

FINAL REPORT

Illinois Public Act 102-1088

Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency

**ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1700 Spartan Drive
Elgin, IL**

September, 2024



**Elgin
Community
College**

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Report on Reflections of Past and Current Efficiencies Made Under the *Elgin Community College Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2027*

September 9, 2024

Context from the State of Illinois. Illinois Public Act 102-1088, passed by the General Assembly in October 2022, requires that local units of state government, including Community Colleges, form committees to study practices and provide recommendations on increasing organizational efficiencies and accountability. This process is to be completed within 18 months of the committee's formation and at least once every ten (10) years thereafter. Additionally, a report containing the committee's insights is to be filed with the county boards where the government unit is located.

This report represents the collective results of deliberations of the Decennial Committee of Elgin Community College, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, Illinois 60123. Per the Act, Decennial Committee members include members of the governing Board of Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer, and two (2) residents of the governmental unit appointed by the Chair of the Board. At Elgin Community College, the Decennial Committee consists of the entire Board of Trustees (seven elected members) and the student trustee, the president, along with two District 509 residents: Ms. Jenni Betancourt, Executive Committee Chair of the Elgin Community College Foundation and Senior Architect at Dewberry Architects, Inc., and Dr. Eric Larson, past Chair of the Foundation and former Dean of Business at Elgin Community College and retired President of Blackhawk Technical College in Wisconsin. All Decennial Committee members have broad knowledge of the College and its surrounding district.

Context from Elgin Community College. Every five (5) years, Elgin Community College creates a strategic plan containing Key Imperatives – core directions the College aims to achieve over the five-year period of the plan. Key Imperatives represent the top-most layer of the plan, and they are written in an intentionally broad or conceptual manner to provide space for every College department, committee, and employee to set their own goals under them. In this way, Key Imperatives provide a foundation that keeps the College on pace. Key Imperatives renew every five years as strategic plans expire and as new plans are launched.

From Elgin Community College's *Strategic Plan of 2022 to 2027*, Key Imperatives of Elgin Community College include: (1) Teaching and Learning Excellence; (2) Lifelong Connections; (3) ECC Experience; and (4) Fortify Our Future.

Key Imperatives for 2022 to 2027	
Teaching and Learning Excellence.	Deliver instructional practices and curriculum to ensure student-centered learning
Lifelong Connections.	Create a lifelong meaningful, and mutual relationship with the College
ECC Experience.	Cultivate a welcoming destination for students, employees, and our community

Fortify Our Future. Position the college to remain affordable while ensuring long-term financial stability and operational efficiency

To provide directionality to Key Imperatives, the College sets Annual Goals at the start of each fiscal year that contain specific language about the nature of work to be done. For example, the College’s Goal 3 for fiscal year 2024 is situated under the Key Imperative of Lifelong Connections, which stresses the importance of fostering meaningful relationships with constituencies. Goal 3 specifies that one of the constituencies the College strives to cultivate are students; in particular, it states that the College must grow the number of students enrolled from the start until the end of the fiscal year from 13,840 to 14,206 students (see p. 4).

As Annual Goals are set with specific language and targets, College departments and employees set their own individual goals to ensure that the College makes progress on the college-wide goals as a whole. At the end of the fiscal year, results from each Annual Goal and the strategies deployed to enact them are summarized in the College’s *Performance Report*. *Performance Reports* are prepared each fall for the Board of Trustees and the public and are published on www.elgin.edu.

Key Imperatives for 2022 to 2027	Annual Goals for Fiscal Year 2024
Teaching and Learning Excellence	Goal 1. Completion Goal 2. Mastery of Learning Outcomes
Lifelong Connections	Goal 3. Enrollment Goal 4. Credit Accumulation
ECC Experience	Goal 5. Student Experience Goal 6. Employee Experience Goal 7. Community Experience
Fortify Our Future	Goal 8. Student Affordability Goal 9. Financial Health Goal 10. College Fundraising Goal 11. Operational Efficiency

Reflections by the Decennial Committee on Efficiencies Gained as a Result of Enacting Annual Goals

To review efficiencies and improved accountability gained by enacting Key Imperatives and Annual Goals, Elgin Community College’s Decennial Committee held three (3) public meetings as explained below. A quorum was present at each meeting.

May 8, 2023. In May 2023, the Decennial Committee met to appoint the committee, outline a process for gathering and discussing evidence of efficiencies and future opportunities. It was determined that the College would summarize evidence in a draft document to be prepared in a year’s time for Committee review.

June 10, 2024. The draft document originally planned in June 2023 was prepared on June 10, 2024, and the Decennial Committee held a public meeting to discuss the gathered examples and evidence. Examples were situated under the Key Imperatives, and content from that meeting appears in black font in this report.

September 9, 2024. During the June 2024 meeting, the Committee reviewed the draft report to reaffirm the College's progress in building efficiencies for each Key Imperative and Annual Goal. It also raised examples of other efficiencies not provided in the June 2024 draft but to be included in a final report prepared for the Committee's September 9, 2024 meeting. This additional content appears in red font in this report.

The remainder of this report lists the efficiencies gained by enacting each Annual Goal for fiscal year 2024. Fiscal year 2024 was selected as a basis for documentation since 2024 was the first fiscal year following the passage of the Act. Again, insights discussed in the June 2024 draft report appear in black; insights raised during the June 2024 meeting but not appearing until this September 2024 final report appear in red.

Committee Review of the Teaching and Learning Key Imperative

Goal 1. Completion. Increase the percentage of students who complete their programs from 35.6% to 38.2% with a stretch goal of 39.0% by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 1:

- Reflections on Goal 1 prompted the College to implement a practice of reaching out to students who have 45 credits without credentials. Reach-outs ensure the College is aware of barriers that prevent students from completing.
- Reflections on Goal 1 prompted the College to revise policies to facilitate student completion. The College now allows students to register for courses even with restrictions like library fines and parking tickets which previously may have prevented them from registering. This change helps bolster student persistence, which leads to gains in completion.
- ECC modified Goal 1 to make it annualized rather than retrospective. Because completion is a four-year rate (for full-time students), it takes four years to know whether any changes made today impact future completions. The Decennial Committee changed this metric in FY2024 to examine credit accumulation in real time, thus ensuring that students from whom we derive data are the same ones who benefit from the improvements we implement.
- Since academic year 2020-21, the College has offered a Complete to Compete scholarship to students who have earned at least 45 credits toward a degree but need a financial boost to finish. The scholarship covers the full costs of tuition, fees, course materials, and living expenses for one year. Statistical modeling is used to predict how funds are awarded; to date, 78% of scholarship recipients have completed their degrees within a year of receiving the scholarship versus 43% who meet eligibility requirements but do not receive funds.

Goal 2. Mastery of Student Learning Outcomes. Attain 80% average achievement among students of color in all general educational learning outcomes with a stretch goal of 90% by June 1, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 2:

- For several years ECC has engaged in self-study of how various disciplines assess student learning. This work culminated in a December 2023 progress report called *Advancing Equity through the Assessment of Student Learning*, which the College submitted to the Higher Learning Commission as a requirement of accreditation. The report showcases how the College standardized assessment practices and broadened them to include more faculty, programs, and courses.
- The College launched a faculty leadership program in 2021 to broaden faculty involvement in assessment. It continues to date. In the program, a faculty leader is chosen each semester to help gather artifacts and evaluation results from various general education courses and engage faculty peers in dialog. Data are aggregated and discussed to better understand student learning and instructional improvements.
- Reflections on Goal 2 prompted the College to develop a framework for assessing learning outside of classes, such as in student clubs, internships, service learning projects, and other co-curriculars. This work is ongoing, and results will be reported in future Performance Reports. It addresses a need to understand how out-of-class experiences contribute to learning, improve the student experience, and hasten time to graduation.

Committee Review of the Lifelong Connections Key Imperative

Goal 3. Enrollment. Increase annual unduplicated enrollment from 13,840 students to 14,206 students with a stretch goal of 14,571 students by April 1, 2024.

Goal 4. Credit Accumulation. Increase the total annual credit hour count from 158,790 to 167,964 with a stretch goal of 177,137 by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goals 3 and 4:

- The College unveils a new Student Engagement Plan in 2024 to ensure that strategies to increase student headcount and credit attainment are consistently recorded, measured, analyzed and reported.
- In response to Goals 3 and 4, the College began a "Just One More" campaign to encourage part-time students with high academic potential to take an additional course, allowing them to complete faster than they otherwise would.
- In 2024, ECC adopted CRM software to ensure that all students, from the point of initial inquiry through enrollment and graduation, are tracked and responded to. This practice minimizes lost data and allows the College to audit missing credits, new course pathways, or other opportunities to hasten students' progression.

Committee Review of the ECC Experience Key Imperative

Goal 5. Student Experience. Increase the percentage of students responding "very satisfied" or "satisfied" to a question about overall satisfaction on the fall 2023 administration of the Current Student Survey from 91% to 93% with a stretch goal of 94% by December 18, 2023.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 5:

- To improve accountability for the student experience, the College launched a mobile app, *My ECCExperience*, that allows students to explore, attend, and provide feedback on-campus activities and receive text reminders. This is an efficiency over paper files, emails, or other methods.
- The College revamped processes around testing, including adding staff; increasing hours of operation; minimizing long lines during peak periods; and providing accommodations, such as study sessions and retakes, for students with test anxiety.
- The College hired success coaches to act as liaisons among faculty, advisors, and other front-line professionals to ensure that students receive proper connections to services that support their success.
- Documents used by faculty for web-enhanced instruction, such as course projects and quizzes, are being redesigned to make them accessible.

Goal 6. Employee Experience. Maintain an overall mean of 3.956 with a stretch goal of 4.030 as measured by the PACE Campus Climate Survey administered in spring 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 6:

- After launching the ECC Strategic Plan in 2022, the College began offering goal-setting workshops called performance cafes that align supervisor goals to College Goals in 'SMART' format to be specific, measurable, attainable, reportable, and time-bound.
- The College negotiated and set up required professional development training for all employees in areas related to data privacy and literacy, cybersecurity, and equity and inclusion. These skills ensure that ECC personnel, regardless of role, approach their work from a common mindset.
- The College modernized its public website and employee and student portals beginning in 2021. After public launches, routine updates continue to date. These updates make it easier for constituencies, both internal and external, to find information and learn about the College.

Goal 7. Community Experience. Implement Community Vibrancy metrics to collect baseline data for FY25 goal setting with a stretch goal of communicating baseline data to key external stakeholders by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 7:

- The College leveraged Salesforce CRM software for storing and organizing data about external partners (e.g., industry type, involvement, etc.). This improvement frees the College to focus less on transactional matters with partners (e.g., routine meetings, etc.) and refocus on insights (e.g., joint ventures, etc.) that are mutually beneficial for the College and partners to pursue.
- Through its partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD), the College continues to examine metrics for assessing its overall impact on the community. Recently, the College and ATD are exploring metrics to allow institutions to benchmark progress. To date, these metrics include changes in job levels, wages, and upward economic mobility; they will be used to ensure that ECC's success initiatives yield the benefits we believe they provide.
- An analysis conducted by Joliet Junior College revealed that ECC has more university transfer agreements than any other community college in the state. These agreements ensure that transferring students have clear and affordable pathways to complete their baccalaureate degrees. These efforts appear to pay off: ECC's six-year baccalaureate attainment rate is higher than most community colleges nationally.
- The College's Small Business Development Center offers advising and workshops in English and Spanish to entrepreneurs and small business owners seeking advice on launching and scaling their businesses. The SBDC brings prosperity to the community by strengthening the local economy and retaining area jobs for employers and employees.

Committee Review of the Fortify Our Future Key Imperative

Goal 8. Student Affordability. Increase the average non-loan aid to student aid recipients from \$2,745 to \$2,882 with a stretch goal of \$3,020 by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 8:

- The College increased the pay rate for work-study students.
- With the proliferation of online and hybrid courses and services, the College eliminated the \$10 per credit hour Internet fee and simplified the refund policy.
- For over five years, the College has steadily expanded enrollment in high school dual credit programs which allow students to complete college requirements while still in high school. These programs minimize costs and hasten time to graduation.
- The Workforce Development Department has expanded enrollment in internships and apprenticeship programs, which allow students to train for careers while also earning income.
- The College's Affordable Educational Resources Committee continues to examine alternatives to reduce or eliminate textbook costs. This strategy was first proposed in the College's 2020 Equity Plan and is reinstated in its 2024 Equity Plan.

Goal 9. Financial Health. Implement a common review/evaluation process for new (non-operational) budget requests above \$10,000 for FY25 budgeting (by April 1) with a stretch goal of implementing by February 29.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 9:

- Since 2009, the College has earned a 'Aaa' credit rating from Moody's Investor Services, the highest rating attainable among municipal entities. Because of this recognition, the College is able to obtain favorable investment options, lower interest rates, and can pass these savings onto taxpayers.
- The Business and Finance Office created evaluation rubrics for the Cabinet and the Strategic Budgeting Committee to understand funding requests related to new projects and hiring. This improvement facilitates understanding and communication by formalizing expectations, increasing sharing, and improving transparency.
- The College has made purchasing more efficient by introducing new technology for monitoring invoicing (ImageNow); agreements and contracts (DocuSign); and budgeting (Questica).
- Additionally, the College hired an internal General Counsel and expanded signatory authority to expand oversight for vendor relationships (Administrative Procedure 2-405).
- The College's Health and Life Science Building (Building A) and Renner Academic Library (Building C) have earned Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification for using recycled and renewable materials and energy-efficient ventilation, lighting, heating and cooling. Additionally, an Illinois Green Economy Network grant has provided the College the funds needed to construct a fully functioning solar array in fall 2024. Improving the energy efficiency of campus facilities lowers operating costs and demonstrates a commitment to sustainability.

Goal 10. College Fundraising. Raise unrestricted college campaign funds of at least \$1.5 million with a stretch goal of \$2 million by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 10:

- The College launched and is currently overseeing a three-year \$3M Bright Futures student success campaign to drive fundraising for student success. The campaign focuses on workforce development and completion scholarships – two directions that not only appeal to donors but also ensure community vitality (see Goal 7).
- Processes by which the ECC Foundation and the College have secured grant innovation funds have coalesced under a common form and process. Uniting these two approval processes ensures fairness in how projects are evaluated and standardization and alignment to the ECC Strategic Plan goals.
- Strategic partnership with the Marketing and Communications Office, Financial Aid Office, and ECC faculty are helping to maximize scholarship awards to students. These efforts are especially important for scholarships specialized for particular applicants.

Goal 11. Operational Efficiency. Go live with a request/project tracking system with follow-up satisfaction survey for rollout to four service departments with a stretch goal of training departments for use in FY25 by June 30, 2024.

Increased Efficiencies and Accountability in Response to Goal 11:

- Goal 11 is dedicated to improving efficiencies and is, for this reason, integral to the Decennial Committee Report. Examples of efficiencies gained under Goal 11 include adopting Jira software to track business workflows and implementing CRM software to monitor student progression. Both systems allow the College to move clients and paperwork through required approvals with greater speed and accuracy.
- Many institutional forms, which are used by employees for common tasks ranging from expense reimbursements to technology requests are being redesigned to make them simpler and more accessible.
- The College launched the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Office and the Equity and Student Success Action Council (ESSAC) committee as a core oversight committee for all initiatives related to equity and student success. The committee relies on the ATD and Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) frameworks to guide this work; and the ESSAC committee ensures appropriate rigor in the design, deployment, and evaluation of dozens of student success projects undertaken each year.

Concluding Remarks

Common Themes. Across all Key Imperatives and Annual Goals, the Decennial Committee’s analysis reveals several general themes. First, the Committee notes multiple efficiencies gained by lowering costs for students and expediting the pace at which they complete their programs. Affordability and timeliness go hand-in-hand. Examples include advances in enrollment planning and in outreach/onboarding of new students as well as advising and support services to hasten matriculation of current enrollees. Second, the Committee notes that advances in technology underlie multiple efficiencies in this report. Technology is being used more than ever to streamline workflows, expedite data collection, and reduce the time and errors arising from manual methods of tracking. Finally, across several examples in the report, increasing efficiencies come about through renewed collaborations with community partners. Examples include improvements with agreements with universities to facilitate transfer and improved relationships with industry partners to provide careers, apprenticeships, and internships. These core themes continue in myriad ways, including the College’s ongoing selection of Annual Goals and recent improvements in practices related to program development, new employee hiring, and employee training and development.

Next Steps. As required by the Act, Elgin Community College will file this reflection report with the county boards of its service district (known as District 509 per the Illinois Community College Act). The counties contained in District 509 include Kane, Cook, DuPage, McHenry and DeKalb in Illinois. Additionally, this report will be kept on file at Elgin Community College and made available to the public upon request. Following the approval of this report during the Decennial Committee’s open meeting of September 9, 2024, the Committee has officially dissolved. It will reestablish again in 2033 with new members to prepare a report in 2034.

Community Feedback. Questions or comments about this September 9, 2024 report can be sent to the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, Elgin Community College, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, IL 60123 or via email to ECCPlanning@elgin.edu.

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Public Notice

Illinois Public Act 102-1088

Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency

Monday, May 8, 2023

3:30 p.m.

Seigle Auditorium / E 125

1700 Spartan Drive

Elgin, IL 60123

AGENDA

- A. Appoint the Committee
- B. Discussion on Past and Current College Efficiencies
- C. Discussion on Future Opportunities for Increased Efficiencies and Accountabilities
- D. Scheduling of Future Meetings



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Illinois Public Act 102-1088

Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency

Monday, June 10, 2024

3:00 p.m.

Building E - E 100.01

1700 Spartan Drive

Elgin, IL 60123

AGENDA

- A. Roll Call
- B. Discussion on Past and Current College Efficiencies
- C. Discussion on Future Opportunities for Increased Efficiencies and Accountabilities
- D. Final Meeting September 9, 2024
- E. Audience Wishing to Address the Committee



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Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency

Monday, September 9, 2024

3:00 p.m.

Building E - E 100.01

1700 Spartan Drive

Elgin, IL 60123

AGENDA

- A. Roll Call
- B. Review of College Efficiencies Discussed June 9, 2024
- C. Discussion on Opportunities for Increased Efficiencies and Accountabilities Added Since June, 2024
- D. Audience Wishing to Address the Committee
- E. Adoption of September 9, 2024 Final Report



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