



Elgin Community College
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NEWS RELEASE

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ECC selected to participate in national Achieving the Dream initiative

[Elgin Community College \(ECC\)](#) is one of five Illinois institutions selected to participate in the national expansion of [Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count](#). Achieving the Dream is a long-term national initiative that collaborates with community colleges to help more students earn degrees, complete certificates, or transfer to four-year institutions to continue their studies.

ECC joins Harper College in Palatine, Triton College in River Grove, Morton College in Cicero and Danville Area Community College in Danville as the first Illinois institutions participating in this initiative. ECC also is one of 20 new community colleges in seven states to join Achieving the Dream. Since its inception in 2004, the initiative has grown to include 98 colleges and four universities in 22 states.

Core to Achieving the Dream's success is helping community colleges and universities create a culture of evidence in which data and inquiry drive broad-based institutional efforts to close achievement gaps and improve student outcomes overall.

"Essentially this lifts up the entire institution by allowing a better representation of graduates who began their education at ECC. Our desire is to have more people graduate." says ECC President David Sam, PhD, JD. Sam was involved in Achieving the Dream at Lone Star College-North Harris in Houston, Texas, where he served as president prior to ECC.

Achieving the Dream is particularly concerned about student groups that have faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. According to the initiative's research, factors such as family and work commitments pose a risk for students—who often have no choice but to attend part-time—not staying in school to finish their degrees. Achieving the Dream assists schools in identifying problems and setting priorities to better assist these students.

Participation in the initiative will heavily involve faculty, staff, and students as well as our communities, says Mary Perkins, EdD, associate dean of enrollment management and ECC co-team leader. This focus on using data to make sure students are succeeding at milestones along the way to their educational goals will change how we do our work at the college.

"We can refine our programs, services, and policies that are assisting students and abandon those that are not," Perkins says.

Sarah Dye, ECC English professor, president of the Elgin Community College Faculty Association and co-team leader, agrees with Perkins. She is anxious to share with her fellow faculty members about how the Achieving the Dream involves faculty in improving the learning environment.

Dye sees firsthand the results of a national survey showing that 14 percent of students entering community colleges do not earn a single credit by the end of their first semester.

"I know ECC's faculty cares about their students and demonstrate that daily when they meet them face-to-face in the on-campus classroom or the online classroom," she says. "ECC's selection as an Achieving the Dream school will now provide my colleagues with the data they need to know to address how these different student populations are or are not succeeding."

Past and current Achieving the Dream participants have been successful in changing its policies and strategies—such as offering more detailed and timely student feedback, or arranging quick counseling assistance to students struggling in a subject—to improve student outcomes. As participants, Sam says ECC can tap into those success stories to determine what works best for its students.

ECC's two-year participation in Achieving the Dream began with a kickoff institute from June 15 to 18 in Austin, Texas. The ECC team met with teams from other participating community colleges joining Achieving the Dream and its assigned coach and data facilitator to prepare for participation in the initiative. This institute also grounded the team in the initiative's values, goals and expectations.

Perkins says the next step is to analyze the college's student outcomes data and assess current efforts. ECC's coach and data facilitator will visit the college this fall and again in the spring to further consult and guide the ECC team through the data collection and strategy identification.

For more information, contact Mary Perkins, associate dean of enrollment management, at 847-214-7414 or mperkins@elgin.edu.

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Contact: Kristophere' Owens
Communications Specialist
847.214.7838
kowens@elgin.edu

[Elgin Community College](#) (ECC) is a comprehensive public community college, one of 48 statewide. ECC serves approximately 10,000 students per semester in credit classes while some 11,000 more rely on the college for non-credit classes and activities each year. [Programs of study](#) include university transfer, more than 155 career-oriented, occupational degrees and certificates, corporate and continuing education and a full complement of pre-collegiate courses. The average class size is less than 20, making one-to-one student/teacher relationships commonplace.

About Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. The initiative works on multiple fronts — including efforts on campuses and in research, public engagement and public policy — and emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Achieving the Dream was launched in 2004, with funding provided by Lumina Foundation for Education. Seven national partner organizations work with Lumina to guide the initiative and provide technical and other support to the colleges and states. They are: the American Association of Community Colleges; the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas-Austin; the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University; Jobs for the Future; MDC Inc.; MDRC; and Public Agenda. MDC is the initiative's managing partner.

ECC NEWS MEDIA PROTOCOL

All members of the media should utilize the public relations department as the first point of contact. Kristophere' Owens, public relations specialist, may be reached at 847-214-7838 or kowens@elgin.edu. All Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests must be submitted in writing to Marilyn Prentice, compliance officer, at mprentice@elgin.edu or via fax at 847-214-7375. This release is the official newshead for Elgin Community College. Any information received on behalf of ECC not on this newshead should be disregarded.