

April 2025



ECCFA NEWS

The Sentinel: Elgin Community College Faculty Association Newsletter

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ECCFA President's Message

It's hard to believe I've successfully made it through my first year as ECCFA's President.

I've learned a lot through the process and am really starting to feel comfortable. This

would not have been possible without the support of all those who have given me counsel and stepped into roles when requested. I'd like to thank all the ECCFA officers, but especially Alison Douglas (Secretary), Kim Tarver (Membership), Luis Martinez (1st VP), Katherine Fletcher (2nd VP), and Tammy Ray (3rd VP). These five remind me of the value in building relationships. I've known all of them for at least a decade, if not more, and they were all willing to step up when asked. I'm very proud of the work we've done this year and I'm struggling to find the words to express how grateful I am for you all.

For my last message of the year, I'd like to again touch on the Dear Colleague letter focused on DEI efforts in higher education. I know this news was disturbing, and there are faculty at the college who are so concerned that they have changed syllabi and course readings in an effort to avoid any discussion of topics that might be on some vague DEI list written by an overzealous newly-appointed bureaucrat.



Academic freedom is central to our mission here at ECC and at higher education institutions across the country. The Dear Colleague letter is about actions an institution might take that violate civil rights legislation, not about course content -- actions like admissions or hiring based on race, not which novel is chosen for your course. It's about giving preferential treatment to one group over another, not choosing which dataset to use in your course.

Many of you know that for years, I've focused my Mth120 Statistics course on a variety of topics that are central to our students' lives, but which some might consider "DEI". I use databases centered on the experiences of the children of immigrants, lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults, and school discipline. Every semester, when students explain why they chose their topic for their class project, many will share they see themselves in these data. In choosing to include these options for students, I'm exercising my academic freedom. I encourage you to stand with me and not preemptively give up these freedoms that are crucial to ECC's success and the success of our students.

In Unity, Dan Kernler - Prof. of Mathematics - President, ECCFA, IFT Local #3791

A Chief Negotiator's Final Message: [Ryan Kerr](#)

As we wind down on our current ECCFA contract (expiring in December 2025), ECCFA membership is yet again tasked with electing a negotiations committee to represent the union in bargaining an update to that ever-important document. After six years on the negotiations team, and three years as Chief Negotiator, I am letting my membership on the committee expire to make way for new voices.

I have learned much about how the proverbial sausage is made, and I have a greater appreciation now for the hard work of union leadership than I ever could have had without this experience.

I will spare you most of what I might like to say in this moment, but I will offer some observations and considerations as we enter a new cycle of contract negotiations. Please [click here](#) to see my five points!

As the new negotiations committee starts their work, and the new Chief Negotiator takes up that heavy mantle, I offer my wishes that they have as smooth a negotiation process as possible. With so many uncertainties in the air, though, we cannot be certain what they will contend with. What they can count on is that I will offer my strong and vocal support and help them as I can. I hope the rest of ECCFA will do the same.

New Member Feature: Kelly Olsen-Guyant

What experiences and past roles have led you to where you are today at ECC? One of the math professors, Professor Gary Grohs, played a big part in my math success. He helped me get through some classes I didn't think I would. Even when I went on to get my Bachelor's Degree from National-Louis, and eventually my Master's, I would still reach out once in a while for a math question, or just to keep him updated that I was using my skills I learned. In 2021, I decided it might be time to start teaching at the college level, so I reached out to Professor Grohs. He guided me on how to apply, and who to talk to, and now I get to teach at one of my favorite places.

Unfortunately, when I reached out to Professor Grohs, he told me he was retiring, so I never got to actually work with him. But it has been an amazing journey from my first day as a student to now, working with such brilliant and compassionate instructors!

What's your go-to comfort food? My go to comfort food is pizza. We have so many different pizza places around us, that it can be hard to choose, but we order in pizza almost every Friday night

A recent movie you watched that blew you away? When I had to think about 1 movie that blew me away, only one came to mind - "Sound of Freedom". This movie is based on a true story of a man who helps save a child who was abducted, and sheds light on the current child trafficking issue in our world. The creators of the movie did not care about making money, and in fact gave many tickets away to help get their message out. If you haven't seen it, please watch it, but just not with your little ones, and with a box of tissue.



Instructor of
Mathematics

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the six 2024-2025 Sentinel issues this year. If there is something you would like to add for next year, please contact the Sentinel Editor [Deyana Matt](#)

ECCFA Endorsed Candidates Win Trustees Election!

It's official - the two newest members of ECC's Board of Trustees are ECCFA-endorsed candidates [Melissa Barbosa-Guzman](#) and [James Allen](#)!

Thank you to everyone who voted, donated funds, wrote postcards, sent texts, put up signs, and talked to friends and neighbors about this election.

Melissa won easily but James's race was won by 156 votes out of nearly 44,000 cast. That is less than 1/2 of 1 percent! This means that every little bit mattered. Every effort, no matter how small, contributed to this victory.

This election goes to show: YOUR VOTE AND YOUR VOICE MATTER.

We'd like to thank the 10 new COPE donors who signed up this semester.

Please consider joining the dozens of ECC faculty who currently contribute to COPE by emailing ECCFACOPE@gmail.com.

Now, let's celebrate!



Who is someone who has made a big impact on your life and why? Whenever I am asked about someone who has had a great impact on my life, I say my sister. It has been a while now, but my youngest sister passed away when she was 12, and I had just turned 21. She was diagnosed with Leukemia at the age of 4. As much as it was a hard time for my whole family, the strength and courage that little girl showed helped shape who I am today. Even on days when she could barely breathe, her skin was peeling, and was confined to her wheel chair, she could still find joy and love. She was a true example of living for the moment, and not being afraid of what is to come.