A college reimagined

Lincoln Land Community College

Annual Report 2019-2020
We may not always realize it, but life’s limitations can inspire us to strive for heights we may not have otherwise reached. It’s an important lesson for graduates who are navigating the sometimes difficult journey of learning. The truth is, some of the most successful people in the world have overcome tremendous obstacles in order to reach their goals.

Enter the noun, verb and adjective “Zoom” into our current vernacular. Remote methods of instruction started out as uncomfortable, alien and sometimes annoying, yet the crisis also brought about change in instructional delivery. Students, faculty and staff learned together to adapt. At the very wee hours of the night the power button on our computers continued to glow. We are all recreating the wheel, and there is very little time to be a realist. Dreaming has become part of our DNA.

As a professor of art, I often teach students to invent, rethink and eventually recreate the wheel. In a nutshell, we as a faculty have taught them to dream.

Hats off to the brave group assembled for this commencement of 2020. The year of the dreamer!
Driving away from campus after our decision to move the entire college to remote operations, I looked back and thought, when will we all be back? When will we see our students again and get back to “normal?”

But then, I faced forward. We rolled up our sleeves and reimagined our college. The past months have been full of unforeseen obstacles that we will never forget. But as Professor Thom Whalen said at our virtual commencement ceremony, life’s challenges can “inspire us to strive for heights we may not have reached otherwise.” The situations we faced brought out our collective creativity and determination. I’m very proud of faculty and staff who quickly pivoted in order to move our students successfully through their courses. And of course, I’m proud of our students who faced these new circumstances and persisted. They kept moving forward.

Prior to the pandemic, we celebrated the groundbreaking for our new Kreher Agriculture Center and a major partnership with Memorial Health System, beginning two major projects that will come to fruition in the months ahead. Despite the obstacles this year, we learned, we collaborated, we innovated and we never stopped moving forward.

Charlotte Warren, Ph.D.
President, Lincoln Land Community College
An acute, local need for more nurses led Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) and Memorial Health System (MHS) to solidify a nursing education partnership on Feb. 20, 2020. With $6.1 million in support from MHS, LLCC will admit 90 additional students per year to the college’s associate degree nursing program, for a total of 215 nursing students annually.

LLCC will renovate the west wing of Montgomery Hall into a new nursing center with state-of-the-art equipment and additional faculty and staff to recruit, advise and teach nursing students.

The new center will provide the physical space needed to enhance nursing skills and simulation labs, expand classrooms and accommodate increased incoming class sizes. Opening is anticipated in May 2021.

“This region, along with all of Illinois, faces a severe shortage of nurses,” said LLCC President Charlotte Warren, Ph.D. “With this support from MHS, LLCC can admit more nursing students and prepare more registered nurses to serve the health care facilities of our communities. This partnership aligns with both of our missions: to be responsive to community needs and improve the lives and health of the people in the communities we serve.”

Ed Curtis, MHS president and CEO, noted that LLCC has been supplying quality nurses to MHS since the early 1970s. In turn, “MHS has provided these nurses with fulfilling careers in an excellent work environment, with numerous opportunities for professional advancement. Multiple Magnet and Pathway designations at MHS hospitals provide local nurse graduates a practice environment that has committed to raising the bar of nursing excellence, again and again. We are excited to now expand our partnership with LLCC to address the regional nursing shortage and meet the needs of the patients and communities we serve.”

2020 has been designated as the Year of the Nurse by the World Health Organization. Dr. Warren and Mr. Curtis both started their careers as nurses and encouraged all students to consider a health care career in central Illinois. “A vast majority of LLCC nursing graduates remain in the district to work and live,” said Mr. Curtis. “We want to continue to keep these nursing graduates in the area by providing the tools, support and opportunities to learn and grow, and enjoy long, rewarding professions.”

LLCC Nursing student Haley Caise commented, “This is an amazing collaboration of two organizations that are near to my heart. LLCC offers an incredible education and value. Now, with MHS support, more nursing students will have additional resources available to them to help them reach their dreams.”

Dr. Warren noted that LLCC Nursing’s completion and national certification pass rates are far above national averages, and that student demand for the program has grown steadily since its inception.
The groundbreaking date was 9/19/19 for a 21st century agriculture building.

LLCC Board Chair Wayne Rosenthal announced that the name of the new structure would be the Kreher Agriculture Center, in honor of the late Charles and Irene Kreher.

“Eighteen months ago, we announced an $18 million gift from the Krehers to transform and grow our agriculture program. Today we honor their intent to modernize and transform our ag program into the finest anywhere.

“We also honor the intent of LLCC’s founders 52 years ago, many of whom were farmers. Because of them, agriculture has been taught at LLCC since its very beginning.”

The cutting-edge facility will feature active classrooms and laboratories, student gathering spaces and a spacious, glassed-in expo area for ag simulators.

The Kreher gift has also allowed LLCC Agriculture to offer students more scholarships, student research, travel opportunities and high tech learning tools including drones and augmented reality devices.

LLCC President Charlotte Warren, Ph.D., announced that LLCC Ag was named the best college agriculture program in the Midwest by the National Association of Agricultural Educators. LLCC’s soil specialist team won first place overall at the national Professional Agricultural Student (PAS) Organization conference in spring 2019, and the college bowl team placed first for the third consecutive year at the Illinois PAS conference.

“You can see why we’re proud and want to expand these opportunities to more students,” said Dr. Warren. “We look forward to further accolades and achievements from our ag program. With this new facility, the sky is the limit!”

LLCC Ag Club President Skye Kretzinger said the groundbreaking marked “a major day for all of those who have, are or are going to be attending LLCC as an agriculture student. Throughout this new building, students will be learning to become our next agronomists, animal nutritionists, land surveyors and much more; they will become the future of agriculture.”

The 19,750-square-foot, $7.5 million building is being funded by annual distributions from the Kreher Farm Perpetual Charitable Trust to the LLCC Foundation and is expected to open in the spring semester of 2021.
A $100,000 gift from The BRANDT Foundation will allow more students to prepare for in-demand careers in agronomy and plant nutrition.

The gift creates a legacy of support through an endowed scholarship fund. Scholarships will be awarded to LLCC students pursuing an associate in applied science degree in precision agronomy/fertilizer or a certificate in fertilizer.

LLCC’s precision agronomy and fertilizer programs prepare students to use ever-evolving technology including GPS, robotics and drones to forecast, monitor, map and improve yields to help farmers maximize profits. BRANDT co-founder Evelyn Brandt Thomas symbolically presented a $100,000 check to Dr. Charlotte Warren, LLCC president, at BRANDT’s global headquarters in Springfield on June 29, 2020. “LLCC is an incredible asset for our community,” said Mrs. Thomas. “We have long supported the college and embraced their graduates.”

Continuing this momentum, the college is developing an accelerated precision ag program that will run throughout the year, graduate students faster and improve the utilization of the LLCC land lab.

The BRANDT Foundation creates legacy of support
LLCC launched the new Open Door – Workforce Equity Initiative Sept. 26, 2019, to provide minority and low-income individuals with career training that would lead to local employment in less than a year. Participants began their training programs in January 2020.

“Our mission, values and goals reflect our desire to provide all of our constituency with opportunities and supports for success,” said LLCC President Charlotte Warren, Ph.D. “The Open Door – Workforce Equity Initiative is an exciting opportunity to continue our mission.”

Director Michael Phelon said WEI is an extension of the Open Door program started in 2016 to mentor and support men of color. “With support of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, its Q5 initiative and community business leaders, Open Door participants have had opportunities for internships with a combination of academics and mentoring. We have now expanded that program to encompass the Workforce Equity Initiative with a goal of 75% of participants coming from the African-American community.”

Participants, at no cost, entered short-term programs including central sterile service technicians, certified medical assistant, CNA to certified medical assistant, dental assistant, electrocardiogram (ECG) technician, emergency medical technician (EMT) basic, pharmacy technician, phlebotomy technician, truck driver training, automotive technology and welding. In addition to free tuition and fees, participants received a stipend, transportation and child care assistance. WEI was funded through a $1 million grant as part of an $18.7 million Workforce Equity Initiative through the Illinois Community College Board.
LLCC was designated a Center for Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-2Y) at the 2019 CAE in Cybersecurity Symposium in Phoenix, Ariz. on Nov. 20, 2019. LLCC is one of only four community colleges in Illinois to receive such a designation.

The CAE-2Y designation recognizes the college’s contributions to training skilled workers with cyber defense expertise. It was awarded after LLCC met rigorous requirements set forth by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

“Cybersecurity is vital to the protection of our national information infrastructure,” said Dr. Vern Lindquist, vice president of academic services. “The CAE-2Y designation is a reflection of the college’s commitment to educate and prepare cybersecurity professionals for this growing field.”

Dr. Carmen Allen, professor of computer science, presented on LLCC’s competency-based education (CBE) cybersecurity grant and program at the National Science Foundation/Advanced Technology Education Conference in Washington, D.C. She has also served as a local community panelist and media expert discussing pertinent cybersecurity issues and the use of social media.

“Educating a new workforce with a focus on providing security for these assets is almost a national imperative,” says Lucinda Caughey, assistant professor of computer science. “Cybersecurity is a broad field with exponential growth because it covers individuals, organizations, confidentiality, the networks we use to transmit and the places we store it.”

Cybersecurity Facts

- LLCC maintains an online Cyber Center at www.llcc.edu/cyber-center to provide pertinent cybersecurity information to the community.
- LLCC is one of 10 partner colleges in a $4 million Department of Labor grant awarded to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to establish pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in information technology.
- The college offers degree and certificate programs in computer science, including an associate degree in computer systems and a certificate in cybersecurity.
- Skilled computer gamers have a new opportunity at LLCC with the addition of e-sports as an athletic offering in fall 2020.
- For those who want to enter the field of interactive, multimedia technology, LLCC also offers degrees and certificates in digital media design, digital app design and development, digital multimedia design, and digital web design and development.

www.llcc.edu/computer-science
A new home for Lincoln biographer’s collection

Determining a research library was its proper home, the LLCC Library donated a collection of 133 books owned by renowned Lincoln biographer Dr. Benjamin P. Thomas to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

“This is a collection that was donated to us some time ago and will add to the scholarship of those who study the life and times of Abraham Lincoln,” said Dr. Charlotte Warren, LLCC president. “I commend our library dean and staff who determined the collection is best suited to a research institution, and what better one than Springfield’s own Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.”

LLCC Library Dean Tammy Kuhn-Schnell explained that the value of the books lies “in the scholarship they bring to Dr. Thomas’s body of work. We feel the collection will be more widely used by patrons and researchers at the ALPLM, expanding access to those who seek it.”

Ian Hunt, acquisitions chief of the ALPLM, gratefully accepted the gift on Oct. 15, 2019. “In the world of Lincoln scholarship, Benjamin P. Thomas remains a significant figure. These books from his personal library include numerous handwritten notes and observances that could be invaluable to scholars seeking to understand his vision of President Lincoln. This gift will complement the Thomas family manuscript collections already at the presidential library. LLCC should be applauded for its outstanding generosity and commitment to scholarship.”

Kuhn-Schnell said the donation is indicative of the cooperative nature of the library community. “LLCC is pleased to contribute this collection to a renowned research institution, in addition to enhancing access to Thomas’s scholarship and materials.”

She said that Thomas lived in Springfield from 1932 until his death in 1956. During that time, he presided over the Abraham Lincoln Association’s research program and was a businessman and farmer. His wife, Salome, a Springfield native known for her generosity, donated his personal book collection to the LLCC Library prior to her death in 1999.

New tools for learning

LLCC’s aviation mechanics program acquired a Learjet 24B in November 2019, donated by Brandis Aviation in Taylorville, Ill. The jet is a valuable training aid for teaching the systems and structures of modern jet aircraft. The Learjet replaced a Cessna aircraft that is now used by the Springfield Airport Authority Public Safety Office for extrication and fire procedure training.

Anatomy and physiology students have a new and realistic piece of equipment on which to learn. The SynDaver, a hands-on, anatomical, flesh-like model, is composed of the same basic material as human tissues: water, salts and fibers (in this case, plant fibers).

Students are able to see what organs and other structures look like in the human body and feel realistic body tissues. LLCC is currently the only college or university in central Illinois to offer this tool.

Murray Gallery hosts Syrian refugee artwork


“The art celebrates the hope of a war-torn people who have left their home to try to create a better life for themselves and their families,” said Rihab Sawah, LLCC assistant professor of physics and exhibit organizer. “This community of artists is struggling to make a living in a country where they have no security or citizenship.”

She explained that several refugees brought a few art supplies with them from Syria. They painted on available material such as newspapers and cardboard boxes that were used for transporting food and tent fabric from the camp. Eventually, they held an art exhibit within the refugee camp. The UN Commission and International Relief and Development Organization became interested in the art projects and supported the refugees by bringing in art supplies and arranging for participation in art exhibits outside the refugee camp.

The exhibit, sponsored by the Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural Education, will travel around the country for five years, with new paintings added annually.
LLCC moves students forward during pandemic

The announcement of a global pandemic hit during LLCC’s spring recess in mid-March 2020. With conditions changing by the minute, faculty, staff and administration worked to quickly pivot and reimagine the college experience.

LLCC extended spring break for students an additional week so college personnel could regroup and develop alternative delivery methods for remote classes and services. During the week of transition, Academic Innovation and e-Learning assisted numerous faculty with instructional and technical needs. They developed web resources and instructions for faculty and students and checked out laptops to faculty and staff preparing to work remotely.

“I want to commend our faculty and staff who have worked intensely and tirelessly to get remote instruction and services to students up and running in a very short amount of time,” said President Charlotte Warren, Ph.D. “We pledge to continue the personal attention and excellent education for which we are known as we transition to new ways of operations during this challenging time.”

On Monday, March 23, LLCC launched all classes online or in remote formats, facilities remained closed and office staff began working remotely.

Over the next several months, continuous adjustments were made to move current and future students forward in their educational pursuits. A new virtual tour debuted on the LLCC website, and recruitment staff offered one-on-one virtual meetings. Student success coaches and financial aid advisors assisted students virtually, while Student Life kept students engaged with weekly virtual programs.

A series of social media videos featured faculty and students experiencing remote learning together. “We’ve all done what we do best, coloring outside the lines,” said Laura Anderson, assistant professor of art, in her class video. Another popular social media video featured college personnel thanking the health care heroes in the community and the LLCC students preparing to join their ranks.

LLCC’s Capital City Training Center offered a free online infection control class for health care workers (and later a contact tracing course), and Community Education offered 10 free, online classes. The Illinois Small Business Development Center at LLCC reached out to provide assistance to small business owners.

LLCC announced that all summer classes would be delivered online and students would pay no online fees. “LLCC wants to support students during these uncertain times,” said President Warren.

She also announced that science, career and technical classes would meet online for the first half of the summer term, with lab and hands-on learning planned for the second half. “It is vital that we keep students moving forward with transfer courses, healthcare and career programs that are so needed in our communities.”
LLCC announced a selection of four class formats for the fall semester, designed to provide students with safety and flexibility in choosing their preferred learning environments. Regular online fees have been reduced by half. “No matter the class format, all faculty will be prepared to move to distance offerings on very short notice should conditions warrant,” said Dr. Warren. “All of our decisions are being carefully evaluated with a focus on safety, published guidelines and student needs.”

Another May observance, the Student Recognition Ceremony, found a new format to ensure students were still honored for their outstanding academic and leadership achievements.

Summer enrollment, all online, rose 6.1% over the previous year. College for Kids courses also moved all online, including an expanded menu of popular Black Rocket S.T.E.A.M. Camps and culinary classes, with ingredient kits provided to participants.

Commencement, scheduled for May 15, transformed into a virtual ceremony debuting on YouTube and Facebook at the time the in-person ceremony had been scheduled. All graduates who participated in the Virtual Commencement received an LLCC-themed box mailed to their homes. Inside was a specially designed T-shirt, diploma cover, graduation tassel, any honor cords for which they qualified, a ceremony program and congratulatory letter from President Charlotte Warren.

As of late July 30, 2020, LLCC had distributed $689,614.15 in CARES Act funding to 1,815 students.
“This scholarship will allow me to take that extra step needed in my education to bring me to my goal. I’ve always wanted a career in which I was able to make a difference in a person’s life, and this was my opportunity to achieve that.”

Tyler Berola

The LLCC Foundation’s mission is to cultivate and steward charitable gifts to support LLCC students, programs and services.

Among those gifts, Dean “Robbie” Robert Jr., president and co-owner of Robert’s Seafood, donated 2.1 acres of land to the LLCC Foundation in November 2019 in memory of Lloyd Inslee Jr. The land, adjacent to the college, is valued at more than $100,000 and will be used for agriculture and horticulture education.

The Foundation assisted 102 students with emergency needs over the past year in the amount of $46,455. The Foundation’s first LLCC Giving Day in February exceeded its goal, raising $6,000 for the student emergency assistance fund, called the “Pay It Forward” fund.

A new scholarship was established in memory of Cinda Edwards, former LLCC Board Chair, and her husband, Frank Edwards, who died tragically in a plane crash Jan. 29, 2020. “Cinda and Frank were among LLCC’s biggest proponents and supporters, and Cinda was a proud graduate of our nursing program,” said LLCC President Charlotte Warren. “Cinda was known for her calm, decisive leadership and tireless support of our students, faculty and staff.” The Edwards Family Memorial Scholarship will be awarded yearly to an associate degree nursing student. The first recipient is Samantha McCarrel of Pawnee, Ill.

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New scholarships were established:

- **Stand Together Scholarship**
  Preference to Black students with financial need, any major

- **Sam Germann Aviation Scholarship**
  Airframe powerplant and aviation mechanics majors

- **Lorie Anne McDonald Scholarship**
  Education majors

- **Edwards Family Memorial Scholarship**
  Nursing majors

- **Kevin Cory Scholarship**
  Past/present members of the Central Illinois Boys & Girls Club, any major

- **Judith L. and Donald T. Anderson Scholarship**
  Agriculture majors

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Academic Highlights

Dual credit/enrollment courses were expanded with growing opportunities for high school students to have early access to college courses and resources. Partnering with 32 high schools in the LLCC district, the college served 1,790 dual-credit students in the fall and 1,781 students in the spring. Students earned 9,621.5 college credit hours.

Work-based learning opportunities expanded with automotive technology offering a new internship class, aviation mechanics offering two additional internship sites, and culinary/hospitality partnering with a cruise company for a new student internship.

A new hospitality curriculum directly aligns with industry-created competencies so students can graduate with a degree or certificate plus the industry-accepted credential of Certified Restaurant Professional from the National Restaurant Association.

A large wall mural (right), featuring a Sangamon County map from long ago, was installed in the offices of Sangamon County Sheriff Jack Campbell, an LLCC alum. The project was designed and produced by Thom Whalen, professor of art, and art student Jessica Le. Professor Whalen noted that Ryan Roberts, professor, librarian and interim dean of English and humanities, assisted by locating the map.

Athletic Highlights

LLCC approved the addition of a new co-ed team sport, esports, following the NJCAA sanctioning of the sport. The college hired its first esports head coach, Dalton McGhiey, who also coaches the District 186 Springfield Capitols esports team, to begin player recruitment and preparations for a spring 2021 semester. However, esports team sports would be postponed to the July 14, 2020 that most recruitment and preparations for a Capitols esports team, to begin player coaches the District 186 Springfield coach, Dalton McGhiey, who also

Women’s basketball player Katryel Clark was named an NJCAA Third Team All-American. This is the second time she has earned All-American status. Her jersey was also put on display in the Women’s National Basketball Hall of Fame.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker (center) recognized the hard work and determination of two LLCC students during his Feb. 19, 2020 state budget address. Lauren Hernandez, a student in the associate degree nursing program, and Brandon Ihlenfeldt, an HVACR student after completing his high school equivalency through LLCC Adult Education, are both MAP grant recipients. They are shown with Dr. Charlotte Warren, LLCC president, and Brian Durham, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board.

Dr. Claire Gordon, professor of communication, was honored with the Outstanding Advisor award at the annual Phi Theta Kappa Illinois Virtual Regional Conference. Also, two LLCC students were installed as officers for the Illinois Region. Hyler Pence will serve as president, the first time an LLCC student has achieved this honor. Julia Kiener will serve as central vice president. Cheyenne Kassebier, a recent LLCC graduate, was named Outstanding Chapter Officer. Three high achieving students, Ian Thompson, Jennifer Haggerty and Nicole Erwin-Gaynor, were recipients of the national PTK Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship.

The Loggers had 20 NJCAA Academic All-Americans and 24 Mid West Athletic Conference All-Academic Team members.

Kate Volk was named the 2020 recipient of the Dick Dhabalt Athlete of the Year Award. During the 2019 volleyball season, she helped lead the Loggers to 32 wins. Her season assist total led all of NJCAA volleyball and is second in LLCC history. She was also awarded NJCAA First Team All-American honors.

The Lamp student newspaper won 16 awards, five of them first place, at the virtual conference of the Illinois Community College Journalism Association. For the second year in a row, an LLCC journalism student won the association’s annual $1,000 scholarship. The recipient, Regina Ivy, served as editor of The Lamp.

LLCC was named a top 10 Illinois school for online learning by the Guide to Online Schools in its “2022 Best Online Community College Rankings by State.” Each community college was ranked by factors including retention rate, graduation rate, percentage of online enrollment data and the number of online associate degrees offered. LLCC was among the pioneers in online education in 1997 and maintains the highest level of accreditation for online teaching from the Higher Learning Commission.

LLCC was honored with the 2019 Volunteer of the Year award at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois Great Futures Gala Oct. 17. LLCC offered the Teen Career Launch Program for the third year in a row in 2019, where Boys and Girls Club members learned about a variety of career fields and participated in hands-on activities. Receiving the award were Marina Wirsing, career development professional; Dr. Deanna Blackwell, director, TRIO Student Support Services; Dr. Lesley Frederick, vice president, Student Services; who are shown with Tiffany Mathis, CEO and executive director, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Illinois.

The Association of School Business Officials International awarded LLCC the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 19th year in a row.

LLCC was honored as “Best Continuing Education” provider in the 2020 Illinois Times Best of Springfield edition.