

# Lewis and Clark Community College Highlights Role in \$27.2B Statewide Economic Impact, Supporting More Than 324,000 Jobs

## New Study Reinforces Value of Illinois Community Colleges

Illinois Community College Board data shows that Illinois' community colleges are a powerful driver of the state's economy, generating \$27.2 billion in total economic impact and supporting 324,273 jobs statewide, according to a newly released economic impact study.

The report, *The Economic Value of the Community Colleges of Illinois*, reflects fiscal year 2023-24 data and underscores the critical role community colleges — including Lewis and Clark Community College — play in workforce development, business growth, and economic mobility across the state.

"This report affirms what we see every day at Lewis and Clark Community College. When education is accessible, flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and employers, it becomes a powerful driver of long-term regional impact," said Lewis and Clark President Ken Trzaska. "Our focus is on creating meaningful opportunities — pathways that lead to good jobs, economic mobility and stronger communities."

The study finds that Illinois community colleges contribute to the economy through operations, construction, student spending, and — most significantly — the long-term success of their graduates. Alumni impact alone accounts for \$25 billion in added income to the state economy.

"Illinois community colleges are one of the smartest investments we can make in our state's future," said ICCB Executive Director Brian

Durham. "This study makes it clear — our colleges are not only transforming lives through education, but they are also strengthening Illinois' economy, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, and delivering real returns for taxpayers and communities across the state."

### LEWIS AND CLARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE LOCAL IMPACT

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, Lewis and Clark Community College added \$210.1 million in income to the regional economy — equal to approximately 1 percent of the region's total gross regional product (GRP). The college supports economic growth in the LC Service Region, which includes 77 zip codes across 10 counties, through direct expenditures and additional spending generated by students and local businesses. LC's impact supported 2,864 jobs, meaning one out of every 69 jobs in the region is supported by the activities of LC and its students.

Operations spending by Lewis and Clark resulted in \$28.5 million in added income to the regional economy, equivalent to 605 jobs within the Service Region. Spending by relocated and retained students from the college added an additional \$1.5 million in regional income, while LC alumni generated another \$180.1 million in added income through employment in the regional workforce. In FY 2023-24, Illinois invested \$68.1 million to support LC, which is projected to generate \$300.5 million in added economic output over the course of students' working lives.

### STATEWIDE IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Key findings from the study include:

- \$27.2 billion total economic impact in Illinois

- 324,273 jobs supported — equal to 1 out of every 26 jobs statewide

- \$1.8 billion generated through college operations
- \$385.5 million added through student spending
- \$25 billion in economic impact from alumni contributions

- 538,541 students served during FY 2023-24

The study also highlights strong returns on investment:

- Students: \$4.30 in lifetime earnings for every \$1 invested
- Taxpayers: \$1.30 return for every \$1 invested
- Society: \$6.70 return for every \$1 invested

"This report clearly demonstrates that Illinois community colleges are among the most effective investments our state can make," said Jim Reed, president of the Illinois Community College Trustee's Association. "The return is not only measured in economic impact, but in stronger communities, a more competitive workforce, and expanded opportunities for students across Illinois. Our colleges deliver value at every level — for students, for taxpayers, and for the future of our state."

In addition to economic impact, the study reinforces the role community colleges play in advancing workforce readiness, increasing earning potential, and improving quality of life. The average associate degree graduate earns \$8,400 more annually than a high school graduate.

Illinois community colleges — including Lewis and Clark Community College — serve as critical partners to business and industry, providing a steady pipeline of skilled workers while supporting regional economies through job creation and increased productivity.



## Culture and policy combine at Native American Summit

### The event promotes Native issues and connects people to lawmakers

By NICOLE HYTREK  
*Capitol News Illinois*

Drums and bells echoed as people dressed in regalia sang and danced traditional dances at the fourth annual Native American Summit at the Illinois Capitol.

The theme for the gathering was community, awareness and connection.

People from several Native American tribes gathered in the Capitol Rotunda on Tuesday to raise awareness and share information about important issues for Native communities.

"We have so many roots, so many connections, not only to Illinois, but to our own tribal nations that we are here making our voice heard. And you all are making our voice heard," said Andrew Johnson, a citizen of Cherokee Nation and director of advocacy for the Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative. **Native agenda this session**

CAICC isn't pursuing specific legislation this session, so the Summit was focused on meeting with lawmakers and reminding them "we're still here and we'll always be here," said Marne Smiley, a member of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, and a facilitator for CAICC. Last year, CAICC advocated for a bill banning Native American mascots in Illinois schools. The bill passed through the House but did not advance in the Senate.

"We're here today to make sure that our interests are visible in the decisions made by our legislators, that we can build relationships with them, work towards healing historic harms, and that together, in partnership, we can work to build

positive futures and ensure that native families of Illinois can thrive," said Jasmine Gurneau, a member of the Oneida and Menominee tribe and the president of CAICC.

Priority issues for CAICC include allowing tribal languages to satisfy education requirements for learning a foreign language, establishing a Native American Caucus in both chambers of the General Assembly to specifically discuss policies regarding Native Americans, and working with the state to research affordable housing and homelessness. There are nine total issues listed on CAICC's website.

Gurneau said Native issues aren't different from those of other minority groups, particularly when it comes to disparities in accessing healthcare, affordable housing, education and dealing with the criminal justice system.

Native issues are different, Gurneau said, because tribal nations are sovereign, but Native Americans are still considered U.S. citizens. A long history of broken treaties, illegal landgrabs and forced assimilation has led to a variety of cultural considerations CAICC would like the General Assembly to consider.

That includes ensuring the state gathers better data about public health for Native Americans and the legal system follows federal requirements for prioritizing Native placements in state child custody proceedings involving Native American children.

"We'll be sharing our song and dance, hopes and dreams, and asking for some specific ways for legislators to not just see us, but to act and move our concerns forward in the legislative process," she said.

### The Native American Summit

Dancing was an important part of the Summit and

Maria Barrera, a member of the Cherokee tribe, said she appreciated being able to share her culture.

"It just brings us back to connecting with our roots, and we don't really get to have that all the time," she said.

Barrera danced the Jingle Dress Dance, a dance for healing and prayer. Jingle dresses are traditional regalia that feature rows of metal cones attached to skirts and, sometimes, to shoulders. The sound of the cones striking each other is said to produce a healing sound.

"If somebody wants to pray for somebody — somebody who's sick or whatever reason they have — they would just offer us some tobacco, because that's the traditional way to show respect and to ask for something," she said. "So we would dance and with each cone that goes on, a different prayer goes into that dress."

Tevelee Gudino, a member of the Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache tribe, said the singing and dancing was always spiritual and moving, especially at the Capitol.

"Whenever we hear the drum, it's the heartbeat of Mother Earth, and that resonates in all of us," she said. "We don't hear it as often because we don't have moments that we can do that. But when we do it's really, it touches the soul. It's kind of replenishing, and it brings on a lot of spirituality and connection to our ancestors."

In the past, the General Assembly has passed laws mandating Native American history education, culturally appropriate treatment for Native American remains, dress codes allowing cultural attire at graduation ceremonies and the land transfer to the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation.

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

By VALERIE BELUSKO  
*Illinois Extension Community and Economic Development Educator*

Mental health can present in both physical and mental ways, and in our bustling, hustling world, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. Every unit within University of Illinois Extension has identified this as a real problem through local assessment processes and has recognized it as a critical need for our communities. We are actively addressing this (both directly and indirectly) within our community plan for the next three years. Many programs at Extension will tie in a mental health focus, either directly or indirectly.

According to the World Health Organization, "mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with stresses in life while realizing their abilities and contributing to their community." Mental health is a multifaceted spectrum that includes our emotional, psychological, and social

well-being. At Extension, we want to make sure you have the tools to build good mental health. Our programs utilize research-based approaches to support mental health well-being in the following ways:

### Social connection and belonging.

Extension programs create opportunities for social connection and belonging by bringing people together to learn, share, and connect. These efforts help reduce isolation, build relationships, and strengthen community ties.

### Physical wellness foundations.

Some Extension programs focus specifically on physical wellness by helping individuals learn how to properly fuel their bodies through nutritious food, adequate hydration, and restorative sleep. These programs support both physical and mental health, as nutrition and quality rest directly influence energy levels, mood, and the ability to manage stress.

### Connection to nature and

### outdoor well-being.

Connecting people to nature can be important in supporting emotional regulation and well-being. Time spent outdoors has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and help individuals feel more grounded and present, thereby supporting overall mental health.

### Communication, empathy, and inclusive understanding.

We offer programming that strengthens understanding of how people communicate and recognize that individuals have different needs. This programming promotes empathy, improves relationships, and supports the development of inclusive and respectful communities.

Extension is committed to supporting mental health and well-being through a variety of engaging programs. We invite you to stay connected through our newsletter, social media, and website to learn more about upcoming opportunities designed to support you and your community.

**DO YOU NEED IT LAMINATED?**  
Enquirer~Democrat  
**854-2534**

**Electrolux**  
Sales and Service  
**GARY MOTLEY**  
1-800-346-2060

**Illinois Valley Senior Citizens Menu**  
Carlinville 217-716-2337 • Benld 217-835-3174

<b>Monday, May 18</b> Fish Patty, WG Bun, Scalloped Potatoes, Asparagus, Pears	<b>Tuesday, May 19</b> Chicken Spaghetti, WG Garlic Bread, Tossed Salad, Peaches	<b>Wednesday, May 20</b> Hamburger, WG Bun, Baked Beans, Tater Tots, Plums	<b>Thursday, May 21</b> Ham Salad, WG Bread, Broccoli Cheese Soup, 6 Bean Salad, Fruit Cocktail	<b>Friday, May 22</b> Roasted Turkey WG Dinner Roll, Baked Sweet Potato, Green Beans, Orange Fluff
--	--	--	---	--

*Meal reservations must be made by 11:00 a.m. on the day BEFORE you wish to receive a meal*