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Erie Community College Mission and Vision Statements

Mission:
Erie Community College meets the needs of a diverse student body and contributes to regional economic vitality by providing high-quality, flexible, affordable and accessible educational programs committed to student success.

Vision:
Erie Community College will serve as an innovative learning resource by striving for universal access to lifelong learning, catalyzing economic and cultural development, and supporting a diverse and mobile student body.
Introduction

Ever since admitting its first students in 1946, SUNY Erie Community College (ECC) has pursued a mission of offering easy access to career-focused courses for those looking to start, restart or redirect their education. The core of that mission has not changed during the last seven decades, but the region and the field of education have undergone significant transformations, ones that have affected other higher education institutions across the country. The resurgent Buffalo economy and the changing face of higher education have combined with major changes at ECC during the past decade as well. The college’s enrollment spiked sharply in the early 2010s only to fall back to mid-2000s levels over the past few years. The ebb and flow of enrollment, inadequate support from state and county sponsors, and increased contractual obligations due to higher health costs and an aging workforce have led to a steady dose of tuition increases as well as the use of financial reserves. New facilities like the forthcoming Nanotechnology Center, the STEM Building, and the recently-built Green Building Technology Center help ECC improve its instructional quality but fail to address the lack of maintenance in our other facilities as a result of inadequate fiscal support.

This lack of support, furthermore, is coupled with a strong need for new investments. Aging campuses and the necessity for new technologies to adhere to student demand for online education have forced the college to spend considerable sums on basic building upkeep while enhancing its technological infrastructure. The deferred maintenance of its campuses has grown considerably during the past decade, resulting in a college with considerable technological capacities housed in buildings with severe maintenance and renovation challenges.

Finally, the move toward online instruction has been driven by structural changes in the higher education industry that have been pushed by revolutionary advances in computing. The rapid rise of multimedia content during the past decade has motivated educators to adapt traditional seated courses into online offerings. ECC’s faculty have largely done this on their own, as support for instructional course design has been absent throughout most of this revolutionary shift toward the new online modalities. Only in the past two years has the college moved into the realm of instructional design support, albeit with inadequate staffing to meet the needs of the roughly 250 sections offered online each semester.

These challenges are forcing ECC to reimagine itself – ECC Excels is the college’s response to this need.

ECC Excels is the product of eighteen months of collaborative deliberation by the Board of Trustees, the Office of the President, the Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee, the Strategic Plan Working Group, the College Senate, five task forces, 30 work groups, and over 100 work group members that constituted the ECC Excels team. The work began in late 2014 with the establishment of the Strategic Plan Working Group. The group’s purpose was to conduct a review of the available data, examine internal as well as external assessments that would inform our planning, consider ECC’s mission and vision statements, and to make decisions about the rough framework of the plan. We then continued with the decision to align ECC’s planning with SUNY’s and to build a framework similar to that of SUNY Excels, the strategic plan of the State University of New York. The plan is centered on five focus areas: Access, Completion, Engagement, Operations, and Success. We define those focus areas as follows:

1. **Access** – providing Erie County with high-quality educational services in multiple modalities and locations while being fully representative of all segments of the diverse population of the county. Key measures of access include diversity and curricular alignment with workforce and transfer needs.
2. **Completion** – the fulfillment of students’ considered goals as they advance through the institution. For some students, completion means getting a degree. For others it means acquiring a specific skill. The college’s responsibility is a joint one, however, as students must engage with us in the shared pursuit of
the fulfillment of those goals. Key measures of completion include degrees and certificates awarded as well as retention and graduation rates.

3. **Engagement** – the interaction with our region, communities, and neighbors both inside and outside ECC’s walls. ECC’s relationship to its community and surrounding neighborhoods is essential to our identity. As we seek to serve the people of Erie County, we must find ways to engage our workforce and industry partners while also engaging in philanthropy, service learning, internships, and building a collegial working environment. Key measures of engagement include funds raised, implementation of START-UP NY, and finding new ways to measure cultural engagement and campus climate.

4. **Operations** – the effectiveness and efficiency of our physical plant, finances, and technology. ECC seeks to be an effective and an efficient institution with responsible finances, updated facilities, and a culture of continuous improvement. Key operational measures include administrative overhead per student, the creation of a facilities master plan, and keeping our new construction efforts on schedule.

5. **Success** – the capacity of our students to achieve their post-ECC goals, whether those be in the area of continuing education, direct entry into the workforce, or successful skills training. Key measures of success include transfer and employment rates.

A fuller explanation of SUNY Excels can be found [here](#). For purposes of ECC’s plan, the focus on Inquiry was switched out for a focus area on Operations. Given the ongoing need to focus on facilities and fiscal concerns the college felt that this was a greater imperative.

The resulting plan is therefore one that is aligned with ECC’s mission and SUNY’s statewide needs. It builds a case for realigning our workforce to meet the priorities that you will read about in the coming pages. It creates a vision for a college that holds on to its heritage of open access while modernizing its educational delivery and support structures. Finally, it establishes a flexible foundation in an environment of rapid change and evolving student expectations.

The following pages contain a narrative overview of ECC Excels followed by detail tables that drill down into specific goals and initiatives to be addressed over the five-year life of the plan. Each initiative is to be individually managed by approximately 100 collaborative teams that take advantage of staff expertise while building opportunities for cross-divisional participation by members of all bargaining units at the college. The implementation details are currently being worked out by these teams and will begin to emerge during summer 2016. Those details will include the following elements for each initiative:

- Timeline – start and end dates for the initiative
- Performance Indicators – the key indicators that will define success or progress for the initiative
- Assigned Personnel – a project manager and additional team members
- Reporting Frequency – reports to internal college stakeholders and to the public
- Resources Needed – cost estimates and resource needs to include supplies, facilities, and equipment

As these implementation details are finalized the college will be in position to develop a detailed implementation calendar that will drive the work of the college for the next five years. Phased implementation of Excels will allow our limited staff to avoid overload, create reasonable expectations for the work to be done, and allow the college to begin with low-cost and efficiency-seeking projects that aim to create savings so that later resource-rich projects can be made possible.

We invite you to join us as we build the new ECC.

Sincerely,

Jack Quinn, President – Erie Community College
Access – Overview

In the Access area ECC envisions an institution where curriculum decisions are based on the best available data about the region’s economic demands and the needs of our four-year partners. Prospective students who seek to find jobs upon graduation will have access to a wide range of programs while prospective transfer students will be directed into a clear transfer pathway or dual admissions agreement in order to ensure smoother passage to the four-year degree. These curricular changes will be coupled with a significant growth in online instruction at ECC. ECC’s faculty will continue the drive toward online instruction, bringing more courses into the online modality and improving educational access for students who cannot attend classes on a physical campus. In addition, the college will continue reforming its recruitment, marketing, and intake processes in order to harmonize the work of the various offices that currently work in these areas so as to build a robust enrollment pipeline.

While these curricular changes are ongoing ECC will be in the midst of diversifying its faculty, aiming to reach equity with its peers in the SUNY system. Diversification is a moral imperative and a fundamental indicator of fairness.

ECC will pursue the following initiatives in order to bring this vision into focus:

- **Investment in Online Education**: The institution will direct resources toward online instruction in order to facilitate significant growth and to position itself for the learning modalities of the future of higher education. Resources will be directed toward assistance with instructional design, mentorship and tutoring for students, and construction of fully-online programs with fully-online student supports in the Open SUNY+ environment.
  - Objectives:
    - Completion of the Open SUNY self-assessment in order to establish a baseline for future program improvements
    - Continual evaluation and assessment of online academic offerings
    - 3% annual online enrollment growth
    - Development of at least one Open SUNY+ program by fall 2019
    - Expansion of online mentoring, tutoring, and technical support services for students
    - Migrating existing paper processes to online self-service in order to serve online students and increase convenience for all students

- **Curriculum Development**: ECC has significant program diversity that offers students many pathways to continuing their education or joining the workforce. Over the next several years the college will ensure that all programs are a strategic fit to in-demand jobs or four-year transfer paths. This will be accomplished by periodic market analysis connected to the college’s curriculum development governance process and will include new program development in addition to program consolidation and elimination.
  - Objectives:
    - Conduct workforce and transfer market analyses to identify the right programs for ECC
    - Complete the construction of the ECC Nanotechnology Center and cement the college’s regional leadership role in this key emerging technology

- **Faculty Diversity**: The college’s diversity is essential to its success. While ECC has achieved parity with its SUNY peers in staff diversity, this has not been achieved among the faculty ranks. The college will identify areas where strategic growth in diversity can be achieved, expand faculty searches to non-traditional outlets, and develop programming to illustrate the importance of diversity to hiring managers.
Completion – Overview

ECC started its mission of open access to education in 1947 with only 400 students. At the time the task was daunting, but manageable: those 400 students were spread out across only 8 programs. Today Erie Community College has over 10,000 students spread out over more than 80 programs. The astonishing choices that we offer to prospective students is important and it speaks to the diversification of our economy, but it also constitutes a difficult hurdle for students who are sometimes overcome by the sheer complexity of navigating through a complex institution. The ECC of 2021 is simpler to navigate and offers students guided curricular pathways, customized supports that respond to individual student needs rather than one-size-fits-all solutions, and online services that recognize that our students cannot always be on campus during business hours. This approach will recognize the diversity of our students while promoting a shared culture of completion where we help one another achieve our individual goals.

Specific initiatives in the Completion area include the following:

- **Guided Pathways**: The diversity of our academic programs is a strength of our institution, but it sometimes leaves students baffled about the courses they need in order to graduate. Students who are undecided will receive added support in choosing a major and a career path, while students who already know their path will receive clearer guidance in order to avoid credits that do not count toward their degree or unnecessarily exhaust financial aid eligibility. The students of today and tomorrow want degree planning software that is precise, accurate, simple, and guides them toward smooth completion of their considered goals. We will deliver on that demand by incorporating SUNY Transfer Paths into all transfer degree programs and building smarter advisement pathways for students who have chosen a general route but not yet chosen a specific major.

- **360-Degree Student View**: As much as students do while they are on campus or engaged with the college in online instruction, ECC has not managed to capture a comprehensive view of that student activity in a manner that leads to rapid action by our support teams. The college has built many sophisticated intervention and support systems for students, but those systems fail 100% of the time that the student fails to seek help. The future of ECC moves us toward a complete view of student life that allows us to combine academic progress with utilization of support services so that we can move quickly to intervene on the student’s behalf. This proactive approach to student support will place the college on the cutting edge of higher education and signal to students that the college cares about their success.

- **Objectives**: Adoption of electronic self-service for advisement, registration, graduation, change of major, and other completion workflows
- Comprehensive analysis of college readiness for all incoming students
- Promotion of 15-credit loads for full-time students
- Increase of ECC’s fall-to-fall student retention rate to 62%
- 2,300 degrees and 500 certificates to be awarded annually by 2020
- 25% 3-year graduation rate
- Increased use of stackable certificates that seamlessly flow into 2-year degree programs

- **Implementation of predictive success profiles for all students**
Construction of student success dashboards for academic advisors and department chairs

Engagement – Overview

The word “community” in the name of our institution is not an afterthought or an irrelevant add-on. ECC has always been rooted in the neighborhoods of Western New York, and the ECC that is emerging is one that is actively engaged with the residents of our towns and cities. Engagement works both ways, of course, and just as we seek the support of our legislative and industry partners we also know that we cannot isolate ourselves from the life of our communities. For this reason Erie Community College will make a strong investment in the philosophy of applied learning during the next five years. We will study and implement service learning opportunities, internships, and new approaches to career services. We will seek to build a framework that creates connections between knowledge and action, further situating the college in the heart of its communities through its scholarship and not as an afterthought. And as we do this, we will develop a deeper appreciation for the diversity of those communities and – we hope and believe – those communities will develop a deeper understanding of what we do and how we serve them.

ECC will pursue the following initiatives in the Engagement area:

- **Workforce Development:** As a leader in forging connections between non-credit offerings and academic programs, ECC will continue to build non-credit-to-academic pathways and strengthen partnerships with regional development agencies like the Regional Economic Development Council of Western New York. Combined with its focus on alternative energy through the Green Building Technology Center and on automotive technology through its Vehicle Technology Training Center, ECC will continue to lead the way in connecting qualified workers with local employers.
  - Objectives:
    - Establish stronger partnerships between institutions in Western New York in order to reduce unnecessary program duplication and embrace regionalization
    - Support stackable and national credentialing with coursework that advances employability of trainees who participate in customized non-credit professional development and skill training offerings
    - Simplify and promote the use of the Life Enhancement Assessment Program (LEAP) in order to promote Workforce-to-Academics transitions

- **Employee Development and Engagement:** ECC was born in the relatively small Pierce Arrow administrative building 70 years ago, grew into a large suburban institution in 1960, expanded that campus in 1968, and built two new campuses in the early 70s. The move to the Old Post Office in the early 80s, followed by additions at 45 Oak and Flickinger Center, grew the college’s footprint significantly. These expansions have been welcome, but they have also physically separated our staff and sometimes make it difficult to generate meaningful engagement. ECC will address this deficit by building collaborative spaces for our students, finding office space for our dedicated but underpaid adjunct faculty, and creating low-cost but dynamic opportunities for professional development that make use of the staff and faculty expertise that already exists at the college.
  - Objectives:
    - Measure existing staff and faculty engagement through periodic surveying
    - Review and restructure the current model for staff and faculty development
    - Create executive/governance partnership to identify and fund college training priorities
    - Create more collaborative spaces for faculty and staff, focusing first on adjunct faculty
• **Civic Engagement:** ECC is already engaged in the cultural and physical spaces of its communities, but this engagement is not always managed or nurtured. The college is not merely another resident or stakeholder in Western NY: it is, rather, the keeper of a solemn promise by the State of New York to provide everyone with access to a quality education. As such, ECC will act as the gateway to that promise. To do so it will pursue an aggressive philanthropy campaign and also offer itself as a cultural and knowledge hub to its community partners.
  
  - Objectives:
    - ECC will review its facilities usage fee structure in order to facilitate greater community use of its buildings
    - Perform a comprehensive review of ECC’s presence within social networks and develop an action plan
    - Identify major funding needs for the college in order to develop bundled fundraising campaigns that allow for capital and other needs to be met

**Operations – Overview**

ECC’s facilities are nearing the end of their useful life and the college must modernize itself in order to be viable. While patchwork maintenance can always be performed, the cost of that maintenance is simply too high for existing buildings to be sustainable over the long term. There must be a shift toward new construction. Over the coming years ECC will study its own physical plant and make strategic decisions about the buildings, facilities, and instructional spaces that are no longer functional for educational purposes. Facilities performance indicators will be adopted to assist the college in making these strategic decisions. A culture of evidence-based management will be evident in the decisions we make during this time.

While ECC faces serious facilities challenges, it has a world-class technological infrastructure with which to serve the needs of students, faculty, and staff. We will leverage those technologies even more than we already do in order to reduce the burden on our physical plant.

ECC will pursue the following operational initiatives:

- **Facilities Master Plan:** ECC will develop a facilities master plan that controls our facilities development, fully assesses physical plant capabilities and limitations in all campuses and buildings, and coheres with curriculum planning. New construction that focuses on specialized programs like nanotechnology and alternative energy will be fully leveraged to ease the burden on the remainder of the physical plant. ECC will continue to seek improved capital support for new construction to replace aging facilities that cost taxpayers and students substantially more to operate than new facilities.
  
  - Objectives:
    - A comprehensive study of all instructional spaces at the college
    - The repurposing of vacated instructional spaces
    - Student housing at all campuses
    - Establishment of a signature School of Nursing in downtown Buffalo
    - Adoption of facilities performance indicators, benchmarks, and regular assessment in order to promote a culture of evidence-based facilities management

- **Administrative Process Review:** ECC will review every business process in every unit in order to seek out duplicative or wasteful processes. Special emphasis will be placed on analysis of the course scheduling process in order to right-size the schedule to match the needs of our students and make smarter use of our facilities. The driving objective of this review will be to promote a culture of evidence-based management in all academic and administrative units of the college.
Objectives:
- Train all unit managers in business process analysis
- Incorporate business process review for all units through Program Review

Technology: The impressive technological infrastructure of the college must be tightly focused on improvements in classroom instructional technology, online learning, adaptive learning, lecture capture, and the technologies that are overtaking higher education. All of these tools, however, require training and support. To support the rapid pace of technological change in higher education the college will move toward increased use of self-service training via online training platforms. The same trend toward self-service is also evident when it comes to data, and so the college will seek out new resource planning tools in key administrative areas in order to significantly reduce expenses in those areas and improve data quality.

Objectives:
- Conduct assessment of space and technology needs for all academic and administrative units in order to establish long-term needs and minimize unplanned requests
- Implement new Enterprise Resource Planning tools and business processes in Payroll, Human Resources, and Finance

Success – Overview

Students succeed when they meet the goals they set for themselves, but it is also reasonable to acknowledge that our students sometimes need help in setting those goals. ECC will be an institution that promotes exploration while reducing wasted credits and keeping students on track toward their considered objectives. In the transfer and workforce areas this will mean ensuring that students have the best possible transfer or career counseling all the way from the intake process through to graduation and beyond. ECC will be an institution that takes ownership of the successes and failures of our students while they are with us and after they go on to other pursuits.

ECC’s focus on success will yield the following initiatives:

- Applied and Experiential Learning: Ever since its conception ECC has focused on making education practical and applicable to the lives and jobs of our students. This focus is not in conflict with a love of knowledge and artistry for its own sake, but instead supports it by challenging us to creatively apply what we know to our communities, to our environment, and to our future goals. As such, the focus on applied learning fits equally well into the transfer and the workforce track. Those who seek to continue their education at a four-year institution will need to apply their ECC learning to that future degree, while those who seek to enter the workforce directly will need to understand how their learning applies to their future jobs.
  
  Objectives:
  - Promote applied learning opportunities via the Career Resource Center in order to facilitate student access to – and preparation for – service learning, volunteer efforts, and internships
  - Establish institutional database to track applied learning opportunities and activities
  - Adopt software to connect students and prospective employers via jobs and internships
  - Establish Erie Community College as an apprenticeship hub

- Successful Transfer: For half a century ECC has sought to promote the transfer of its students into four-year programs. This core mission of the college is currently met by 17 Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degrees that facilitate transfer and four-year completion. The development of the SUNY Transfer Paths and the SUNY Seamless Transfer initiative has established an easier transfer pathway for
our students, but this can only be accomplished if we succeed in making those pathways available to them and reduce the amount of confusion associated with transfer.

- Objectives:
  - Utilize National Student Clearinghouse reports to assess whether students are transferring to the campus of their choice and develop a transfer rate for all academic programs
  - Establish guided curriculum pathways to facilitate seamless transfer
  - Integrate transfer counseling into intake process during orientation
  - Promote dual admissions during intake as part of the formal application process
  - Require the adoption of a SUNY Transfer Path during the application process
  - Increase use of stackable certificates for all incoming students to facilitate dual awards upon graduation