

Interview with John Duffy

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue

Pogue: This is Phil Pogue. I'm on the campus of Elgin Community College [ECC]. It's August 23, 2013. I'm going to be talking with Mr. John Duffy, a longtime trustee at Elgin Community College, about the school's history. This is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library project on the history and development of the Illinois Community College System. Thank you, Mr. Duffy, for being here today. Would you begin by giving us some background about yourself?

Duffy: I'm going to start by saying you have a copy of the book, *The Community's College: Sixty Years of Elgin Community College*. In fact, many of your questions seem to come from your reading the book. Consequently, if the question is already answered in the book, I'll try not to be too redundant.



John Duffy

I was a northwest Iowa farm boy. My B.A. is from Loras College in Dubuque, and my master's is from Creighton [University] in Omaha. I spent a year as a teaching assistant at the University of Iowa and have had additional experience at the University of Minnesota and at Elgin Community College.

John Duffy

Pogue: What have been some of your work experiences?

Duffy: As a kid, I grew up on a farm, so my youth was spent driving a tractor and doing the chores, feeding the chickens, milk the cows, slop the hogs, that kind of stuff. Later, I spent two summers wheeling cement and hauling bricks for Skow Construction Company. After high school graduation, I spent four summers, or parts of those summers, with pick and shovel, laying ties and straightening rails for the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad.

The first summer, we graduated from high school May 17 and worked until the day before we went to college. The next three summers, we worked until all the rotted railroad ties had been replaced. Then we were laid off. That's when I would detassel Pioneer Hybrid seed corn, build Butler steel bins, worked in the milk drying plant, or toss bales of hay for \$1.00 an hour or a penny a bale.

As an adult, I taught for five years in Iowa, where I also ran a country club swimming pool for three summers. Then I spent thirty-four years at

Larkin High School in Elgin Public Schools. During the sixties, I spent a lot of my nights moonlighting in a French restaurant called the Chateau Louise.

Pogue: With your five years of teaching in Iowa, what kind of assignments did you have?

Duffy: I taught Latin, history and English; I was director of plays; I was baseball coach. [In] little Iowa farm communities, you did a little of everything.

Pogue: How long have you been a trustee?

Duffy: Elgin Public Schools hired me to teach Latin at Larkin High School the day it opened in 1962. With five years of teaching in Iowa, I wanted to decide quickly whether we wanted to spend the rest of our lives living in Elgin, so that October I joined the Elgin Teachers Association [ETA] Welfare and Negotiating Team. I must have made an impression because the ETA presidents, in sixty-three and again in sixty-four, appointed me their welfare chairman and chief negotiator. The two of us attended every school board meeting each year.

That was also when the Community College Act was receiving a lot of interest in the State Legislature. Since Elgin Public Schools already had its own junior college, the topic came up on a regular basis at those board meetings. The act was passed in 1965, and the first ECC board was elected in April of 1966.

At that time, I had just been elected ETA vice president, but Elgin teachers were having to make the choice on whether to stay at Elgin High School and Larkin High School or to become a faculty member at Elgin Community College. The new ETA President, Gus Stuart, chose ECC, and suddenly I was the ETA president.

As a side note, the following spring I again led the ETA negotiating team. It was rather successful. We got a 10 percent raise to the base of the salary schedule, plus health and major medical insurance, paid for by the district, plus paid sabbaticals for 5 percent of the staff. The new ECC board, not to be outdone, awarded the 10 percent raise, the medical insurance, and the paid sabbaticals to their faculty. To this day, ECC faculty still apply for paid sabbaticals every year.

What made me interested in becoming a trustee? Obviously, I was interested in the college and in how it was progressing, but I had no interest in becoming a trustee. Even after my boss, Chuck Madearis, left Larkin to become dean of evening division at ECC, the thought of becoming a trustee never entered my head.

However, eight years later, Chuck Madearis, the best boss I ever had, and a couple of other people, sat in my living room and asked me to run for

the board. I told them that the election was during spring break and that I was taking my family to Biloxi, Mississippi, camping, but if they wanted to try to get me elected, to go for it. I came back from spring break to find that I had been elected. At my very first board meeting, President Bob Appel resigned. As to the duties of a trustee, the primary duties of a trustee are hire the president, set board policies, adopt the budget and try not to micromanage.

Pogue: When you talked about being at Larkin—Elgin had its own college—did they have college classes at Larkin?

Duffy: No. All the college classes were at Elgin High School, on the fourth floor.

Pogue: When you talked about people going from Larkin and Elgin High School to this new college that was set up after the Junior College Act, how did people determine where they would go?

Duffy: It was a matter of the high school teachers applied. I don't know of anyone who was turned down.

Pogue: What role have you played with state and national trustees' associations, and what have you learned about other community college operations in and out of the state of Illinois?

Duffy: I've been active in our state association, ICCTA [Illinois Community College Trustees Association] since 1976. I've been our board's representative or alternate rep almost every year since then. I've served on ICCTA committees throughout my career and was ICCTA's state legislative chairman or co-chair throughout most of the eighties.

Nationally, I've been to almost every national legislative summit and ACCT [Association of Community College Trustees] convention since 1976. In 1983, I was elected to the ACCT national Board of Directors and reelected to another three-year term in 1986. From eighty-four to eighty-nine, each year I was appointed to the ACCT-AACC [American Association of Community College] Joint Commission on Federal Legislation and was vice chair of that commission in eighty-eight and chair in eighty-nine.

In 1990, the American Association of Community Colleges appointed me to a three-year term on their national board of directors and also appointed me each year as one of their members to the Joint Commission on Federal Legislation, all of which was quite an honor. The AACC Board of Directors appoints only one person each year from throughout the whole United States to their board of directors for a three-year term.

Since then, I've been asked to serve on a number of ACCT committees and have been appointed as an associate member to several standing committees. Currently, I serve as an associate member on ACCT's Membership and Communications Committee.

What have I learned? In that time, I have learned that Illinois has one of the very best community college systems in the nation and that Elgin Community College can hold its own with any of them.

Pogue: What are some of the differences in governing styles that you see from the other states?

Duffy: About half of the states have elected trustees, and those, the way they are elected varies considerably from state to state. The other half are appointed, and the way they're appointed varies from state to state, but many of them are appointed by the state governors.

Pogue: What kinds of topics are explored by these various national committees?

Duffy: The ACCT national association, its mission is two-fold. Number one is lobbying Congress, and the second half is trustee education. That's what the convention is all about.

Pogue: Elgin has a mission statement, "Improve peoples' lives through learning." How has Elgin tried to fulfill that statement?

Duffy: That mission statement is our guiding light in everything that we do. It's imbedded in our board policies, but it's also the guiding light throughout every board meeting.

Pogue: Elgin Community College began in 1949 as part of [School District] U-46, and you've talked a little bit about that transition. What historic ties does the college still have with U-46, and what role did the University of Illinois have with Elgin's history?

Duffy: Actually, it was returning World War II veterans and the University of Illinois that inspired Elgin Public Schools to form Elgin Junior College in 1949.

Pogue: Why did the World War II veterans play a role? Was it the GI Bill?¹

Duffy: It was the GI Bill. The GI Bill granted them educational opportunities. Most of them had come back, gotten jobs working in the community, and they needed local education.

Pogue: What districts were added after District 509 began, basically with the Elgin U-46 system? And how many square miles are now in the district?

Duffy: District 300, which includes Hampshire, Dundee, Algonquin and Lake in the Hills, joined in 1971. In 1973, Burlington District 301 joined, and in 1974, St. Charles District 303 joined.

¹ Officially the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the G.I. Bill was created to help veterans of World War II. It established hospitals, made low-interest mortgages available and granted stipends covering tuition and expenses for veterans attending college or trade schools. (<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/gi-bill>)

The Community College Act gave school districts ten years to get their act together. Each school district could form their own community college district or join a contiguous community college district. District 509 is 360 square miles and includes portions of five counties, Kane, Cook, DuPage, McHenry and DeKalb. We have two farms in DeKalb County.

Pogue: Was it a difficult decision for some of these areas, such as St. Charles, to join Elgin?

Duffy: I don't know what the local K-12 [kindergarten through high school] school district did in their deliberations, but each K-12 school district had to decide which way their community college was going to go.

Pogue: What influence did the first president of Elgin, Gil Renner, have on its history, and how is he remembered today?

Duffy: He is still revered. In fact, a chapter of *Sixty Years of Elgin Community College* is devoted to Gil Renner. In addition, the Renner Resource Center and Renner Drive were named for Mr. Renner.

Pogue: How many years did he serve?

Duffy: He was part of Elgin Community College when Elgin Community College was still part of Elgin Public Schools. He was the founding, active president of Elgin Community College.

Pogue: How many referendums has Elgin run, and how has their success rate been?

Duffy: We've had successful referenda in 1967, in 1986, in 2001 and in 2009. In the heart of the recession, our voters approved one for \$178 million for new buildings and remodeling. That was a vote of confidence and a vote of trust.

Pogue: You were a trustee when this was being brought up to be on the ballot. What led the trustees to decide, we'd better have this kind of referendum?

Duffy: We formed a committee from people throughout the district, and we had them do the original groundwork, do the interviews with people from throughout the district, and make the decision and recommend to us whether or not to go for the referendum in 2009. They recommended, in spite of the recession, that we go for that referendum and that it be for \$178 million, in spite of the recession.

Pogue: You were also a trustee in 1986 and 2001. Were those campaigns different in scope, as compared to the one in 2009?

Duffy: I think every referendum is entered into with trepidation. You will hope the voters have the trust and confidence in what you're doing to vote in favor of what you need, but it's always with a certain amount of fear and trepidation.

Pogue: What unique relationships does Elgin Community College have with the fine arts?

Duffy: Our founding board members had the vision. They believed that a visual and performing arts center was a vital part of any comprehensive community college. They supported the Elgin Symphony Orchestra from its beginning, but the state did not believe in funding the arts. So, it was not until 1993 that that part of their vision was finally realized. With some creative funding on our part, we built a first class, state-of-the-art Visual and Performing Arts Center.

We now help support six in-residence ensembles. The moment it opened in 1993, we began supporting three of them, the children's chorus, the Elgin Choral Union and the Children's Theater of Elgin, Fox Valley Youth Theater. In 2001, we began supporting the Elgin Youth Symphony and in 2003, both Hamilton Wings and Ballet Folklorico.

Once upon a time, the Elgin Symphony Orchestra was an in-residence ensemble as well. In fact, the Elgin Symphony Orchestra and the Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra both began as Elgin Community College orchestra classes. Each grew until it had sufficient momentum and support to become a separate, not-for-profit entity of its own. In all of this support, we believe that we are continuing the vision of our founding board members in their belief in the arts.

Pogue: When you visit the Visual and Performing Arts Center, what kind of facilities do you find in that building?

Duffy: We not only have the Blizzard Theatre and the Black Box Theatre, we have all of the visual arts. We have painting; we have ceramics; we have jewelry; we have pottery. We have just about every kind of artistic endeavor available to students.

Pogue: We talked a little bit about the GI Bill. What has happened since? How have military veterans impacted the college?

Duffy: As I said earlier, returning World War II veterans were one of the reasons that Elgin Community College was established in 1949. We are still trying to carry out that part of our mission. In fact, again this year, *GI Jobs Magazine* has named Elgin Community College a military friendly institution.

Pogue: How do you get that definition to be a military friendly institution?

Duffy: They thoroughly check us out, and if they believe that we are serving veterans adequately, we get the designation.

Pogue: Why was Elgin called a community college?

Duffy: Our people are the community of District 509. Our mission is to meet the needs of the people of our community. The word community is part of the Illinois Community [College] Act of 1965. Our founding board put the word community in our name, and furthermore, every entity has a limited number of resources. The word community helps keep us focused on how we spend ours.

Pogue: The history of Elgin Community College has a tie to the Elgin Watch Company. What was that?

Duffy: Elgin was once a company town, and the Elgin Watch Factory was the company. Teachers got a raise when watch factory workers got a raise. The base for the telescope at the Elgin Watch Factory observatory was dug down to bedrock. Elgin watches were set by sidereal time.² The railroads demanded it. In fact, it was the U.S. and Canadian railroads who, in 1883, first set standard time and agreed on the time zones. Congress didn't make it the law of the land until 1918, thirty-five years later.

Digital watches and battery watches marked the demise of the Elgin Watch Factory. When they left Elgin in 1963, they donated the observatory to Elgin Public Schools. In 1966, when Elgin Community College separated from Elgin Public Schools, an agreement regarding the observatory was reached between the two entities. ECC still holds all of its astronomy classes at the observatory. Once upon a time, I took Astronomy 101 there.

Pogue: How difficult is it to maintain that facility?

Duffy: I'm happy to say I don't have to worry about that. It is really maintained by School District U-46, Elgin Public Schools.

Pogue: In 1967, 100 acres was bought at Spartan Drive, moving the campus away from downtown Elgin. What impact did that have on the college?

Duffy: Interesting history. In 1965, the Illinois state mental system was getting out of the farm colony business. At that time, the Elgin State Mental Hospital had land that ran from State Street just south of U. S. 20 Bypass, out across McLean Boulevard and all the way to Randall Road. The farm colony living facilities were along the east side of McLean Boulevard, where the golf course now stands. The land from McLean Boulevard to Randall Road was their farm.

When the State decided to sell the farm, public entities had the right of first refusal. ECC's founding board members partnered with the City of Elgin and purchased the entire parcel together. They then hired a civil engineer

² Sidereal time is time reckoned from the motion of the earth (or a planet) relative to the distant stars, rather than with respect to the sun. (<https://www.dictionary.com/>)

together. The civil engineer designed the golf part for the city and the college's 100 acres for ECC. That was the beginning of our current campus, with Elgin Community College on the north side of Spartan Drive and the city golf course on the south side.

As a footnote, we are currently in the final stages of purchasing the second half of the golf course from the City of Elgin.

Pogue: How far is the current campus from downtown Elgin?

Duffy: I would say we're probably about a mile and a half or two miles. We're within the city limits of Elgin.

Pogue: Right now you've got factories, businesses and subdivisions in this area. What was it like back in the early days, when the campus was being built?

Duffy: In the early days, this was a farm field. This was the farm colony for the Elgin State Mental Hospital. There were factories just to the north of us and nothing but farmland to the south and the west.

Pogue: How many building phases have been handled by the college, and how were they paid for?

Duffy: Most of our buildings have been financed by our local taxpayers. Getting money for buildings from the State has been rare.

Pogue: What do trustees look at when hiring a president, and how many has the college had?

Duffy: The college has had six presidents. Obviously, a board wants someone who will carry out the board's policies. Since every board's policies are a little different, that means that those policies will have a significant influence on whom a board might choose. Beyond that, every college is a living, breathing entity, so it will probably have different needs at different times.

What a board really does in searching for a new president is ask itself two simple questions: Where do we want to be in the next five years? And who can best get us there? We hope that Dr. Sam will be with us until he retires, but those are the questions you ask. If it works, you keep renewing the contract.

As a footnote, I served as chair for two of our presidential searches and co-chaired the one that hired Dr. Sam.

Pogue: The book refers to various presidents with descriptive titles, identifying some as transitional leaders, some as healers, some as builders, some as technology, some as optimists. Were those descriptors put in after the fact, or were they what the trustees were actually looking for at the time?

Duffy: Those were the interpretations of Polly Nash and Jack Weiss who authored *The Community's College*.

Pogue: In 1973, Public Act 78-822 created a non-voting student member. How has that worked for Elgin?

Duffy: In my time on the board, we have embraced the student member as an integral part of our board. After all, students are why we exist. The students being there keeps us ever mindful of that fact. Furthermore, every year it is really fun to watch the growth and development of that student, over the course of her or his twelve months on the board.

Andrea Andrada is a perfect example of this. Andrea did not want to come to ECC, but her financial situation left her no choice. Once at ECC, she immediately got involved in student life, and by the end of her first year, she was elected as student member to the board. By the end of her second year at ECC, she was one of twenty students in the nation to be named to the first team of the All USA Community College Academic Team.

In addition to many other state and national honors, including a full scholarship to the University of Illinois, she was selected by CNN [Cable News Network] to explain the benefits of attending a community college in a discussion broadcast live nationwide.

Pogue: What legal roles does a student member have, as compared to your role as a trustee?

Duffy: The student has every legal right that an elected member to the board has, except the student's vote is not a binding vote; it's an advisory vote.

Pogue: Are they allowed to go into closed session?

Duffy: Our student has every right that an elected board member has, and that includes closed sessions.

Pogue: Are they elected by all of the students, or are they elected by a senate?

Duffy: I think that varies from community colleges. Ours are elected by the Student Senate.

Pogue: Has any student continued on to be a trustee?

Duffy: None of ours have been elected to the board after serving as a student trustee, but it has happened elsewhere in the state.

Pogue: What have been some of Elgin's controversial issues that are mentioned in the book?

Duffy: The book mentions William Kunstler in seventy-one, the sit-in of seventy-three, collective bargaining and the formation of the IFT [Illinois Federation of Teachers] in eighty-four, the lease of the Sears building in eighty-two, the strike of 2001, the Carver Model of Governance in ninety-five, the land swap with the city in ninety-nine, and the building of the road to Randall, Duffy Drive, in 2008.

I guess what's considered controversial, in retrospect, is really just dealing as best we can with life as it happens, always trying to keep in mind our mission, to improve peoples' lives through learning.

Pogue: So we have an understanding of some of the difficulties trustees faced, surrounding some of those issues, let's talk a little bit about them, starting with the road. Why was that such an issue?

Duffy: The road to Randall was part of the original master plan by the original Board of Trustees in 1970. It had a stormy history. It got put off and put off and put off and finally, in the early nineties, we saw the real, absolute need for the road.

We then got involved with the Army Corps of Engineers because they said the road would run through the headwaters to a navigable stream, and that involved at least six or eight years of litigation. Then we partnered with the City of Elgin and built the road together.

Pogue: Your name is connected to that road; is that correct?

Duffy: Duffy Drive is my drive. (laughs)

Pogue: And when that road was opened, how did that help the college?

Duffy: Elgin Community College is 360 square miles that go from Lake in the Hills in the north to Lily Lake in the southwest, from Hampshire in the northwest to almost West Chicago in the southeast. Half of our territory is west of Randall Road.

Now, that was originally mostly rural land, but it has grown and grown over the years, and the need for the entrance from Randall Road has grown year after year, with that growth. It was a real bottleneck to get here.

Pogue: What was the big issue concerning this swap with the city in 1999?

Duffy: The swap with the city involved the golf course. People were concerned that there wouldn't be a golf course, even though the city was planning on building a new and improved golf course on the east side of Randall Road. It also was worrisome to the people in the subdivision, which had since grown on the south side of the golf course. They felt that the golf course had been promised to them for eternity, and the city was now going to abandon them.

- Pogue: As to the Carver Model, could you give us a little more background about that?
- Duffy: The Carver Model of Governance is a whole different way of governing any institution, but particularly public entities. It involves, as I said, setting the board policies, hiring the president and adopting the budget. Under the Carver form of government, the president is really the only person the board hires and the only person who is responsible to the board. Everyone else is responsible to the president. So, the evaluation of the president is really the evaluation of the college.
- Pogue: Who was Carver? Was that a person?
- Duffy: That was definitely a human being, and he started out developing his model of governance for public boards, public boards of for-profit entities. For community colleges to take on the Carver model—which had been designed for for-profit boards—was a little controversial at the time.
- Pogue: When it comes to adopting the model, what modifications have to be made to it because all community colleges are different in geography and state operations, etc.?
- Duffy: Well, it makes it fairly simple. Prior to that, we had a book of board policies that was a binder, two inches or three inches thick. By adopting the Carver Model, the policies are about ten pages long.
- Pogue: How has the college worked with four-year institutions?
- Duffy: In the beginning, having our credits accepted by four-year institutions was sometimes a tough sell and on occasion still is. But in August of 1975, my daughter Jane graduated from Elgin Community College with an AA [Associate of Arts] degree. She wanted to go to the University of Northern Colorado.

So in July of that year, she went out to register. The person in charge said, “This will transfer; this won’t. That will transfer; that won’t.” Jane said, “Wait a minute, I read your catalog. It says that if I have an associate’s degree, I enter as a junior.” He said, “But you don’t.” Jane said, “But I will August 15, and I’m not coming here until August 25.” He said, “Then let’s start over with a schedule for a junior.”

Jane went to Northern Colorado, and after her first semester there, she was invited to join Mortar Board, their scholastic honor society. I guess, in the final analysis, I would say that some institutions and some departments in

some institutions have been more responsive to articulation agreements than others.³

That being said, we have had partnerships with four-year institutions for nearly twenty years. Those classes are offered on our campus, in our facilities, offering people in our community significant choices, without leaving home. Their degree programs, offered on ECC's campus, meet the same accreditation standards as degree programs on their campuses, as well as meet requirements set by Illinois state education departments.

Currently, we have dual admission programs for bachelor's degrees with Northern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, Columbia College, Roosevelt University, and Judson University. Plus, we have seventeen online partnership agreements and an additional sixteen transfer agreements.

Pogue: Has dealing with articulation agreements been an evolving, positive step for the four and the two-year colleges? Has it worked better, during the course of time, in getting these agreements in place, and is that also a problem at the national level?

Duffy: Let's face it, community colleges are the new kids on the block, and community college degrees were not trusted by four-year universities in the beginning. It takes a while for any new entity to gain a decent reputation. The reputation of community colleges has grown and grown and grown.

Now, we not only have over 60 percent of every student in public education, the success we have had and the success of those students has made four-year institutions take a serious look at us and at the success of our students and consequently look more favorably on the credits attained by community college students.

Pogue: State funding has dropped to about 12.5 percent of the total dollars. How has Elgin met that challenge, and do tax caps impact the college?

Duffy: We have almost reached the point where it is fruitless to rely on the State for any significant funding in our budgetary process. When we do get the money, we use it, but relying on it could be hazardous to the health of the college.

Our finance department used to calculate ECC's loss to the tax cap each year. We quit wasting our energy in 2009. But for the ten-year period, 1999 to 2008, the loss in property tax revenue was about \$30 million, or \$3 million a year.

³ Articulation Agreements are formal agreements (some would call partnerships) between two or more Colleges and Universities, documenting the transfer policies for a specific academic program or degree in general. (<https://www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/WhatisanArticulationAgreement>)

Pogue: How has Elgin Community College Foundation expanded from its beginning?

Duffy: In 1980 or eighty-one, I came back from the ACCT convention and presented the idea of an ECC Foundation. As it says in the Bible, "The seed fell on rocky ground, withered and died" [Luke 8:6]. Foundations were only for four-year institutions. But each year, after returning from an ACCT convention, I tried again, and in 1983, the seed finally fell on fertile ground. The rest is history.

The ECC Foundation, its presence in the community, its visibility in the community, its support by the community, and the scholarships it provides for our students, have made it an integral part of Elgin Community College. The foundation's assets are now over \$5 million. In fact, its annual fundraising commitments have grown to almost \$1 million a year and are now growing by more than 20 percent annually.

Pogue: How is the foundation able to raise that amount of money?

Duffy: They have several fundraisers throughout the year, and the people in the foundation really do a wonderful job in the community of gaining the support of fellow members from the community.

Pogue: Are the people who serve on their board connected with Elgin Community College, either as students or faculty, or are they more outside of Elgin?

Duffy: They are not part of the Elgin Board of Trustees; they're not students; they're not faculty, although there are two members, one member of the faculty and one member of the administration, on the board of directors. But they are vast and mostly members from the community who believe in the college and believe in fundraising for the college.

Pogue: You said that you picked up information about the foundation idea in the early eighties. What were you hearing about a foundation? What were you kind of coming back and talking about?

Duffy: Well, as I said, four-year institutions have had foundations forever, and funds are tough to come by. It occurred to trustees at the national convention that two-year colleges needed foundations for additional support, both financial and friend raising. A foundation is not just about money; it's about friend raising in the community. You have to make friends before you can get funds.

Pogue: How does a foundation use the money that they've been raising?

Duffy: Primarily for scholarships. They have supported the purchase of equipment; they've supported the college in a variety of ways, but by and large, scholarships for students.

Pogue: You said that it took a while to grow the seed. What were some of the reasons why it was difficult to get started, at the beginning?

Duffy: A few board members felt that, if Elgin Community College had a foundation, it would be draining funds from four-year institutions and draining funds from other foundations in the community.

Pogue: What unique programs exist at Elgin?

Duffy: We believe that all our programs are unique and worthy of recognition, but data supports the fact that some of our programs are essential to the community. For example, our nursing and allied health programs provide essential healthcare workers throughout the Chicagoland area. More than 60 percent of all allied health workers in this country are trained at community colleges. That is why our largest building project, stemming from the 2009 referendum, is the 130,000 square feet Health and Life Science Building.

In addition to nursing, it houses other programs, including clinical lab technician, histotechnology, phlebotomy, massage therapy, radiography, physical therapist assistant and dental assisting. In fact, Elgin has the only American Dental Association accredited dental assisting program in northern Illinois.

This new building will also allow ECC to expand its allied health programs. In 2014, we will add mammography, computer tomography and magnetic resonance imagery or MRIs. It is also noteworthy that ECC students consistently score above the national average on their state exams.

ECC's culinary arts program is also unique in that it has a rich history of collaborative partnerships and unique student experiences. ECC has had an exchange program with a culinary school in Austria for over twenty years, and more recently, we have developed a partnership with a culinary arts school in France. ECC has also partnered with several companies, including Sanfilippo Fisher Nuts, the Grand Victoria Casino, and Tate and Lisle to offer culinary competitions that result in student scholarship prizes.

ECC's partnerships with Sysco Foods has resulted in two organic gardens on our campus. They help provide the food for our student-run restaurant, Spartan Terrace, which has been helping students get hands-on experience in the industry for more than thirty years.

The icing on the cake may be our distinguished visiting chef program, where a renowned chef creates a special menu, comes to our campus, and oversees our students' preparation of the menu during the day and again in the evening, oversees the students' preparation of the gourmet meal for 150 paying guests from the community. These dinners are always the talk of the town.

All of this is done at a tuition rate which is 80 percent less than the competing private culinary schools in the Chicagoland area.

Pogue: You've talked about many programs in the medical field, as well as the culinary area. How is a need for those kinds of programs determined?

Duffy: First of all, we have to do a survey and establish, in our minds, the need. Then before the program can be offered, we have to submit it to the Illinois Community College Board. We cannot offer a program for credit without the approval of the Illinois Community College Board.

Pogue: These programs also have equipment needs. From where is the funding coming to pay for those?

Duffy: From our local taxpayers, from tuition, and a tiny bit from the State Legislature.

Pogue: And then to find instructors. Where do you find those for these specific programs?

Duffy: Again, they are funded by our local taxpayers, by student tuition, and a tiny bit from the State Legislature. The actual faculty in the classrooms, we have to find them by recruitment.

Pogue: You mentioned partnerships from France and Austria; how were those institutions or schools picked?

Duffy: Our culinary instructors are actually well-known nationally, and because they were well-known nationally, they had also contacts with the school in Semmering, Austria. It was our faculty and the faculty at the school in Semmering, Austria that developed the program.

Pogue: How has Elgin worked with the high schools located within its boundaries?

Duffy: In addition to the things that just about every community college is proud of, including articulation, dual credit enrollment and tech prep, we have our Alliance for College Readiness, a project begun jointly in 2006 by our faculty and by the teachers in our twelve feeder high schools. The goal of the alliance is to provide curriculum, programs and support services aimed at increasing academic success, improving students' transition to college, and reducing the number of students requiring developmental course work once they get to college. This voluntary teacher and faculty-led partnership has resulted in sustained collaborations at all levels, including staff, administrators, and board members.

In addition to their voluntary collaborations, year after year, in 2010, the alliance members developed a summer bridge program. This is a three-week summer boot camp which helps almost college-ready high school

graduates improve reading, writing, and math skills to place in college level courses in the fall. It is team taught by high school teachers and ECC faculty in each of the disciplines.

The alliance was also the inspiration for our newest collaboration with our area high schools, the Transition Academy. It is designed to help first generation students of color, in grades nine through twelve, improve academic achievement and college readiness.

Using best practices from our summer bridge program, the new Transition Academy provides monthly workshops at ECC, focused on college readiness, emotional maturity, and development of affective skills. Students stay enrolled in the Transition Academy throughout high school. This new program also has a parent outreach learning component and matches the high school students to community mentors, who meet with the students during their monthly workshops at ECC.

Finally, we are proud to say that our Alliance for College Readiness won the 2013 national Bellwether Award for Instruction Programs and Services. Being number one in the nation is not too shabby.

Pogue: You mentioned community mentors. How do you find those mentors?

Duffy: We go to various organizations in the community, including church and social organizations, and beg people to be mentors to these students.

Pogue: What are the major projects going on at the college now, and what are the current challenges of running a community college?

Duffy: Our current major project is the Public Safety and Sustainability Center. It is the last project to be funded by the 2009 referendum. As Dr. Sam says, "Even heroes need a place to train." This facility will train first responders: police, fire fighters and EMTs. It will also be home to our energy management program, and we hope to achieve LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] Gold certification for the project.⁴

The current challenges for ECC are two-fold. First, funding continues to be a serious challenge. State funding is not only diminishing, but additional burdens keep being placed upon us. A major cost shift, from the State to community colleges, appears inevitable because of the pension crisis. The Affordable Care Act and the increased cost of healthcare also place a major

⁴ LEED Gold is a certification program focused primarily on new, commercial-building projects and based upon a points system. Buildings can qualify for four levels of certification, Certified: 40–49 points, Silver: 50-59 points, Gold: 60-79 points, Platinum: 80 points and above. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leadership_in_Energy_and_Environmental_Design)

strain on our budget.⁵ Financial obligations like these all drain money away from ECC's academic programs and student support services.

The other challenge currently facing ECC is hiring and retaining qualified, diverse employees. For example, our current student enrollment is more than one-third Hispanic, but we cannot come close to mirroring our faculty and staff population to our student population.

Despite these challenges, we still focus on and commit ourselves to improving students' lives through learning.

Pogue: How has Elgin expanded its recruiting operation to meet the needs of the diverse learners?

Duffy: I'm going to talk about that in a few minutes.

Pogue: Then where is Elgin going for the next decade?

Duffy: Because ECC is committed to helping students achieve their goals, there will be an increased emphasis on completion rates over the next decade. The number of degrees and certificates awarded by ECC has increased 40 percent in the last six years, and ECC is currently ranked fifth in Illinois for awarding one-year certificates. We're proud of these accomplishments, and we will not rest on our laurels.

Today's student must complete to compete, and ECC is committed to helping them. Toward that end, we have just initiated our Twenty and One Program. Research has shown that students who complete twenty credit hours in their first year of college are immensely more likely to complete their degree or certificate. It is our hope that this program will help many more students reach their goal of completion.

The other focus in the next decade centers on partnerships with four-year colleges and universities. Our core business is the first two years of college, and ECC has been very vocal about saying it has no intention of getting into the bachelor's degree business. Rather, we will continue to actively seek relative relationships with other colleges and universities, finding creative ways to offer students in our district access to bachelor's degrees and beyond.

Pogue: How does the ECC board keep relationships and information flowing between the local, state and federal elected officials?

⁵The Affordable Care Act is a comprehensive health care reform law enacted in March 2010 (sometimes known as ACA, PPACA, or "Obamacare"). The law provides consumers with subsidies ("premium tax credits") that lower costs for households with incomes between 100% and 400% of the federal poverty level. (<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/>)

Duffy: Naturally, we do what everyone else does. We participate in ICCTA lobby day. We visit our state legislators. We attend ACCT's national legislative summit and we visit our U. S. senators and members of Congress.

But what we are justifiably proud of is our meet and greet sessions. We invite each elected official, state and national, any part of whose district lies within our district, one-on-one, one at a time, to our campus. We give him or her a tour of the campus, and then we spend an hour or more with that person. Dr. Sam gives a status report on the state of the college, and then we give the person an opportunity to interact with us. They love it. They get to know us. But more important, they get to learn about our college, about where we're coming from, where we are, and where we hope to go.

Pogue: How has diversity evolved at Elgin Community College?

Duffy: Diversity has been at the heart of our endeavor. When we hire someone, we want our administrators to hire the most qualified individual, but we also want them to show us that they have worked very hard to find a very diverse group of applicants. As a board, many of us have served on ICCTA's Diversity Committee, and Ellie MacKinney is our second trustee to chair that committee. Likewise, she is our second trustee to serve on the ACCT Diversity Committee.

But more important, what have we done for our diverse student population? Over twenty years ago, we founded the Youth Leadership Academy, primarily for black, at-risk students in grades six through twelve. More recently, that academy has also seen a growth in Hispanic students.

Eight years ago, our faculty formed the Alliance for College Readiness. While it is designed for every high school and middle school student who needs help in reading, writing or math, the fact remains that almost 50 percent of those who need the help are black or Hispanic students.

In addition, just last year, the alliance developed the Transition Academy for first generation students of color in grades nine through twelve. We are also an Achieving the Dream Leader College, which is a further indication that each of these programs is definitely working well.⁶

And lastly, we are an Hispanic Serving Institution.⁷ In fact, this fall, 2013, of our 11,200 student enrollment, 37 percent are Hispanic students, and

⁶ Achieving the Dream (ATD) Leader College is a national honor awarded to institutions in the ATD National Network that have shown three years of steady improvement in two outcomes that measure student success. (https://www.achievingthedream.org/press_release/16107/achieving-the-dream-announces-2016-leader-colleges)

⁷ A Hispanic-Serving Institution, or HSI, is defined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act, Title V, 2008 as an accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic-serving_institution)

of those 4,500 Hispanic students, 59 percent are female and 41 percent are male. We are working hard to improve on that 41 percent, but it is the 59 percent that is truly amazing to me.

In spite of the fact that we have always had a significant Hispanic population, I can remember years when not a single Hispanic female walked across our stage at graduation. Now, almost 22 percent of our entire student population are Hispanic females. That is an amazingly wonderful statistic and a wonderful way to end this conversation. Thank you for having me.

Pogue: John, I want to thank you for giving us an overview of the history of Elgin Community College. As my last, follow-up question, you've been a trustee for a number of years, what's it feel like to be a trustee at Elgin Community College?

Duffy: Obviously, I love it, and I love doing it, or I would have ceased doing it long ago. There's a certain sense of satisfaction. Watching students walk across that stage every graduation makes every meeting all the more worthwhile.

Pogue: Again, I want to thank you for participating in our project on the history and the development of the Illinois Community College System and, in particular in this case, the role of Elgin Community College in that process.

Duffy: Thank you.

(end of transcript)