Review in 2015, ECC has made several enhancements in regard to policy management, including the implementation of a new online eTalent system that replaced its App Tracking system. In terms of compliance, the college is expanding its audit procedures to include non-financial compliance related to records and data retention. However, ECC does not specifically address how the college administration has addressed feedback from its 2015 review related to 1) simplifying its procedures and 2) the widespread belief among staff that procedures did not apply equally to all employees. Perhaps the eTalent system addressed some of the complexities from the hiring and job description standpoint.

The college participates in the National Community College Benchmarking Project. As part of this project, the college reports its annual grievance rate every 3 years. The college reports that their rate is higher than peer institutions. In response to this information, the college might consider establishing a review process for submitted grievances in order to identify trends. Any clear themes

could be shared with employees as well as steps taken to address common grievances. The learning process could benefit the improvement of services provided to students and the public.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The main ECC webpage contains information for students regardless of whether they are interested in credit or non-credit offerings. The College Catalog and the Student Handbook and Planner are two sources available on the Web or print, and both contain relevant course information, student policies, general college information, and so on.

Each fall the college issues a Performance Report from the Board of Trustees, and the college publishes Fast Facts that provide specific information about students and success metrics. The Student Right to Know page is also public facing and provides information to students, both current and potential, as well as the general public. In addition to a comprehensive college publication, individual departments and programs might also maintain and publish program specific literature. The college provided a specific example for review via the Nursing Program Student Handbook.

ECC continues to maintain printed copies of the student handbook which could enhance access of information to students without regular internet access. The college reports the Student Handbook and Planner is popular with its students and other constituencies. The document is used in new student orientations and other offerings around the college service area.

Regarding its 2015 review, the college has adjusted its Notice of Disclaimer statement in its catalog slightly from "This Catalog is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contract" to "This Catalog is for informational purposes only". The college does not specify how it communicates changes to either its catalog or its student handbook after the documents are published, either on the web or in print, for the academic year. As long as the college has a mechanism to communicate changes to the campus community, it seems that action would be sufficient. Accreditation information is easily available on the college website, and this includes information related to the Higher Learning Commission as well as information related to program specific accreditations.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The seven-member Board of Trustees are elected at large by district voters. The BOT also includes one student trustee serving a one-year term, and the student's vote is considered advisory by the BOT in terms of actions taken. The Board Policies Handbook outlines the key responsibilities for the Board and also defines its core purpose. Board actions are mission relevant and adhere to the stated shared values, something recited at the beginning of each meeting.

The Board works to be accountable to both internal and external constituencies, and eleven meetings throughout the year are open to the public for comment and time to directly address the board. Meetings are also audiotaped with the actions and discussions transcribed into minutes that are approved at the next meeting. The Board members participate in ongoing training by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), and all Board meetings follow the Open Meetings Act which outlines legal criteria related to decision making and the Board focus on matters of public concern. The board members prepare written and oral reports on their engagement activities and present these at the public board meetings.

The Board members follow the statutes enacted by the Illinois legislature. Members publicly swear an Affirmation of Service to acknowledge that authority flows from community interests. Furthermore, each board member files an annual statement of economic interest with the Kane County Clerk.

No single Board member has authority over the president, and the BOT allocates the day-to-day management of the college to the administration. The board's job description is to govern, not manage. By contract, faculty are responsible for "overseeing academic content and ensuring student learning." As noted, both the contract and board policies place an institutional emphasis on teaching.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Academic Freedom is supported by the Board-Faculty Association agreement which "explains that faculty are required to present information fully and without bias and are entitled to research and speak freely about academic matters." In addition to the contract, operating procedures "support and protect diversity of opinion." In searching the college website, Academic Freedom did not produce a college statement of practice or policy, which could lead to misunderstanding when only addressed through the faculty contract. The 2017 Team Report notes also that the interpretation of academic freedom by some faculty hampered the ability for the college to ensure course consistency. A formal definition and a clear statement would benefit the college employee base as well as clarify for the community the college's commitment to constructive and appropriate applications within the context of academic freedom. While the college publishes Administrative Procedure 3.403 to address issues of tolerance, the college might consider an additional public statement/policy on the student's right to free expression.

ECC supports diversity in its value statements and cites several examples of operating practices that support and protect diversity of opinion, including ongoing forums of inquiry such as the Socrates Cafe and training including Safe Zone that supports the campus community to engage freely in open discourse.

As published on the college website, "A forum for the free expression of student views and opinions is the focus of the student newspaper, the *Elgin Community College Observer*. Students gain experience in newspaper production and may earn college credit while readers keep abreast of current events and news on campus. The newspaper was recognized by the Illinois Community College Journalism Association, awarding a second-place rating in the "Best in Show" competition among all community colleges in Illinois. A review of the publication reveals timely articles and student editorial writing on topics relevant to the college reader. The website also includes information produced that might be of benefit to the college student such as "Guided Transfer Pathways."

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC has an established Institutional Review Board that is comprised of elected faculty representatives who oversee research requests for the college. The Data Collection Involving People policy contains related procedures. Student and faculty research is exempt from the IRB and subject to classroom oversight and guidelines. The college is enhancing research and data use policies with the addition of a new Data Privacy Policy currently under review. Data sharing agreements are signed by the requesting party and the ECC President.

Students are assisted in understanding ethical research practices by the Writing Lab and the Library. Librarians teach classes in-person and online related to the appropriate use of sources and research writing. Several documents available to students support research writing, and all documents are available online, linked to the college LMS, and in print. ECC also provides assistance via walk-in, by appointment, or through free non-credit courses offered through The Write Place.

Policies related to academic honesty and integrity are stated in the Student Handbook and Planner, master syllabus template, as well as other college resources. All policies and procedures are located on the college website, on one tab, open to all, and titled "College Procedure." Due process is provided through the Student Disciplinary Committee Hearing Process as described on the web and in the student handbook.

The college maintains data related to student complaints and subsequent resolutions in order to identify the nature of those complaints and any trends. The college administration could review the submitted appeals and provide constituencies with a public FAQ or some related posting that might stave off future appeals. This would also demonstrate an openness to considering diverse viewpoints with transparency in mind.

Students receive information regarding academic honesty at orientation, in the handbook, and as part of the master syllabus template for each of their courses. However, the academic honesty section in the handbook is brief. "All students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with Administrative Procedure 4.407 at elgin.edu/academic integrity." If the handbook simply refers a student to the web for important detail, it defeats the purpose of printing the handbook. Providing even a summary of

the procedure could benefit students with a genuine concern.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rationale

Elgin Community College demonstrates in a variety of ways that it operates with integrity. The board serves as the point entity for establishing an environment promoting integrity, and the ECC board has developed and published polices outlining its own ethical approach to operations. Those policies are augmented by enacted state statutes that further refine the leadership culture and relationships the board has with the college community it is charged with governing.

The college maintains a robust website where all policies and procedures are published and readily searchable by all constituents. The college also publishes a limited amount of college catalogs and other documents should someone request hard copy. In addition, the college publishes and readily disseminates the Student Handbook and Planner to students during new student orientation and in the student success course, College 101. The handbook is also available in the college bookstore, and as noted in the assurance argument, continues to be a popular resource for students.

The governing body of the college is transparent with published policies and procedures, and clearly actions demonstrate that the college operates in accordance with Illinois Compiled Statutes. Board members regularly file statements of economic interests with the Kane County Clerk to publicly acknowledge freedom from any conflicts of interest.

The college promotes the academic freedom through a variety of policies and procedures, and the Board promotes a published statement as a shared value and the value is recited by the trustees at the opening of each meeting. The college also seeks to insure that the student body embraces diverse thinking and expression by providing relevant student organizations, co-curricular activities, and support services.

Finally, the college seeks to promote the responsible acquisition and dissemination of knowledge by providing policies and procedures that govern all forms of research. The college also provides support services to students to ensure the ethical, proper use of information. The library and Learning Resources Center provides much of that support.

All policies and procedures are published in print and are also available online, and the website is searchable with most found under "College Procedures." ECC is also transparent in the penalties assigned when the policies and procedures are violated and due process and appeal is provided.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC works to ensure program and course currency through a variety of informed sources, including data collected from employers and transfer institutions. Faculty use a backwards design to align curriculum with employer needs as well as transfer institutions . Transfer courses align with the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), and the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network. ECC provided their 2019 Annual Report submitted to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) which reviews programs on a 5-year cycle and includes analysis of the need and cost effectiveness of individual programs. The feedback from ICCB was also included.   The program learning goals are included as part of the ICCB report, and ECC has developed an Annual Program Health Review process to ensure programs remain viable and relevant. A faculty lead Curriculum Committee reviews new programs and courses as well as significant revisions to ensure mission relevance. Of note, the college has secured approval from the ICCB to award the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) credential.

The college employs a master course syllabus with defined learning outcomes and assessment processes to ensure consistency across all modalities, and ECC plans to publish learning outcomes for all programs in its course catalog beginning in 2020. The college provided current syllabi that were reviewed for consistency across modes delivery, and the learning objectives were found to be consistent.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

All degrees and programs of study at ECC require the completion of coursework that aligns to general education outcomes for reading, writing, critical thinking, and global awareness. The six general education outcomes are described in the College Catalog as well as the college website. ECC states they use the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Transparency Framework as a guide for reviewing their general education outcomes. Although many areas are involved with assessment, the Student Learning Assessment and Advisory Committee reviews the general education outcomes on a regular basis. Although the assurance argument states that the the general education program recently adopted new language, no committee minutes were provided to support this assertion. In the review of syllabi provided, several syllabi were inconsistent in how the outcomes were shown or worded.

The general educations courses are aligned with the Illinois transfer agreement that ensures consistency of outcomes across institutions and allows for transfer of credit to and from ECC with knowledge that the learning experiences have been of comparable quality.

The five-year review process dictates that faculty review curricula and align courses to both their program and general education outcomes. Several curriculum maps were supplied to illustrate when specific learning opportunities were introduced and assessed. The college curriculum is intentionally designed to demonstrate respect for human and cultural diversity, and the Global/International Studies Taskforce is a cross functional team with a charge to advance college efforts associated with

students and faculty to ensure a high level of global competence. Faculty are encouraged to pursue research interests as well as artistic work as a part of their college role, and each year, the Board supports one or more faculty sabbaticals. The Renner Academic Library offers research services to support both students and faculty. Further, ECC engages students with activities in Phi Theta Kappa and Honors, including the described Honors in Action projects, fostering intellectual curiosity and skills that promote lifelong learning. ECC introduced new courses in May 2019 to support diversity. In addition, the college offers short-term grants with stipends for faculty to infuse global perspectives within their courses. The college also introduced a new series called the Pelz Global Speaker Series and is expanding its study abroad opportunities for students.

The faculty role encourages students to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge. In addition, the college has created a Faculty Research Committee for approval of research projects. The approval process did not specifically address a student's ability to demonstrate scholarship, creative work, or the discovery of knowledge. The delineation of the process and examples would be helpful to review during the next accreditation visit.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The college notes that they experienced a faculty hiring freeze during the Illinois state budget challenges, but have since lifted the hiring freeze. ECC reports a goal of 60% of the courses offered to be taught by full-time faculty, and although they were not at this goal with the last report, they continue to be close. The college in 2019 hired 16 new full-time faculty, and they anticipate adding another 7 this spring. In terms of faculty credentials, the college full-time and part-time faculty qualifications follow policy AP 5-103 (Minimum Requirements for Appointment to Faculty) which adhere to the HLC qualification requirement for both transfer and CTE courses. The college reports developing a process after a 2017 audit identified two faculty out of compliance. The college also has within their dual enrollment agreements required faculty qualifications for high school concurrent enrollment faculty that are consistent with the course credentialing requirements .

Faculty evaluation processes are defined by the faculty association agreement and described as well in the Faculty Handbook. They delineate the different evaluation processes between tenure, non-tenure, unit adjunct 1 and unit adjunct 2.

Faculty development funds are budgeted annually and recently increased to $750 per year for active full-time faculty and $200 per semester for active part-time faculty. The faculty also play a significant role in the Faculty Development Committee, as also defined by the association agreement with the Board. In the next review cycle, documentation of the number of faculty participating, the types of activities provided, and the overall cost to the institution would be beneficial.

Faculty are also required to post office hours and to be available to students both in person and via electronic means. The bargaining contract states that instructors will be available to students for a minimum of 10 hours per week.

Staff members are also qualified based on the job description, and professional development opportunities are provided to staff as well. As noted, these areas were highly rated during the last climate survey. The SSECCA contract sets aside $87,000 per fiscal year to professional development for staff. It would be helpful during the next review to delineate how the funds are being spent and by whom.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC provides students with a full range of student support services. The college reports positive feedback related to student services on both the CCSSE and RNL surveys; both indicate that student satisfaction was higher than comparison colleges in terms of support and services provided.

As ECC is an open-admission institution, they offer testing services to assess a student's readiness for placement into college level coursework. Recently they adopted state-wide placement numbers, and these recommendations allow multiple methods to be used for students to qualify for entry into college-level English and math.

Even before a student enters the college, support is provided for financial aid, advising, career development, and so on. As a college with a large Hispanic population, services and printed materials are provided in several languages, and bilingual staff are available to provide personal assistance to many non-English speaking students. Services are also provided for specific populations such as students with disabilities, veterans, and many others as noted in the assurance argument. These services are described on the college website. All new students must attend an orientation to learn about support services and to meet with an advisor. Academic advising is housed within the Student Success Center, and a variety of support services are co-located in that area on campus. In 2014, the college made a decision to move away from faculty advising to staff advisors with a focus on student planning. As a result, student reported satisfaction with advising has increased as has the number of logged visits by students to the Success Center.

ECC is currently working with a consultant to develop a new campus master plan; however, facilities are maintained to support student learning and development. Technology is available and labs are kept up to date. Faculty use the Desire To Learn (D2L) learning management system to

communicate with students. The system also provides students protected access to grades and assignment information. A dedicated Helpdesk is available for both faculty and students with technology needs. The college notes that since the last review, they have implemented a student focused app, ADA support access controls, and an emergency alert system. College librarians are most knowledgeable about research methods and the appropriate use of outside sources for research. A dedicated distance learning librarian is also available to assist students not on campus.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC offers a variety of co-curricular activities housed in the student services area. A few examples were contained within the argument, and the website notes the policy related to mandated participation by students in co-curricular events. In the next review, a more in-depth presentation of co-curricular activities would be helpful and would affirm the breadth and variety available to students on a regular basis. Many activities are connected to classroom learning experiences while others are focused on engaging students in a positive campus culture with opportunities for leadership and learning. ECC is a leading college in terms of international programming and study abroad opportunities which clearly a college-wide commitment in support of global learning.

ECC describes assessment of co-curricular activities as emerging. There is reference to data collected from focus groups, surveys, a co-curricular inventory and the beginning of a discussion about connecting these activities to general education outcomes. However, the process is not formalized and ECC recognizes the opportunity exists to develop a more refined and comprehensive assessment process.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Rationale

ECC has shown a commitment to high quality education which spans to the sites and instructional modalities described. When the college experienced funding challenges with the Illinois state budget for two consecutive years, ECC had to make adjustments to operations, including the need for a hiring freeze. Fortunately, the college was in a solid financial condition which allowed them to manage operations throughout the state funding crisis. Fortunately, the college has regained a small level of support from the state and is currently rebuilding the number of full-time instructors employed.

Areas that can be strengthened by the next accreditation cycle are: articulating program learning and general education objectives more clearly to the public through the catalog and syllabi; illustrating student contributions to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge; articulate how professional development funding is being used; and implement a consistent process for assessing co-curricular learning.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Rating

Met

Rationale

The state of Illinois has a mandated program review process where all academic and service programs participate in a five-year self-study process. The end product is presented to the ECC Board as well as the ICCB for review, and then the report is published on the college website.

As described in the College Catalog, ECC has a clearly defined process for accepting credits from other accredited colleges as well as for transcribing course grades. In addition, the college has acceptance standards for alternative forms of credit such as AP or CLEP. ECC also has a process in place for Prior Learning Assessment and the process where students can request credit based on experience is outlined in the College Catalog. The catalog contains proficiency information for every

course as well. The Records and Registration Office is responsible for ensuring transfer credits from other colleges align with the ECC curriculum as well as with college policies and procedures. The college utilizes the Illinois Articulation Initiative and collegesource.com as resources to insure transfer coursework is uniformly evaluated. The institution also has a policy in place to refund tuition on any general education course not accepted in transfer.

Faculty are responsible for the college curriculum, and the Curriculum Committee review process ensures course quality. The Master Course Outlines set the course standard for all instructional modalities, including dual credit offerings. The college follows the National Alliance of Concurrent Programs accreditation standards for all high school offerings. Faculty qualifications review occurred in 2017 and faculty who did not meet the qualifications (2) were provided plans to address the deficiencies. To ensure consistency, these standards apply equally to all dual enrollment faculty.

The college has integrated the MCO with the course syllabus. The college is beginning to offer courses at the high schools and has put processes in place to ensure standardization of outcomes, etc. A sample pivot table with outcomes is included as evidence, but the example provides no data at this time. There is evidence of outcomes with the Dual Credit Report. The numbers look positive, but the overall dual enrollment population at the area high schools are relatively low. ECC references the assignment of a dual enrollment liaison, but the specific duties of this position are not provided.

ECC maintains a number of specialized accreditations as shown in the College Catalog, and a variety of offices provide support to maintaining or acquiring third party accreditation. The IR office provides information related to college graduates, and many programs rely on advisory committees and student feedback to ensure program and course relevancy. The statewide program review process also evaluates this feedback, including graduate success rates.

The college has a comprehensive performance report showing outcomes that is published each fall. Program-specific outcomes are part of the 5-year program review, as previously described. The college has identified an opportunity to improve the quality of reported data by working with the National Student Clearinghouse.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Rating

Met With Concerns

Rationale

ECC divides student learning outcomes assessment into three parts: course, program and general education. General education outcomes are part of the curriculum mapping process that is intended to align instructional experiences to one or more of the six general education outcomes. Course outcomes are clearly defined in the master course outline and overseen by faculty. The combination of courses develops the program outcome process; however, the integration of these three assessment strategies and how changes are made based on these assessments is not clearly defined. In addition, ECC notes that there is a lack of consistency in terms of faculty involvement, and the use of learning outcome data to improve course or instructional quality is not evident. The college notes as well in the assurance argument that they have worked to develop learning outcome connections to co-curricular activities including clubs and events; however, there is still opportunity for growth in this area.

The college is taking steps to enhance the transparency of learning outcomes for students by publishing the learning outcomes for each program in its 2020-21 catalog, which is a positive step. As noted in the narrative, ECC has identified that not all programs are participating in the student learning outcome assessment process. One of the reasons cited includes smaller programs with fewer full-time faculty; in fact some programs have only adjunct faculty. The college makes general references to lack of participation and highlights those programs that do well with assessment, but it is unclear if the lack of participation comes from the majority of programs or a small number of programs. The college maintains a tracking tool for assessment plans/reports, but there is no evidence to show how many programs are actively participating. As a solution, the college has included other personnel to work with faculty and IR to support assessment; however, the information related to leadership in assessment seems external through organization membership and conference participation. It seems that the college has also created a myriad of committees and sub-committees as well, and the true effectiveness of these additional committees/sub-committees is unknown and not documented in the argument.

As noted in the narrative, the college recognizes that the assessment of student learning is vital to improvement and providing a quality experience for students, and to that end, the administration is working to encourage more faculty involvement, hiring individuals with defined responsibilities related to assessment and mentoring faculty (examples include the Manager of Outcomes position in 2006 and the Director of CTEL in 2019), and identifying budget dollars to support these activities. ECC needs to continue this work with clarity and inclusion in order to gain a commitment to the value of general education for all students. However, evidence of positive progress in general education learning outcomes assessment since the last review in 2015 is missing, and the college currently is not demonstrating the commitment necessary to assess student learning institutionally and to improve processes and procedures based on assessment data.

As ECC notes, turnover in divisional leadership, competing strategic priorities, and smaller programs led by fewer numbers of full-time faculty have contributed to a lack of consistent participation in *formal* course assessment processes. While assessment is practiced by generally all departments, the formal documentation of such activities and their findings from broader dissemination have been inconsistent. Some faculty express confusion about assessment and a lack of awareness or understanding about assessment expectations.

The college has not made the critical shift from a compliance mindset to one of improvement. In the 2009 focus report and visit related to assessment, the college demonstrated some strategies to gain faculty commitment; however, the work was not sustained or enhanced. In 2017 and 2018, SLAAC piloted rubric usage for three general education outcomes (critical thinking, quantitative literacy and global/multicultural literacy). All faculty were invited to participate, and only 13 faculty submitted student classwork. In total, 273 student artifacts were assessed, which is clearly insignificant in comparison to the scope of the college student population. The SLAAC has used this pilot to discuss potential improvements in the rubric rating process, promoting greater participation in the use of the rubrics, and opportunities for expanding general education data collection to include assessment data that has already been collected; however, the evidence for improvement is sorely lacking.

As reported in the assurance argument, the SLAAC committee has formed three standing subcommittees to ensure forward momentum: Rubric Subcommittee, the Evidence of Student Learning Subcommittee, and the Faculty Resource Subcommittee. Each subcommittee summarizes their progress per NILOA recommendations and includes them in the General Education Outcomes Summary Report. That report does not show any significant progress over the last two years.

As also written: "ECC is sometimes uncomfortable with less-than-perfect results and has a tendency to lose faith with assessment results that involve a subjectively 'small' number of students or courses. This tug-of-war was the theme for February 2019's Annual Assessment Diaries conference. As ECC moves toward more comprehensive and integrated assessment, there is an emerging need to re-calibrate our expectations of assessment and improve data literacy, so that coming up with 'statistically significant findings' does not negate the value of 'informative findings,' as had been the case." For an institution with a history of 15 years working on student learning outcomes assessment, these challenges must be addressed or ECC will never be able to meet this Core Component's intent.

As the college noted in the argument narrative: "While general education assessment has been enhanced by the development of common rubrics for outcomes, general education decision-making is still an opportunity for improvement. Faculty members of SLAAC are sincere and passionate but express concerns with finding time to conduct or develop assessments in addition to teaching classes, attending to students, and participating in departmental routines. Still, the committee is hopeful that

momentum can be built around a few projects that appear promising." The team agrees that some demonstration of progress is needed, and the purpose for the Interim Monitoring Report will focus on this topic in two ways: demonstrated significant faculty involvement in the general education assessment process and clearly identified outcomes that have been identified to improve student learning as a result of the assessment process. As the new assessment initiatives described are all within the last 6-7 months, the Interim Report will provide documented activities, participation, and improvement for the next three years.

The Manager of Outcomes Assessment position created in 2006 appears to have a strong external focus rather than a support role for faculty as noted by the examples of conference attendance and organization memberships rather than examples of leadership with assessment initiatives. This perception by the team would affirm the college's comments that their "approach to assessment is faculty-led and faculty-driven and administration-supported. There is a common commitment to the idea that assessment data is not a tool to evaluate individual teaching but rather a means for fostering understanding and improving the quality of learning." Administrative support for assessment needs to be clearly identified with clear expectations for faculty involvement and collaboration with active and intentional support to eliminate barriers.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

The purpose for the Interim Monitoring Report will be to monitor general education learning outcomes assessment progress over the next three years. The report will focus on this topic in two ways: demonstrated significant faculty involvement in the general education assessment process-- real numbers and artifacts collected and clearly identified outcomes that have been incorporated to improve student learning as a result of the assessment process. The report should document both the process, the involvement, the outcomes, the dissemination of results, and the actions taken based on the results.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

The ECC Strategic Plan identifies several goals related to retention, persistence and completion, and these implemented through the college operations plan. The plan has set four strategic goals with fourteen actionable strategies. The college's involvement with national and state initiatives like Achieving the Dream (ATD), Illinois Equity in Attainment, Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, the HLC Student Success Academy, and the Voluntary Framework of Accountability demonstrates a commitment to understanding student success at all levels and across all demographics. The college's Performance Report provides very detailed data that connects with its Strategic Plan. Although the report seems to indicate average benchmarks, these may or may not be the actual goals set by the institution. There were no specific benchmark goals found in the strategic plan.

Several committees are involved in strategies and actions related to persistence, retention, and completion, and they all rely heavily on data from Institutional Research. The Student Success Infrastructure group sponsored student focus groups of both active and non-returning students. The college used this qualitative information to inform Operating Plan priorities.

The college has also developed through ATD a decision making model which is intended to guide committees and individuals on the evaluation of initiatives. Data collected and reviewed is used to set goals and prioritize future projects. ECC provides a variety of examples related to how they have used data to make improvements. Their Aspen Prize submission form also highlights some of the predictive modeling they have used to support student success.

As described in the assurance argument, the college processes related to student success measures reflect good practice and a commitment to continue to improve.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Rationale

A review of the evidence in the assurance argument and related supporting documents reflects a college committed to improving the success of its students. The college is committed to creating a culture of reflection that incorporates the evaluation and continuous improvement of its' programs through the collection and review of data.

The college provides an infrastructure to collect and review assessment data. The college utilizes the Curriculum Committee, the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Committee, and the Manager of Outcomes Assessment to collect and review data related to student success. However, as noted in the assurance argument, ECC continues to struggle with any significant level of faculty involvement in assessment activities. Even course level assessment work is reported as missing in some areas and not reported in others. For over fifteen years, the college has been working to develop a commitment to general education learning outcomes assessment, yet the assurance argument notes that only 13 faculty participated, out of over 500 at the college. To assume ECC will rectify this deficiency prior to the next comprehensive review in 2025 is not possible based on the evidence provided at this mid-cycle point in time. The team recommendation for a monitoring report due in three years to codify the level of participation of faculty in the process and the actual application of assessment results to inform operational planning is necessary to motivate the college out of the current stagnant state. The report should address factors related to faculty involvement numbers, actions taken at course, program, and general education levels in order to demonstrate a commitment to improvement.

The college has involved itself in several national and state initiatives that focus on the efficacy of its courses and programs and how they are tied to student retention, persistence, and completion efforts. The college has been recognized by the Aspen Institute and has participated in the HLC Student Success Academy. The college has demonstrated a commitment to student success; however, the commitment does not appear to extend to faculty who are currently ignoring or avoiding learning outcomes assessment. Improvement is an institutional commitment that is inclusive of all employee groups and not just administration.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC worked diligently to maintain quality services to students and the community throughout the state budget freeze in 2016 and 2017. Although the college lost a number of positions to a hiring freeze, resources were available to support the mission and prudent budget management helped the college sustain itself through the state fiscal crisis. The Board Policies Handbook outlines long-term financial planning related to budget and overall financial status, which continues to provide fiscal management guidance for the college.

Over the past 10 years, approximately 1/3 of ECC's campus has been built through $178 million referendum. In addition, in lean budget times, the college was able to enhance programs and equipment through donations and conservative budgeting. While there was a period of time with a hiring freeze, HR data indicates the number of employees is beginning to rise again. The Campus Master Plan is in the process of being updated to help vision the physical support needs for the next ten years, and the college leadership has approved a number of new positions for both 2019 and 2020. The evidence that the college operated effectively throughout the financial challenges demonstrates a solid budgeting and resource allocation process.

Financial reserves have helped to establish a positive bond rating, and ESS is a public community college with control over revenue received. They do not share finances with an external entity. The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and the end of year audits support the financial stability of the college and serve as evidence this core component is met.

In terms of faculty and staff, ECC notes that all staff and faculty are appropriately qualified, and regular performance reviews help to provide feedback on performance. The college also notes an opportunity for improvement with more consistent performance review completion and feedback to employees as noted in the responses to the last employee climate survey. Professional development opportunities are provided at all levels of the organization, both internal and external, and budget is allocated to support professional development each year.

The Strategic Planning and Budget Council monitors department and committee spending throughout the year, and the Business and Finance Office monitors both income and expenses throughout the year. The processes are well defined and oversight by the Board is clearly evident within the materials provided.

Several areas within this topic are notable. For example, the college utilizes a mid-year budget assessment and has continued with their Purposeful Budgeting Quality Initiative as part of that process; ECC also links the budget and resources to specific goals. Most recently, ECC has started a new committee for vetting capital improvements beginning in January 2020.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies— including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As described in the assurance argument, the Board operates by providing governance oversight to the college leadership. The Board Policy Handbook defines the scope of the board's responsibility and oversight, and the Board participates in the Illinois Trustees Association activities. The board gives operational authority to the president and executive cabinet, and the organizational structure from that level throughout administration, faculty and staff roles is well defined. For faculty and staff, representation by a variety of organizations is described and the board/administration clearly negotiates and manages those labor relationships.

The community and college personnel were very involved in the development of the 2018 to 2022 Strategic Plan. The Board also provides several opportunities for college and community members to learn about and be a part of the college governance, at least from an information and feedback perspective. Union and non-union personnel have opportunities to contribute and to collaborate with the Board and with college leadership. The large number and breadth of committee opportunities encourages participation and shared governance at the college.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Although departments and committees follow different procedures and methods in terms of budget development, resource allocations are all ultimately mission relevant and align with the college Operating Plan. ECC uses a zero based model that encourages each unit to develop their budget based on data supported need rather than past spending. ECC incorporates an enrollment simulator/forecast model to help predict future enrollment/revenue, and the college uses a standardized budgeting process with a well defined timeline. Priorities are assigned throughout the process, and budget managers have the authority to emphasize or de-emphasize requests based on college planning and commitments. The college is "intentional" about linking budget to assessment results and program review. Although the link is not direct, budget alignment does use data from course and program assessment as part of the budgeting process; however, with the low number of faculty participating in assessment, the quality of the data used is not clear. The college also offers innovation funds through its Student Success Infrastructure. In some cases, successful pilot projects are also renewed using this funding.

Strategic planning is described as a lengthy process with the intent to be inclusive and transparent. Ideas are collected and refined with much input from internal and external stakeholders. The last comprehensive planning process occurred in 2016 with final approval in October 2017. The college Board has maintained a conservative fiscal approach which has helped effectively manage fluctuations in revenue, enrollment, and unanticipated needs. The college reserve is typically, if not always, more than the Board required number of operating days, and the college has weathered several challenges with reduced or locked state funding. Anticipating potential challenges allows for more effective resource management and allocation.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Rating

Met

Rationale

ECC uses a variety of resources to document performance of its operations, and as noted in the assurance argument, data is often compared to national or state benchmarks through several organizations and memberships. Achieving the Dream and Ruffalo-Noel Levitz are described as key comparison organizations in addition to CCSSE and the NCCBP surveys.

The college collects information through a variety of surveys or focus groups, and in addition, the college uses a number of reports to gain feedback and track internal operations. Many reports are publicly available through the college website for public consumption. ECC also participates in a number of initiatives like Achieving the Dream where comparative data is available to benchmark performance to like organizations. These reports and data informed comparisons provide feedback to systematically improve performance.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Rationale

ECC's focus on transparent planning and resource management is effective and has helped the college to sustain quality operations even in times of resource challenge. Allocations and plans are focused on the mission and work to align resource allocations to support mission relevant activities with a focus on educational quality.

The college has both new and well maintained buildings and is currently in the process of developing a new campus master plan. After a significant hiring freeze due to state budget issues, the college is once again hiring new faculty and staff. As noted, "the college closely matches its personnel to program and services needs, adding employees to areas where it makes sense to do so and reducing when outcomes do not support a need for expansion," as noted in the assurance argument. Although the college relies heavily on adjunct faculty and in some instances, programs are reported to be taught only by adjunct faculty, the college support systems have worked to maintain quality and student learning support.

The ECC Board of Trustees is committed to the college and provides guidance for all areas associated with planning and budget management. As noted, the role of the Board is to oversee operations with the president, administration and faculty responsible for the daily work. The planning process is inclusive, and Board members provide much input and affirmation to the work.

As evident through the examples and supporting evidence provided, the college works to improve performance and to meet future challenges through effective forecasting and oversight. Based on the information provided, this Core Component is met.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met With Concerns
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Interim Report(s) Required

Due Date
12/15/2023

Report Focus
The purpose for the Interim Monitoring Report will be to monitor general education learning outcomes assessment progress over the next three years. The report will focus on this topic in two ways: demonstrated significant faculty involvement in the general education assessment process--real numbers and artifacts collected and clearly identified outcomes that have been incorporated to improve student learning as a result of the assessment process. The report should document both the process, the involvement, the outcomes, the dissemination of results, and the actions taken based on the results.

Conclusion

Elgin Community College was established in 1949 and has a long standing record of serving the Illinois region, both in terms of workforce development and service to the community. In 1968, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, now the Higher Learning Commission, awarded the college accredited status, and ECC has continued its affiliation with the HLC in a strong position.

The college mission of Elgin Community College serves as the guiding document for all employees as they work with student and the community. The mission was developed with much input and discussion, and the essence of the mission is reflected in the Strategic and Operational plans for the college. The mission is "to improve people's lives through learning," and the statement is articulated publicly in print and electronic media. As noted in the college assurance argument, the mission guides the college operations and goal setting.

As provided through the evidence in the assurance argument and through materials provided as evidence, the college takes seriously its conduct and works to act with integrity. Although the college experienced some financial challenges in 2016 and 2017 when the state did not have a budget, the college had planned effectively and through fiscal responsibility was able to weather the challenge effectively. The Board of Trustees are elected to their positions and abide by the statues that govern community college boards. In addition, the board has adopted a policy and procedure handbook that clearly delineates responsibilities, including those related to ethical and responsible conduct.

ECC uses a Master Course Outline to ensure that courses are similar and consistent regardless of instructional modality or location. Faculty are committed to student learning and have a variety of professional development opportunities. Staff are equally qualified to perform their defined job duties, and financial support is provided to ensure growth opportunities exist for all employees. The college is working to provide high quality education wherever and however the offerings are delivered.

The state of Illinois has a defined community college program review process that is both comprehensive and transparent, and ECC is an active member of the statewide organization. The assessment of student learning has been in place for over 15 years, and the college has joined organizations and participated in trainings, like the HLC

Assessment Academy. However, as noted in the assurance argument, little evidence of broad participation by faculty is provided and the college has not been able to develop a system for assessment at all levels that informs change and improvement.

The campus facilities are in good condition and one-third of the campus structures are ten years or less in age, as reported through the assurance argument. The technology is kept up to date, and labs are on a regular review process to ensure currency. The budget process is well defined and mission relevant with budgets beginning at the department level and moving through the institutional processes. In general, the Board of Trustees have demonstrated fiscal responsibility that has allowed the college to earn positive bond ratings and to demonstrate financial stability.

Elgin Community College is a solid institution both physically and financially, and the employees clearly are dedicated to serving the students by fulfilling the mission. General education assessment, with some clear commitment on the part of faculty, has the potential to also improve the quality of educational offerings and instruction in the future; however, commitment is necessary at all levels to ensure viability and accuracy.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation
Met With Concerns

Sanctions Recommendation
No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation
Not Applicable to This Review

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

INSTITUTION and STATE:	Elgin Community College, IL
TYPE OF REVIEW:	Open Pathway Assurance Review
DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:	Year 4 Assurance Review
DATES OF REVIEW:	12/9/2019 -

☐ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Public

Recommended Change: no change

Degrees Awarded: Associates

Recommended Change: no change

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2015 - 2016
Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2025 - 2026

Recommended Change: no change

Accreditation Stipulations

General:
  Prior HLC approval is required for substantive change as stated in HLC policy.
 Recommended Change: no change

Additional Location:
  Prior HLC approval required.
 Recommended Change: no change

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

Recommended Change: no change

Accreditation Events

Accreditation Pathway   Open Pathway

Recommended Change: no change

Upcoming Events

Comprehensive Evaluation: 2025 - 2026

Recommended Change: no change

Quality Initiative Report: 06/02/2025

    Other

Recommended Change: no change

Quality Initiative Proposal: 06/01/2023
Other

Recommended Change: no change

Monitoring

Upcoming Events

None

Recommended Change: Interim report due 12/15/2023 on assessment of student learning

Institutional Data

Educational Programs		**Recommended Change:**
Undergraduate		
Certificate	89	
Associate Degrees	37	

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Baccalaureate Degrees	0	_____
Graduate		
Master's Degrees	0	_____
Specialist Degrees	0	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

Extended Operations

Branch Campuses

None

Recommended Change: no change

Additional Locations

Education and Work Center, 6704 Barrington Road, Hanover Park, IL, 60133 - Active

Elgin Community College Center for Emergency Services, 815 East Plank Rd., Burlington, IL, 60109 - Active

Recommended Change: no change

Correspondence Education

None

Recommended Change: no change

Distance Delivery

11.0601 - Data Entry/Microcomputer Applications, General, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Microcomputer Specialist

22.0301 - Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Office Administration Technology - Legal Office Professional Option

22.0302 - Legal Assistant/Paralegal, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Paralegal

24.0101 - Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies, Associate, Associate in Arts

24.0101 - Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies, Associate, Associate in Liberal Studies

30.0101 - Biological and Physical Sciences, Associate, Associate in Science

43.0107 - Criminal Justice/Police Science, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Criminal Justice

51.0710 - Medical Office Assistant/Specialist, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Office Administration Technology - Medical Office Professional Option

52.0201 - Business Administration and Management, General, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Management

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

52.0301 - Accounting, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Accounting

52.0401 - Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Office Administration Technology - Virtual Assistant Option

52.0402 - Executive Assistant/Executive Secretary, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Office Administration Technology - Administrative Office and Information Processing Professional Option

52.0701 - Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurial Studies, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Entrepreneurship

52.1401 - Marketing/Marketing Management, General, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Marketing

52.1803 - Retailing and Retail Operations, Associate, Associate of Applied Science in Retail Management

Contractual Arrangements

51.0904 Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic) - Certificate - - Presence St. Joseph Hospital

51.0904 Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic) - Certificate - - Advocate Sherman Hospital

None

Recommended Change: no change

Consortial Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: no change