

A PUBLICATION OF ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Impact

Spring 2023 | Volume 29 | Issue 4

**ECC's
trucking
program is
miles ahead**
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MISSION

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

SHARED VALUES

- Excellence
- Freedom of Inquiry
- Ethical Practices
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Holistic Approach

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The Community College District 509 Board of Trustees meets at 6:30 pm 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.

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LEADING THE WAY

A message from the ECC President and Board Chair

Dear ECC Community,

We have a lot to celebrate at Elgin Community College. Our spring 2023 enrollment increased by 16.3% compared to the same time last year, with more than 8,900 students starting or continuing their journey at ECC.

We attribute this increase to ECC's reputation as an Aspen Top 25 community college — out of 1,047 in the nation — in conjunction with our collegewide, student-centered approach to improving student experiences and removing common roadblocks to their success. At ECC, we believe that everyone, from the faculty to the staff and administration, plays an integral role in helping our students achieve their dreams. Additionally, our District 509 Board of Trustees did their part to make college more affordable by voting to keep tuition frozen for the sixth year in a row and the tax levy flat for three consecutive years.

As an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction, we continue to innovate in the

classroom and expand opportunities for students outside the classroom. In this issue, you will find stories about instructors who inspired their students to experience course material in new, dynamic ways and others who developed learning communities to improve course completion. You will also learn more about the first cohort of the Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC) fellows, who spent the last year conducting graduate-level research under the guidance of faculty mentors.

Last but certainly not least, we want to say farewell to an outstanding servant, staunch student advocate, and the longest-serving trustee in the state of Illinois — John Duffy, who retired after 48 years of commendable service on the Elgin Community College District 509 Board of Trustees.

During Trustee Duffy's nearly five-decades-long tenure, the college awarded 47,880 degrees and certificates to students, helping them to achieve their dreams and ultimately change their lives. ECC named Duffy its first Trustee Emeritus, honoring a legacy that will far outlast his time on the board. Thank you, John, for your dedication and sacrifice and for always putting students first. You will be missed.

David Sam, PhD, JD, LLM
President



Donna Redmer, EdD
Chair, Board of Trustees



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ON THE COVER:
Frank Dean, an ECC trucking program graduate

JOURNEY OF SERVICE

JOHN DUFFY, OF ELGIN, RETIRED FROM THE ECC BOARD OF TRUSTEES in April with 48 years of service, making him the longest-serving trustee in both District 509 and Illinois community college history. A retired Larkin High School (Elgin) educator and administrator, Duffy first won his trustee election race in 1975. Since then, he served alongside 45 conventional and 54 student trustees elected to the board.

During his tenure, the college evolved from a single building with a nursing annex to a complex of seven buildings on the Spartan Drive campus, the Center for Emergency Services in Burlington, and the Education and Work Center in Hanover Park. But to Duffy, the college's accomplishments are less about the expansion of buildings and more about the growth of the people. "I learned a long time ago from Frieda Simon, a founding member of the ECC board, that it's what happens inside the buildings that matters," he said.

Duffy received numerous awards and accolades over the years, but watching students succeed mattered most to him. "The thing I am most proud of is the fact that I was part of a movement that allowed thousands upon thousands of people to achieve their dreams and lead better lives because ECC was here for them when they needed it," said Duffy.

It might seem impossible to pick a favorite memory, but for Duffy, it was easy — commencement. "Every year, as I sat on that stage and watched our students get their diplomas or certificates, I tried to imagine the trials they endured and the sacrifices they made to arrive at that moment. Students from every walk of life, age, and socio-economic condition were like a cross-section of America walking across our stage. It made even the most tedious of board meetings eminently worthwhile."

A resolution adopted by the board in April made Duffy ECC's first Trustee Emeritus. In his parting words, Duffy acknowledged the significance for him and his wife as an honored service journey spanning more than half of their lives. "For me, it has been a wonderful adventure." ■



John Duffy, first row center, and the ECC board of trustees from 1988.

GOOD FELLOWS



CURIC students and their fellowship research projects

1-**Tracy Altheide**, Faculty Mentor, Professor Glenn Earl
The Value of Competency-based Education Resources for Returning Students

2-**Emma Bell**, Faculty Mentor, Assistant Professor Mia Hardy, PhD
Privilege in the Juvenile Justice System: A Qualitative Examination of Lived Experience

3-**Brynn Brancamp**, Faculty Mentor, Instructor Brian Bohr
Swimming Against the Stream: A Critical Performance on Gender Fluidity

4-**Taina Caraballo**, Faculty Mentor, Adjunct Faculty Christopher Newman, JD
The Patterns of History: The Perception and Control of Disease Outbreaks AND Recidivism and the Illinois Prison System

5-**Tiffany Jensen**, Faculty Mentor, Professor Liddy Hope, PhD
Researching the New Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) Program in Human Services and Accompanying Tracking Mechanisms

6, 7, 8-**Chuck Harder, Melanie Thomas, and Lisa White**, Faculty Mentor, Professor Joseph Rosenfeld, PsyD
The Neuroscience Underpinnings of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous

9, 10, 11-**Ariana Puebla, Karina Santana, and Mariah White**, Faculty Mentors, Assistant Professor Mia Hardy & Assistant Professor Marisol Rivera, PhD
Community College Students' Perceptions of Factors Impacting Academic and Career Success

12-**James Monroe**, Faculty Mentor, Adjunct Faculty Christopher Newman
Analyzing the Development and Use of the French Meunier A6 Rifle

"STUDENT-LED RESEARCH OF THIS CALIBER JUST ISN'T DONE AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEVEL," shared Mia Hardy, PhD, assistant professor of sociology and founder of the new Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC). "It's rarely done at the four-year college level." But now, Elgin Community College offers students a unique faculty-mentored research and engagement opportunity.

The first CURIC fellowship cohort consisted of 12 students. Fellows commit to one semester or one year, and Hardy pairs students with a faculty member to guide and assist them throughout the research process. A central theme of the CURIC program encourages students to research subjects that embody the students and their interests.

Student Brynn Brancamp's research involved analyzing the personal experience and the cultural perspective of one who is transgender. "I was interested in CURIC because it seemed like a great stepping stone and turning point in my career to perform an autoethnography on my own life," said Brancamp.

Brancamp aims to use the research topic to make a difference in the lives of others. "That's part of CURIC and innovation, to better understand not only what I've gone through but understand a greater scope of what others have gone through."

"These projects are mind-blowing, with resource allocations students can utilize to help their projects come to fruition," said Hardy. One resource for each project is a \$500 discretionary grant, which students can use for project materials to help carry out the research. Fellows also receive a \$250 credit to their student accounts for each semester of participation.

Karina Santana focused her research project on the urban community college student perception of academic and career successes. "I looked into factors that might contribute to students' struggles with

education, specifically minority students," said Santana. "As a person of color, my research was eye-opening. This journey provided so much educational growth, which is very important to me."

Santana worked beside fellow students Mariah White and Ariana Puebla. "I never did anything like this before, and I wanted to make more connections in the school," said White, a first-generation college student. "This research showed me that feeling supported is one of the most important factors in student success. When someone backs you up and encourages you, it motivates you to continue your education."

For Santana, White, and Puebla, support from faculty mentors Hardy and Marisol Rivera, PhD, assistant professor of history, affords them more than just research skills. "The energy was great, and the center showed me the kind of people we, as students, get to work alongside. There was so much support," said Santana.

Rivera became a CURIC faculty mentor to pay forward her mentors' critical influence on her education. "As a student, it was a blessing to have mentors who took the time to share their experiences and explain to me the expectations at the higher levels of education," said Rivera. "Being a mentor to these students has been a great experience. Seeing them acquire and apply skills they will use throughout their academic and professional careers is one of the most fulfilling experiences of being an educator."

The experience the CURIC fellows receive is significant and prepares them for academic research beyond ECC. "CURIC connected me with educators I may not have met here at ECC," said White. "They gave me different perspectives on what direction I can take as a first-generation college student. Before CURIC, I didn't have that push that made me realize I can do all these things as a mother and a full-time student." ■

"This research showed me that feeling supported is one of the most important factors in student success."

— Mariah White

Mia Hardy, mentor and assistant professor of sociology, left, and Marisol Rivera, mentor and assistant professor of history, right





DRIVING DEMAND

ECC prepares truckers for the long haul

THE TRUCK DRIVING INDUSTRY IS EXPERIENCING A SHORTAGE of an estimated 70,000 qualified drivers, a number expected to double within the next decade, according to American Trucking Associations. "Nearly everything you can touch, wear, and consume that is a part of your daily lives was on a truck at some point," said Todd Anderson, director of Elgin Community College's Truck Driving Program. The need for safe, trained drivers to meet our economy's demand hovers near a historic high.

With Elgin Community College's expanded truck driving program, including accelerated sessions, newly hired instructors, and plans for a lar

Anderson. "We still conduct a 320-hour program — significantly more hours than other colleges and for-profit programs. The more hours we spend with our students, the more we can provide a learning environment that functions at a safe, steadier pace, giving them the experience necessary to feel ready to be on the road as truck drivers."

In addition to accelerated training, ECC now offers daytime sections along with traditional evening classes. This expansion is partly due to ECC's partnership with the Kane County Office of Community Reinvestment and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a federally funded program helping students start, continue, or finish their education. Because of WIOA, the program opened up access to more students. "This program was challenging, but thanks to the support from my instructors and classmates, I was able to make it and achieve my CDL," said Jose Tavera, a graduate of the first 8-week section.

With the program expansion and WIOA's support,



ECC increased capacity by 200%. As the program looks to continue serving its students well and meet industry demand, the future facility will feature more classroom and simulator space.

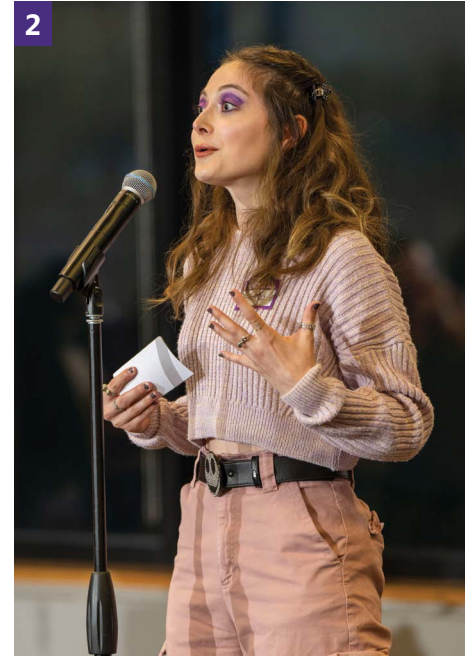
ECC's program provides a smaller student-to-instructor ratio than most, with 2-3 students per truck and instructor. The college also takes a 'grow-your-own' approach to recruit new instructors and meet the needs of the expanding program. ECC recently hired its first full-time female truck driving instructor, alumnae Sharla Suggs, '20, and three new female adjunct instructors. "The instructors here care about their students and care that they are putting good drivers on the road. However, I didn't see many people like myself. I saw this as an opportunity to step into a new role and represent women in trucking," said Suggs.

"This was an amazing class and could not have been better," said Frank Dean, another graduate of the first 8-week section. "These instructors have been in the industry and bring decades of experience. ECC's program has everything you need to become a professional CDL driver. I received two job offers one week after obtaining my license." ■

Above, an instructor shows students what to look for during a pre-trip inspection of the vehicle. Drivers perform safety checks before every trip. Below, Sharla Suggs, a truck driving instructor, goes over operational procedures with a student.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



**Students perform at "ECC Speaks,"
ECC's first storytelling event.**

1-Gabe Bueno

2-Gianna Licciardi

3-Jack Ward

4-Ryan Regelbrugge

5-Roswell Howells

6-Sophia Licciardi

Students share life experiences through stories

"EVERY STUDENT HAS A STORY," SAID BRIAN BOHR, INSTRUCTOR OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES. Bohr is reinventing the classroom experience to embrace and enhance what students can bring to storytelling. In his communications course, Oral Interpretation of Literature, students take stories that are not traditionally performative and bring them to life from their personal perspectives through different mediums, including poetry, personal narratives, and digital storytelling.

Although Bohr's class is rooted in performance, it differs from a theatre performance class because students are not playing characters but performing each piece as themselves. "This class is an entry point into thinking about 'Who am I?' and 'How do I interact with stories and put myself into them?' instead of thinking about what the author wanted me to do," said Bohr. He even replaced the traditional desk-and-chair setting by holding classes in one of ECC's dance studios to facilitate creative thinking.

"It was really refreshing to be free to try something different," said ECC Oral Interpretation student Roswell Howells. For one performance, he wore an inflatable dinosaur costume to tell a story of nearly fainting in a parade.

Freedom to make choices within their performances is the backbone of Bohr's course. For the poetry component, students took a poem they felt connected to and performed it in either their open classroom or a specific location on campus. "This freedom gave them a way to think a little bit more critically about what they were doing and why they were doing it," he said. "So many of my students have come to me and said they would never have interpreted the text this way had they only been instructed to stand up and recite the poem."

"We could each perform the same poem, and all have wildly different interpretations of the text because the performance centers on your unique experiences, values, and beliefs," said Bohr. "It's about what you get from the piece of literature and what you want to show from it."

For another project, students partnered with McKinley Elementary School in Elgin, adapting the grade schoolers' short personal narratives into full performances. Bohr based this project on a group in New York called the Story Pirates and a Chicago group called Barrel of Monkeys. "People often neglect kids' stories. Here we ask: 'How we can give them a voice, and how do we show these kids that their words matter, their stories matter, and that they hold worth?,'" said Bohr. In May, ECC invited the elementary school to see their stories performed on campus.

For the final project, Bohr's students performed their narratives at a live "ECC Speaks" event based on NPR's "The Moth Radio Hour." In collaboration, students from the ECC Working with Groups class, taught by Assistant Professor of Human Services Liddy Hope, PhD, helped plan the event. "This is a neat collaboration where we get to share our students and create this experience for them," said Bohr.

"This class allowed me to explore a different part of me," said Howells. "Effective communication will help me in any field I pursue, and it reignited my love of public speaking and presenting." ■



Brian Bohr, instructor of communication studies, gets on his soap box about public speaking and personal storytelling.

TAG TEAM TEACHING

Instructors create a community for learning

WHEN LATASHA DEHAAN, PHD, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, NOTICED STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH ASSIGNMENTS in her African American history classes, she took action. DeHaan's colleague, Instructor of English Chasity Gunn, saw similar struggles in her African American literature course. With enrollment and completion rates among African American students declining over the past decade, and even more so during the pandemic, new initiatives are vital. The instructors formed a learning community called Unshackled Voices to foster student success.

"Investing in African American students is critical to reversing the trend of stagnant completion rates," said DeHaan. "We must intentionally recruit and retain African American students." Working together, DeHaan and Gunn bring more than a syllabus, lectures, and projects; they provide tools to help students succeed.

Students in the learning community take both classes separately, but the learning and resources are intertwined. Noting that many students struggled with composing papers, DeHaan tapped into Gunn's English expertise to improve their writing. Both took a more hands-on mentorship approach and met with students one-on-one. The instructors invited departments, such as financial aid and tutoring, to speak to their classes for additional resources. "We know our

students often need a bridge to access the many resources available," said Gunn.

Thanks to a mini-grant from the ECC Foundation, students received the necessary course books and materials, plus a Toastmasters International membership to improve communication and leadership skills. ECC's Student Success Infrastructure initiative also funded a trip to Springfield, Ill., for students to present their final research projects.

Ten percent more students passed both classes when compared to the standalone African American Literature class before the learning community. "There is something beautiful about the synergy between the classes," said student Izaak Robinson. "[It] helped provide historical insight to the revolutionary writings," he said.

"Reading about these amazing people and learning about my heritage gave me an appreciation for how incredible it is to express yourself. I also saw myself in many of the writings, which made me feel less alone. I gained confidence from this class," said Robinson.

The learning community is again planned for the fall 2023 semester to help more students succeed.

"I loved the curriculum. I've been an ECC student for a few years and had never seen an African American history course until last semester," added student Mickayla Chandler. "I felt included and seen." ■



Chasity Gunn,
instructor of
English and
former Poet
Laureate
of Elgin

LaTasha DeHaan,
assistant professor
of history and
political science



BUILDING FUTURES

SUSAN TAYLOR-DEMMING, THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT and the Elgin Community College Foundation, hangs up the phone after thanking an ECC alumni donor for a recent gift that will help several current students pay for college.

"I get to build relationships between the community and our students, helping the students achieve their dreams and helping the donors determine how their philanthropic efforts can better the community," said Taylor-Demming.

She works with donors who want to make a difference in students' lives. Some donors prefer to support students with housing or food insecurities through contributions to the Spartan Pantry. Other donors focus on student success in a particular program or area of study. "We have donors who are successful in their chosen careers and want to pay it forward to the next generation, and some who took different paths but want to enable students to pursue their true passions," she added. For example, the foundation

has scholarships for programs in health professions, performing arts, and HVAC, as well as scholarships for different types of students, such as veterans returning to school and first-generation students.

As she begins to position the foundation for the future, Taylor-Demming has three main priorities: *Complete to Compete*, a targeted scholarship for students close to graduation who need extra support to cross the finish line; *Student Success*, a new initiative to give students a solid academic career start; and *Workforce Development*, a set of scholarships designed to forge connections between students and employers for fostering job-ready skills.

"My goal is for the ECC Foundation to live up to its name — to provide a solid base for students to build their futures. Our donors are the core of that base, and their gifts are changing lives today. They are changing families' trajectories, and they are changing the lives of students 10 years down the road. The cycle of generosity is a lasting legacy." ■

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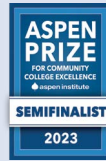
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