

A PUBLICATION OF ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Impact

Summer 2021 Volume 27 Issue 4

**ECC Students
take the wheel at
'Wicked Wrench'**

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,

As the number of COVID cases decline statewide and more restrictions are lifted, we welcome this season with optimism and excitement. Despite a year wrought with limitations and setbacks, our faculty, staff, and administrators never stopped preparing our college and our students for growth. We will emerge from this pandemic stronger, wiser, and ready for new challenges and all the opportunities that lie ahead.

We are encouraged to see a rebound in students enrolled for summer courses, on track to return to pre-pandemic levels, and we look forward to seeing more students on campus this fall. While following federal and state guidelines, we are preparing for the start of the fall 2021 semester with additional in-person classes and a host of hybrid offerings. We know that, in many circumstances, our students learn best when they can personally connect with faculty and when hands-on learning can better translate into real-world experience.

Although the campus has been quieter, our students and faculty have been actively living our mission.

Throughout these pages, you will see stories of students seizing opportunities to gain skills and advance their careers — and they are succeeding in their efforts. The stories of students like Nadya Quezada and Amy Dabe (pp. 6-7), Leo Cooksey (p. 8), and Veronica Huynh (p. 11) are what inspire us to continue to find new and innovative ways to help our students succeed. We are so proud of their accomplishments and those of the countless other students, including our spring 2021 graduates, who are improving their lives through learning.

At ECC, we want to ensure that everyone in our district has access to a quality education and an opportunity to fulfill their dreams. Help us spread the word: As a result of the prolonged pandemic, we are offering more financial assistance to our students than ever before. Our financial aid professionals are working diligently to get those funds distributed to every eligible student. We encourage you to reach out as soon as possible to find out how we can help you pay for college for the fall semester. If you, or someone you know, has been thinking about returning to school to learn new skills or chart a different path, there is no better time than now. For more information, reach out to the Financial Aid Office at 847-214-7360.

Thank you for your continued support!

David Sam, PhD, JD, LLM
President



Jennifer Rakow, BA
Chair, Board of Trustees



FEATURED STORIES

- 3** Gearing up for manufacturing growth
- 5** Fiscal stimulus fills gaps for students
- 6** Cover story: Going the extra mile
- 8** Internships light the way to success
- 9** Aerospace careers launched at ECC
- 11** Donor support keeps dreams alive

ON THE COVER:

ECC student Nadya Quezada, after job shadowing, joined the Hjelm sisters' Wicked Wrench team full time as an automotive technician. **Page 6**



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Simone Tetzlaff

Gearing up for manufacturing growth

Regional census data indicates that two-thirds of small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms expect difficulties finding skilled talent in 2021 and beyond. With more than half of these jobs requiring post-high school training but not a four-year degree, Elgin Community College is well-positioned to become the community link between workers and careers that pay family-sustaining wages. Plans to develop a new manufacturing education and training center on the recently purchased Colonial Café property adjacent to the college's main entrance ensures the college can help meet this need for area families.

"Our efforts are really about closing the local skills gap and boosting economic growth throughout the region," said Cathy Taylor, dean of sustainability, business, and career technologies. "It's exciting to work with our community to open more paths for students to gain valuable in-demand skills while also supporting the increasing needs of area companies to hire and retain quality employees with reliable ECC credentials."

Demand for manufacturing programs has outpaced ECC's capacity for years. The proposed new manufacturing education and training center will provide more space for modern classrooms, labs, and

machinery. Plans for the center are still preliminary, but the vision is to include multidisciplinary project spaces where students, faculty, and industry partners can research, fabricate, and explore together. In addition, the center will be the home to continuing education opportunities for corporate training and workforce partnerships.

"Expanding these kinds of programs at ECC will allow us to train students for middle-skill jobs in advanced manufacturing, a field of exploding job growth in the Elgin region for several years," said Taylor. Industries such as manufacturing automation, precision manufacturing, and mechatronics (e.g., robotics and supply chain technicians) need qualified workers. "Our students can be key to these companies' and our region's continued success."

Students like Simone Tetzlaff, who is completing an apprenticeship with mechatronic automobile components and systems company Brose Belvidere, Inc., see ECC's expanding manufacturing programs as the catalyst to further their careers. "I'm studying mechatronics at ECC, which allows me to gain a solid skill base in a rewarding career and will advance me toward my goal of being a manager," said Tetzlaff. "I will be able to do what I have always wanted — to fix anything on my own." 🛠️

In their own words

Congratulations to ECC's extraordinary graduates



"My involvement at ECC and work/school balance helped me become a well-rounded leader. I learned to embrace the challenges I faced as opportunities for growth. These experiences made me who I am today: a proud Latina immigrant, first-generation college student, and now a college graduate."

-LISBETH CASTILLO, South Elgin
Associate in Science



"ECC is filled with great people — faculty, staff, and students who will help you on the road to success. They helped me discover my potential to do whatever I put my mind to, giving me the confidence I lacked before."

-ROBERT PHELAN, Algonquin
Associate in Arts



"As a first-generation college student, choosing ECC was a no-brainer. I didn't fully grasp what field I wanted to pursue, and ECC felt like the best place to take some classes and explore various programs to see what fit. Once I learned about the physical therapy assistant program, I knew I'd found my career path."

-ASHLEY FREEMAN, Lake in the Hills
Associate of Applied Science



"I really grew in terms of leadership. I became an officer in Phi Theta Kappa, and I was able to build the confidence that I didn't have before attending Elgin Community College. My best advice to students is to be involved in the community and student life — it changed my life."

-ZAIN ALSALHANI, West Dundee
Associate in Engineering Science

For more about our spring commencement, visit elgin.edu/celebrate.



Andrea Lara-Gasca

Fiscal stimulus fills gaps for students

For Andrea Lara-Gasca, a working mom who lost her job due to the pandemic, the financial support she received from the ECC Foundation ensured she didn't lose valuable ground in her studies. "I was worried I would have to stop taking classes and wouldn't be able to finish what I wanted to accomplish," said Lara-Gasca. "Now, I can focus on completing my Associate of Applied Science degree in nursing, have the career I want, and be there for my son."

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, ECC's allocation of more than \$13.8 million in federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds directly benefitted students by helping them pay for educational expenses. Examples of costs covered by the relief funds include tuition, supplies, housing, health care, mental care, and child care.

Along with the significant federal and state funds, several measures were put in place to remove financial obstacles for students, including working with the ECC Foundation to cover gaps in funding with scholarships and grants for those who didn't meet federal criteria, but still demonstrated need. More than \$220,000 was raised in the past year toward these efforts.

Along with more funding options for students, departments throughout ECC mobilized to provide tangible supports and extended services to minimize disruptions to teaching and learning. Examples include purchasing and distributing computers and Wi-Fi hot spots to students who lacked access to adequate technology, covering required testing fees, amending class refund policies, and mailing class materials and graduation regalia packets to students during the pandemic.

"The funding ECC received and raised significantly improved our students' ability to continue in their studies. We are working to leverage every dollar even further by removing as many hurdles as possible through our own cost-saving strategies," said ECC President David Sam, PhD, JD, LLM. "I want every one of our students to know we are committed to providing ongoing financial support so they can accomplish their educational and career goals, despite increased adversity and economic hardships." 🌟

Questions about available financial assistance?
Contact financialaid@elgin.edu.

BY THE NUMBERS: Federal and State Direct Student Grants

\$13.8M
federal dollars received

\$853,892
received as a Hispanic-Serving Institution

\$348,185
received from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER)

2,500+
students awarded funds

By the Numbers as of 5/31/2021



Nadya Quezada

GOING THE

Area auto repair shop challenges industry norms

Most people assume a man will be working on their car engine or sliding out from under the chassis when thinking of who is doing their automotive repairs. Sisters Naomi and Jaime Hjelm are changing that mindset by proving that women also belong in the male-dominated industry and can be leaders in the field.

The Hjelm's own and operate Wicked Wrench Co., of South Elgin. They have been in the private transportation business their entire careers, which started with repairing their own fleets. They believe it's important for people, women in particular, to

understand car problems and repairs, so they began offering free classes on automotive basics to the general public.

Through Wicked Wrench's classes, ECC's Future Workforce Leaders Program saw a learning opportunity for students studying automotive technologies. The Hjelm sisters welcomed the ECC group for a repair shop tour to share more about the industry and their business.

ECC's relationship with Wicked Wrench continues to grow, leading to opportunities for several ECC students, including



Jaime Hjelm

Naomi Hjelm

EXTRA MILE

Nadya Quezada. After job shadowing, she joined the Wicked Wrench team full time as an automotive technician this past March. "I'm truly humbled by this opportunity and proud of the work I have put in thus far. The feeling of being acknowledged for your work, not only by your family, but coworkers and bosses, is the best feeling anyone could have at a workplace," said Quezada.

Second-year automotive technology student Amy Dabe, of Elgin, completed a job shadow at the shop last winter. "The in-person experience allowed me to take my classroom knowledge into the shop," said Dabe. "I also saw the business side of the shop and learned more about running a successful small business." Dabe graduated in May 2021 with an Associate of Applied Science

degree in automotive service technology and is continuing with business classes at ECC this summer.

As a teenager, Jaime Hjelm honed her auto repair skills through hands-on learning and is passionate about providing the same kind of tangible experiences for others. "I've been really impressed with ECC students and their knowledge and understanding of the industry. It's especially exciting to see more and more women come through the automotive programs. These students are entering the workforce as excellent and enthusiastic technicians," she said. "It's a great partnership, and as long as there are students who have the interest to learn, we are here to help." ❄️



Leo Cooksey

Internships light the way to success

Leo Cooksey, of South Elgin, found the key to his future right in his backyard as he settled in a neighborhood near Elgin Community College. Cooksey served for 12 years in four branches of the military, but an injury limited his ability to lift heavy parts or stand for long periods of time. Nearing the age of 40 and due to his injury, he needed to make a career change. He turned his knowledge of heavy machinery into the basis for a new career. Now, Cooksey sees his future in a new light.

In July 2020, Cooksey received a call from Sternberg Lighting in Roselle regarding an internship opening and welcomed the opportunity. "My internship at Sternberg Lighting is very exciting, and I love coming to work," he said. "I've been working all my life and I never had a job where I just loved coming to work."

Cooksey's tasks at Sternberg are to assist senior engineers with sketching electrical posts and anchors using 3D CAD engineering software. Due to his success and aptitude, his internship turned into an offer for full-time employment.

He credits ECC faculty's expertise, patience, and dedication with helping his success. "They were very thorough and always made time for one-on-one review. I used to spend six to seven hours

LEO SHARES HIS STORY.

Watch Leo Cooksey's video on your smartphone.



straight in class — even if I didn't have to be there, I wanted to be there learning more," said Cooksey. "They also helped connect me with ECC's Strategic Partnerships and Experiential Learning internship coordinator so I could learn more about the internship program and connect with companies looking to work with ECC students like me."

What's next for Cooksey? After earning multiple certificates through computer integrated manufacturing courses, including AutoCAD, he is on-track to complete an Associate of Applied Science degree in industrial manufacturing in fall 2021 — but he's not stopping there. He plans to continue to build on his education and earn bachelor's and master's degrees in the industrial manufacturing field. "ECC gave me the foundation and the knowledge for me to cross that threshold, and Sternberg helped me with the experience I need to go further." 🌟



Alan Ladwig

Aerospace careers launched at ECC

Alan Ladwig ('68) built a notable career fueled by a mantra to always shoot for the stars. Literally. His extensive accomplishments include serving in the U.S. Army; spearheading the growing frontier of private space travel; advising two U.S. presidents in service at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); exploring his talent and love for space-themed art; and publishing his first book, "See You in Orbit? Our Dream of Space Flight." Additionally, Ladwig is an Illinois Community College Trustees Association distinguished alumnus awardee and is a leading advocate for increased access to science and space careers for young people.

ECC alumna Angela Andrada ('18) is an aspiring scientist grateful for Ladwig's support. "Alan was the first person I met who had a direct connection to the industry I dreamed of being a part of. He helped me understand more about the larger space industry and how it's growing, including commercialization," said Andrada. "It's so much more than rocket science, which is all I thought I knew before meeting Alan. He mentors me and helps me stay connected as I look for more opportunities to gain experience in the industry, reminding me that everyone's path is different and to never give up."

Ladwig is the founder and president of To Orbit Productions, which provides consulting services and lectures on space policy.



Angela Andrada

He is also executive vice president of communications and board member for STAR HARBOR Space Academy, the world's first publicly accessible spaceflight training facility.

Ladwig earned an associate degree from Elgin Community College and then attended Southern Illinois University, majoring in speech. After completing his master's degree, he landed a position as president of Forum for the Advancement of Students in Science and Technology.

"One of our focuses was aerospace, and then I really got involved in space," said Ladwig. From there, NASA recruited him to head the Shuttle Student Involvement Program, integrating student experiments into the newly developed space shuttle program.

Ladwig's advice for young people is influenced by the unique way his own career took shape. "You need to find something you're passionate about," Ladwig said. "I tell them, 'aim high and dream big — you'll be amazed at what might happen.'" 🚀

Accomplishments and Accolades

Michelle Kershner, MEd, professor of mathematics, is a 2021 recipient of the American Association of Community Colleges' Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty award. One of only 23 recipients nationwide, the award is recognition for faculty members making a difference in the community college classroom.



Erin Vobornik, MA, English as a second language unit adjunct faculty is an inaugural Coalition on Adult Basic Education State Advocate for Adult Education Fellow for 2021. The fellowship is a hands-on advocacy training program for adult educators, adult learners, and friends of adult education. During the yearlong program, fellows will learn how to work with the media, their communities, and policymakers to create change benefiting adult learners and adult education programs.



In March, ECC hosted a first-shot vaccine clinic in partnership with the Kane County Health Department. ECC nursing students and faculty helped administer 3,280 COVID-19 vaccines. ECC Police Department, facilities, and custodial staff helped coordinate this event.

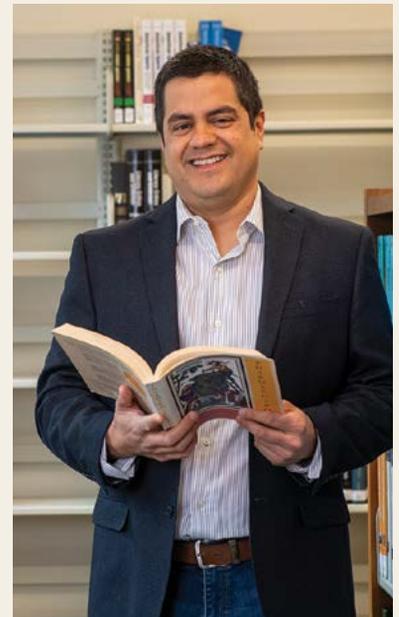
James G. Allen Jr., of Elgin, was elected Student Trustee for the 2021-22 academic year. Allen is pursuing his Associate of Applied Science degree in paralegal.



Jenna Manzano, of Streamwood, was elected Student Body President. She is entering her second year at ECC, pursuing her Associate in Arts.



Antonio Ramirez, MA, assistant professor of history and political science, received an inaugural Elevating Equity Grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation for his Chicagolandia: Oral Histories of Chicago's Latinx Suburbs project. The \$5,000 grant will fund the project's website and the hosting of a public event next spring.





Victoria Huynh

Charlotte Hoffer Canning

Donor support keeps dreams alive

ECC student Victoria Huynh, of Elgin, thought she would have to put her dream of becoming a marketing director in the beauty industry on an indefinite hold as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the ECC Foundation Student Success Fund (SSF) and donors such as the Hoffer Foundation, Huynh is excited to be transferring to the University of Illinois-Chicago this fall to complete her bachelor's degree in marketing and get started on her career.

Huynh's family owns a small business that was forced to close for several months in 2020, taking away the family's livelihood. "It was a very scary time," said Huynh. "My entire family lost their jobs, and I couldn't see how I would be able to stay in school."

The Hoffer Foundation donated \$10,000 to the SSF, which helped Huynh remain in school and stay on track for the summer and fall semesters.

"We're a family-owned business, in operation since 1953," said Charlotte Hoffer Canning, chief culture officer at Hoffer Plastics in South Elgin. "Situations like that of Victoria and her family are devastating to our community. Our core values of family, integrity, service, and trust come from company founder Robert Hoffer's vision of creating a company that puts the needs of customers, employees, and the community first. That's why the Hoffer Foundation is proud to support the mission of ECC and students like Victoria."

The Hoffer family has been involved with ECC for decades, with family members volunteering in various capacities with ECC and the ECC Foundation, including several leadership positions.

In less than a year, the Student Success Fund raised more than \$220,000 and distributed nearly \$150,000. It provides the most flexible funding available to students, ensuring no student is left behind due to the economic fallout from the pandemic. To learn more, visit elgin.edu/foundation.

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Save the Date
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18
ECC FOUNDATION GALA
Dare to Dream

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