

A PUBLICATION OF ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Impact

Fall 2020 Volume 27 Issue 2



Warm up
to one of
the hottest
programs
on campus
Page 6



Elgin
Community
College



MISSION

The mission of Elgin Community College is to improve people's lives through learning.

SHARED VALUES

- Excellence*
- Freedom of Inquiry*
- Equity*
- Diversity*
- Ethical Practices*
- Accountability*
- Collaboration*

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The Community College District 509 Board of Trustees meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, unless otherwise posted on the board's web page. All meetings are held in: Building E, Room E125 Seigle Auditorium Elgin Community College 1700 Spartan Drive Elgin, IL 60123

You can access board agendas, minutes, instructions for addressing the board, and board contact information at elgin.edu/boardoftrustees.

For additional information, contact the Office of the President at 847-214-7374 or dkerruish@elgin.edu.

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LEADING THE WAY

A message from the ECC President and Board Chair

Dear ECC Community,

While the year 2020 has presented us with numerous unique challenges, it has also granted us significant opportunities. Undeterred by this pandemic, and with a student-success mindset, the faculty, staff, and administrators at Elgin Community College have rolled up their sleeves in solidarity to continue our mission to improve people's lives through learning.

One of our top priorities is to ensure that our students can continue their educations during a time of historic crisis when they need it the most. Through surveys and one-on-one conversations, we learned that COVID-19 financially impacted many of our students through the loss of jobs or other unforeseen hardships, and we needed to find a solution to help. You responded through your selfless acts of kindness and donations to the ECC Foundation Student Success Fund, which raised more than \$100,000! You can read more about how our students are persevering and succeeding

because of your generous contributions on pages 9 and 10.

As COVID-19 continues to be of great concern to our community, we want to assure you that campus safety is paramount to us. There are numerous precautionary measures in place to mitigate the spread of this virus, including contact tracing, mandatory temperature checks, the requirement of face coverings, hand sanitization stations throughout campus, enhanced cleaning schedules, and adjustments to our ventilation systems.

We are mindful of the need to remain diligent in our efforts to maintain a healthy campus while delivering an exceptional educational experience and a variety of student support services, whether in person (by appointment) or via a virtual platform.

We must, and will, continue to adapt to whatever circumstances or changes arise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our commitment to excellence will always be at the heart of teaching and learning. And we are confident that we will emerge from this crisis more resilient and more innovative than ever before.

Thank you for your continued support!

David Sam, PhD, JD, LLM
President



Donna Redmer, EdD, '76
Chair, Board of Trustees



FEATURED STORIES

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ON THE COVER:

Jeanette Silva Haro, an exceptional student who is blazing a trail as she pursues her dream to serve as a firefighter. [Page 6](#)



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In their own words

Congratulations to the Extraordinary Class of 2020



"I started at ECC when I was only 14 years old, and I was absolutely terrified, but as I began to succeed in my classes, I realized I was among my academic peers and that education could be our common language. I am proud of my accomplishments – graduating with honors at 16 years old – and eager to continue pursuing my academic goals."

-SUSANNAH GOOCH, Gilberts

Associate in Arts — Accelerate College Program graduate; attending Aurora University studying math/secondary education, minoring in music.



"As I reflect on my two years here, I've come to realize that ECC has given me more opportunities than a four-year institution could. I quickly joined the honor society, Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), and took on the role of chair for the Spartan Food Pantry. PTK opened the door to so many like-minded people who pushed me to be the very best version I could be."

-SETH BROPHY, St. Charles

Associate in Arts — attending University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign studying psychology with plans to continue on to graduate school.



"The stigma of going to a community college was rattling in my head, but that changed when I let ECC in and realized all the opportunities this school would provide me. Through my roles in club leadership, I was able to land two internships with the federal government while attending ECC."

-ALANNIS MUNOZ, Elgin

Associate in Arts — attending Northern Illinois University studying political science and minoring in Latino studies.



"After high school, I didn't have the grades or test scores to get into an elite university. ECC provided me a second chance at academic excellence. I had a wonderful opportunity to be a NASA Aerospace Scholar, and I was selected to represent ECC at a national engineering competition at NASA's Langley Research Center in Virginia."

-JACKSON WOZNIAK, Carpentersville

Associate in Engineering Science — currently studying mechanical engineering at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Read more about these ECC graduates and others from the class of 2020 on our website at elgin.edu/news.

HEALTH CARE HERO



Cathleen Nesheiwat

Alumna delivers compassionate care to COVID-19 patients

As the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic persists, Cathleen Nesheiwat, of Streamwood, remains steadfast in her duties as a nurse on the medical pulmonary floor at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights. She and a group of mostly veteran nurses incorporate compassion into their training to provide the first line of care for patients affected by the virus.

“The main reason the nursing profession called out to me is because of my genuine love for people,” Nesheiwat said. She graduated from Elgin Community College in 2015 with an associate degree in nursing. “I chose this nursing program because it’s the same college that my family attended, and it has a reputation for being one of the best programs in the state.”

Nesheiwat believes her training prepared her to stay calm and work with the resources she has—a valuable trait when caring for patients who show symptoms of COVID-19, or have tested positive. “My instructors imparted a sense of responsibility and calm in the face of adversity and emphasized not to lose sight of who the patient is,” she said.

Sarah Urban, PhD, RN, CNE, director of the nursing program, echoed the importance of training. “As health care changes so rapidly in response to COVID-19 and other emerging diseases, students and nurses must learn and adapt their practices to care for patients safely,” she said. “ECC’s nursing curriculum prepares students with clinical judgment to apply key nursing concepts in a variety of new situations.”

While some do eventually need further care, the goal is to get patients back to health so they can return home. For Nesheiwat, that’s the best part. “Seeing a patient recover and safely go home is just beyond a joy for us,” she said.

This moment has taught Nesheiwat to keep plowing straight forward. “You don’t just treat the illness, you have to see the whole person,” she said. “As long as I don’t lose sight of what I was taught in my training and who the patient is, I can keep going.” ✨

CAREER CATALYST



Toma Kpandeyenge

Alumnus overcomes obstacles; helps others find their paths

Toma Kpandeyenge admits that attending Elgin Community College was not his original plan. He aspired to go to a four-year university, play football, and major in graphic design. However, after graduating from high school with a third-grade reading level due to undiagnosed dyslexia, he faced new challenges.

Unable to gain admission to his dream schools, Kpandeyenge reluctantly enrolled at ECC. Though disappointed at first, Kpandeyenge decided to view ECC not as a second-rate choice, but as the path to his new future. "ECC forced me to face myself and decide if I was going to give up or use my newfound opportunity to course-correct," he said.

Kpandeyenge credits Robert Laws, former ECC director of financial aid, as the person who propelled him toward a brighter path. Laws became a mentor to Kpandeyenge, helping him obtain a student worker job in the financial aid office and offering constant words of support and encouragement. With renewed confidence, he threw himself into classes, working hard to overcome his dyslexia. By the end of his first year, Kpandeyenge was reading at a college level and named to the Academic Scholar's and Dean's Lists. After receiving his associate degree, Kpandeyenge went on to complete a bachelor's degree at Judson University.

Kpandeyenge feels that choosing ECC was the right decision. As a testament, he has achieved continued success in his career, working his way up at companies such as T-Mobile, Aon Hewitt, and ADP. Now at LinkedIn, based in Chicago, he is a senior relationship manager for talent solutions. Driven to keep moving forward, he is currently working on his master's degree at Judson University and has a vision for his future at LinkedIn with a leadership role in sight.

"I never imagined I would be working for LinkedIn, a place that is more competitive than Harvard," he said. "I am currently the only ECC graduate working at the company. Now, I get to inspire those who dare to believe they can be the next."

While LinkedIn offers career development courses, Kpandeyenge reminds people to also take a closer look at their local community colleges. "I felt extremely prepared after graduating with my associate degree. I knew that whatever came my direction, I was going to be okay and would find a way to overcome it," said Kpandeyenge. He imparts that same wisdom to those today who are looking to start or change careers: "ECC is an opportunity. With resources to help you identify the skills you want to grow into, faculty who truly care about your growth, and mentors to help you network, you can find a new way forward." ✨



BLAZING TRAILS

Hot flames burst from open windows; a heavy door blocks the way to someone in need. Two firefighters approach the structure with caution and confidence, using an ax to force open the door. After a few minutes, they emerge from the flames covered in soot and breathing heavily, escorting a victim to safety. While this might seem like a scene from a movie, it's an accurate description of the kind of training that Elgin Community College's Emergency Services Program uses to prepare students for successful careers in fire science.

Jeanette Silva Haro is one of ECC's exceptional students who is blazing a trail as she pursues her dream to serve as a firefighter. After earning her basic operations firefighter (BOF) and emergency medical technician (EMT-B) certificates last May, Haro is more than halfway through the fire science and safety program on her way to earning an Associate of Applied Science degree.

"I want to be a role model for girls and young women and the Hispanic community," said Haro. "I believe that if you haven't been exposed to a career like firefighting, you wouldn't know how to pursue it. I hope that young girls can see me and know they can achieve anything they work for, and that any dream is possible. Sometimes, all you need to see is someone's spark to start your inner flame."

While the average fire department is only one percent female, ECC has seen an increase in women and minorities enrolling in its program. Of the recent graduating class, 4 of 18 (22 percent) students were female. Many of these same students have been offered positions with local fire departments. For example, the Hampshire Fire Department recently hired six ECC grads, including three women—Alexis Muehleman, Laura Black, and Haro.



"It's critical for fire departments to reflect the communities they serve to build trust in emergency service providers," said John Fahy, senior director of academic programming and public safety training. He added that ECC's ability to attract diverse students and deliver outstanding results has not gone unnoticed by District 509 fire departments. In fact, Fahy notes that many of ECC's basic operations firefighter graduates, such as Eric Guerrero, have job offers from local fire departments before they officially graduate.

"ECC did a great job maintaining the curriculum and making sure we got the same caliber of training despite the pandemic-

related changes," said Guerrero, a recent grad who works for the Carpentersville Fire Department. "The team building and camaraderie ECC students have with each other is something very special."

Fire science and safety students, such as Haro and Guerrero, receive critical hands-on training to help them move forward in their careers, and the name Elgin Community College listed on their certificates comes with credibility. "If new hires come in from ECC, I know right away they have what it takes to become trusted members of our team," said Guerrero. ❖



Turning challenges into opportunities

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees and students at Elgin Community College adapted quickly to suspend in-person classes and transition to remote learning for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. As the crisis persisted, ECC's faculty fully developed and expanded online course offerings for the fall semester, ensuring a smoother transition and innovative approach.

"We wanted to be a college that 'did it right' and invested in building out quality programming with faculty well-equipped to teach in that modality," said Peggy Heinrich, EdD, vice president of teaching, learning, and student development.

Over the summer, ECC faculty and staff worked tirelessly to develop more than 230 new online courses that resulted in more than 19,300 hours in training and professional development. The training focused on instructional design, communications tools, implementing group work online, creating interactive content, and online assessment. Additionally, there are more than 90 new online courses in development for the spring 2021 semester.

In addition to taking classes online, limited access to ECC's campus meant that the Student Services and Development Division had to drastically change how they interacted with and supported students, adapting nearly every service model to have online and virtual options so that students could continue to access everything they needed to be successful.

The student advising, financial aid, student accounts, disability services, and career development areas offered both remote and in-person appointments to ensure students could navigate the college process. The Student Wellness Services Department added telehealth appointments, and the Spartan Food Pantry remained open. The Tutoring Services Department added virtual tutoring and Sunday hours to help students receive support seven days a week. "ECC is committed to maintaining and enhancing services in the online environment," said Gregory D. Robinson, PhD, associate vice president of student services and development and dean of students.

To keep students engaged, the college continues to provide virtual activities and events for students. "I always enjoyed attending ECC's events, whether they were hosted by the college or another club," said ECC student Rachel Miller. "Even though things are now virtual, I still enjoy attending the different events that are hosted by the student life office. I'm an introverted person, but I miss the social time that I would spend with friends between class and at in-person events."

"I think students are trying to see the environment that we are in as an opportunity rather than a challenge," said Amybeth Maurer, director of orientation and student life. "It is an opportunity to reflect on their education and prioritize what's important. This is not to discount the burden COVID-19 placed on finances, health, and education. Still, many students are rising to the challenge and embracing online learning—or better yet, creating new opportunities." 🌟



**Student Success Fund recipient
Bryan Arredondo**

Rallying to help students succeed

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring, it became clear that the disruptions caused in classrooms and overall student learning were more than an inconvenience. The effects of lock-downs and social distancing bled into loss of jobs, or conversely, increasing demands. As the pandemic deepened, it brought on additional stresses for students who are also parents or caregivers and forced tough decisions about how one's studies and aspirations could continue under increasing strain.

The Elgin Community College Foundation quickly determined that a solution was needed to assist students at risk of not continuing their educations or coursework due to financial concerns. The answer was the Emergency Student Relief Fund, now known as the Student Success Fund (SSF), which raised and distributed more than \$52,000 this past spring. With a goal to raise a total of \$100,000, which was successfully surpassed on October 17 during the virtual gala, the fund is wholly dedicated to supporting students in need.

Many times, helping a student overcome obstacles amounts to less than \$500. "That's a worthwhile investment in someone's future," said Executive Director of Institutional Advancement and ECC Foundation David Davin. "We have seen the long-term need for solutions to short-term financial problems. After seeing the relief we were able to provide students the past several months, we strive to continue supporting the ECC students throughout the ongoing pandemic," said Davin.

The fund successfully helped more than 65 students continue their education during the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, assisting

them with financial support for tuition, books, technology access, and even ancillary support for rent, food, health care, and child care. The ECC Foundation is committed to providing ongoing financial support so that any students who need assistance can accomplish their educational and career goals, despite increased adversity and economic hardships. Along with support from individuals, organizations such as the Motorola Solutions Foundation and the Union Pacific Foundation stepped in to assist in ECC's efforts to ensure that all students have what they need to succeed.

For students like Bryan Arredondo, of Elgin, the Student Success Fund meant he could finish the spring semester. When his mother was laid off from her job in April, the money Arredondo had set aside for tuition was needed to help cover rent for his family. The assistance he received from the SSF allowed him to continue his studies, ultimately leading to securing an internship, that led to a job as a part-time design and project coordinator and will transition into a full-time position when he completes his degree.

There are many others with stories similar to Arredondo's who now, in the words of ECC President Dr. David Sam, are able to "complete to compete." "We're not done yet!" added Davin. "Our goal is to have the means to support any ECC student who needs help because we know that when we invest in their success, every aspect of our community benefits." If you would like to learn more about the Student Success Fund, or make a donation, visit elgin.edu/studentsuccess. 🌟

ECC Foundation surpasses \$100,000 fundraising goal

The Elgin Community College Foundation Gala Virtual Mas'k'erade: Dare to Dream event took place on Saturday, October 17. The live virtual event brought together community members, students, faculty, staff, administrators, and friends of the college to celebrate ECC's resiliency since the start of the pandemic and raise funds for the Student Success Fund.

The event was the final push needed for the ECC Foundation to surpass its overall goal of raising more than \$100,000 for the fund by the end of 2020. David Davin, executive director of institutional

advancement and ECC Foundation, said, "All of the funds raised will go directly to students to ensure they can successfully continue their education. A donation to the Student Success Fund is a donation to the future health and viability of our community. Thank you to all who donated and continue to donate. Your support means everything to our students."

In addition to student performances, the event honored the following individuals for their extraordinary contributions and dedication to ECC students and the greater community.



Elgin Community College Distinguished Alumni Award

Linda Deering Dean, '81, has achieved outstanding success in the field of health care leadership. With more than 35 years of experience in the health care industry, she most recently served as president and CEO of Advocate Sherman Hospital in Elgin. Deering Dean makes time to give back to the "outstanding" institution

where she began her professional journey. In 2017, she became a member of Purses with Purpose, the ECC Foundation's women's leadership group, and joined the ECC Foundation Board of Directors in 2019. Most recently, she established a full-tuition scholarship program for nursing students of color.

Exceptional Friend of the Foundation Award

Adrienne Butler, MD, JD, dedicated her life's work to the practice of oncology and as a hospice physician. Butler's husband, William Pelz, PhD, was a long-time ECC professor of European history and political science. Pelz died unexpectedly in December of 2017. Butler describes him as a gifted writer of numerous books, a respected teacher who loved his students, and a wonderful travel companion.

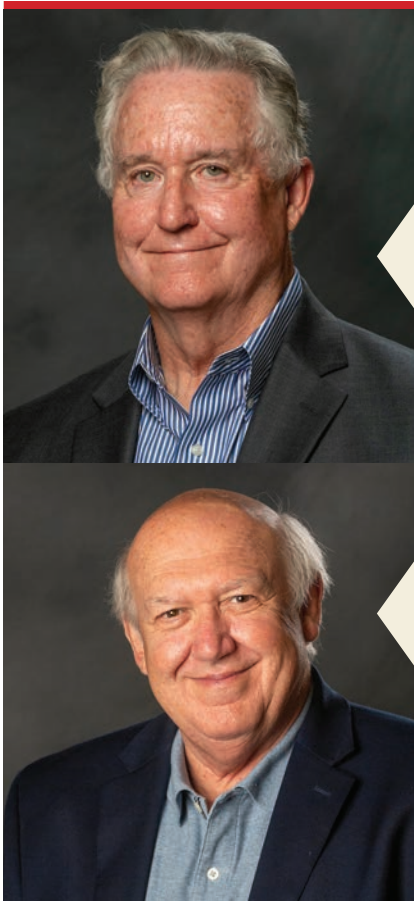
In his honor, she donated a portion of his estate to Elgin Community College to establish The Bill Pelz Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded annually to first-generation students in history and political science. Butler enjoys helping students attend ECC, the college where her husband spent so many happy and productive years of his life.



Elgin Community College Friend of Education Award

Robert Malm started his career as an intern in the Elgin city manager's office in the late 1960s, working his way up to assistant city manager and chief operating officer until retiring in 1998. During that time, he served as interim city manager on four separate occasions. Throughout his tenure with the city, Malm recognized the intrinsic value Elgin Community College

provided the region. Malm refers to ECC as an institutional treasure to our region and one that is vital to individual and community success. He credits ECC for being a valuable partner in developing the area's workforce by creating programs to build a diverse and qualified workforce that, in turn, improves the quality of life for all citizens.



Lasting Impact Awards

TWO WINNERS

Mike Shales, CPA, a native of Elgin, and his family are long-time advocates of Elgin Community College. Carrying on the legacy of his parents, Jack and Marlene, Shales has dedicated his time and treasure in support of ECC for decades. Over the years, his civic involvement included many organizations, such as the Elgin Community College Foundation, Boys and Girls Club of Elgin, Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce, Sherman Hospital Foundation, and United Way of Elgin. Shales is co-founder of Elgin contractor Shales McNutt, LLC.

Ed Hunter is also an Elgin native, having retired as the mission officer and head chaplain at AMITA Health Saint Joseph Hospital in Elgin and Mercy Medical Center in Aurora. Through his work in health care, Hunter understood and fostered a strong partnership with ECC so that faith, business, and health care organizations could walk alongside each other to find creative ways to address the community's diverse and growing needs. Hunter continues his dedication to his community as a volunteer chaplain for the Elgin fire and police departments and serves on several area non-profit boards of directors.

BY THE NUMBERS

\$107,904

Total raised

162

Unique donors to the Student Success Fund

138+

Students supported

200+

Virtual gala attendees

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