

EMPOWER ERIE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE NOW!

Q: Why do we need a community college?

A: Competitive advantage. *The reality is that community colleges are increasingly viewed as the cornerstone of workforce development*—likely one of the reasons every city in the country the size of Erie or larger has a community college focused on producing work-ready employees.

In the increasingly global economy, Erie competes with communities around the country to attract new businesses. Lacking a community college puts us at a clear disadvantage. For instance, *when Amazon held its well-publicized search for a second headquarters, a non-negotiable issue was that the location had a community college that could produce a steady stream of work-ready employees.* You only need to do a quick Google search to see that Amazon's stance is the rule, not the exception.

Without a community college, Erie is falling behind.

Q: How will a community college help local employers?

A: Recently, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry's 28th Economic Survey found *that the shortage of qualified and skilled workers was cited by most job creators as the number one issue affecting their ability to stay competitive in the global economy.* We are already seeing the impact of this in Erie County where a lack of qualified applicants, compounded by an aging and retiring workforce, is challenging our ability to meet customer demand and remain competitive. To continue to grow and thrive, Erie County businesses and organizations are in dire need of a well-trained workforce.

Community colleges partner closely with local businesses and organizations to make sure the classes and training being offered prepares students with the skills needed to get hired, succeed, and build a prosperous career with an Erie County employer. With a community college everyone in Erie County wins—from North East to North Springfield, and everywhere in between.



FAQS: ECCC BENEFITS OUR ECONOMY



Q: Why do you think a community college offers the best opportunity for workforce development?

A: In 2018, the State Board of Education adopted a degree attainment goal for Pennsylvania. This goal stated that in the state, 60 percent of the population ages 25-64 should hold a postsecondary degree or industry recognized credential by 2025, with a focus on closing attainment gaps for historically underrepresented populations. *While nearly 30% of the nation has a bachelor's degree or higher, only 26.1% of the Erie County population does, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. It's also telling that 21.1% of the U.S. population has taken some college classes, while just 16.2% of Erie County residents fall into that category.* An educated workforce improves community and quality of life for all, not just the person holding the degree.

A community college is seen as benefiting a variety of groups, especially adults with a high school diploma or displaced workers seeking additional training (90 percent of respondents), recent high school graduates (86 percent of respondents) and adults in need of basic skills training (84 percent of respondents in this category).

Q13. From your perspective, what level of benefit do you believe the following groups would receive from a community college in Erie County?

NOTE: Totals might not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

	High	Medium	Low or none
Adults with a HS diploma or displaced workers seeking additional training	71%	19%	9%
Recent high school graduates (2014-2016)	62%	24%	10%
High school students (dual enrollment and/or better career planning opportunities)	60%	23%	13%
Adults in need of basic skills training	59%	25%	14%
Out-of-school youth ages 17-24 who have not earned a HS diploma	46%	23%	25%
Retirees (55 and older)	16%	38%	41%

SOURCE: Empower Erie Community College Feasibility Study

Q: Will the community college be an economic boost to Erie County?

A: Absolutely. Respected labor market analysis firm Emsi conducted an economic impact study that identified a range of ways that a community college will drive growth and greater prosperity in Erie County. A few of those include:

1. Leasing and eventual renovating or construction of the community college will stimulate more than \$44 million of economic growth in Erie supporting jobs, taxes, and the local economy now and in the future.
2. By year five of operation, the college will create as many as 200 part-

FAQS: ECCC BENEFITS OUR ECONOMY

and full-time jobs, adding more than \$6.5 million in taxable income to the local economy.

3. A community college combats “brain drain,” helping teach and keep local talent at home. Plus \$6.3 million in income will be added to our economy when students rent, shop, and play in Erie.
4. One community college student can expect to make \$6,100 more per year after earning a degree or professional certification – that’s \$245,000 more in earnings over a 40-year career. By 2030 alone, the projected 5,749 alumni of ECCC will collectively add \$11 million in total income annually to the county economy.

Data comes from “A Ripple Effect for Erie County: The Economic Impact of a Stand-Alone Community College in Erie County”

Q: What Erie County businesses and organizations are behind the plan and why?

A: Many local employers are facing a crisis: Their longtime employees are nearing retirement age and there is a shortage of skilled workers to fill the void. ***A community college is in a unique position to partner with local businesses and manufacturers to make sure that they are preparing students to succeed in jobs that are open today, as well as the jobs of the future.*** Both business and labor leaders have voiced strong support for the community college as they see the potential for it to benefit all sectors of our community and drive job creation and economic growth.



UPMC Hamot



Leaders from the Erie Chamber of Commerce, as well as several local manufacturing executives testified in favor of the community college before the State Board of Education. Two of Erie County’s largest employers, Erie Insurance Group and UPMC Hamot, have publicly voiced their support of Erie County Community College. Many other major local employers as well as small business owners have shown support for the plan as well.

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Q: How is community college different than the schools we have here?

A: With Erie County's poverty rate above state and national averages, many local citizens can't afford to go to four-year colleges or expensive private trade schools. Compounding the challenge is that local workers who are displaced or seeking a pathway to a better job don't have the time or money to go to a traditional four-year college.

The affordability, accessibility and adaptability of a community college addresses all those challenges, allowing residents from all 38 municipalities, regardless of age, background or circumstance, to further their education in a way that fits their lifestyle, schedule and budget.

1. Accessibility: Right now, you would have to drive 100 miles to get to the closest community college. ECCC will be close to home for all Erie County residents. And you could attend ECCC regardless of past academic record or other barriers that often prevent people from furthering their education and developing new skills. Often community college offers an affordable option to prepare people to succeed at four-year institutions where they can earn bachelor's degrees.

2. Affordability: Community college is the most affordable way to get a degree. At \$105 per credit, ECCC will be the most affordable option for Erie County residents, significantly less than tuition at two- and four-year institutions or private trade schools. Charges for the 14 community colleges, as of 2018-19, range from \$100 to \$180.25 per credit.

3. Adaptability: Community colleges are unique in that they work closely with local businesses to tailor curriculum and course offerings to the specific workforce needs, now and in the future. As the needs change, curriculum can change along with it to ensure that the community college produces work-ready graduates who will stay in Erie.



FAQS: ECCC BENEFITS OUR STUDENTS

Q: What types of degrees and training will the community college offer?

A: Students attending Erie County Community College will be able to earn two-year associate degrees and professional certifications—or just take classes that interest them or enhance their skills or knowledge.

YEAR ONE

WHEN IT FIRST OPENS, THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE WILL OFFER 10 ASSOCIATE DEGREE MAJORS:

Accounting	Associate of Arts	Associate of Science
Management	Computer-aided Design	Information Services
Automation Engineering Technology	Machining and Manufacturing	Management and Entrepreneurship
Medical Assistant	Network Systems	Surgical Technology
Welding		

YEARS 2-5

ADDITIONAL ASSOCIATE DEGREE AND PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS WILL BE OFFERED:

Environmental Technology	Nursing (Long Term, Home Care)	Medical Coding (Physician Office)
Interactive Digital Media	Human Services	Digital Arts
Tourism Computer Security	Web Development	Counseling
Sports and Fitness Management	Industrial Maintenance Technologies	Quality Assurance Specialist
Public Safety	Sustainable Agriculture	Logistics
Journalism and Communication	Diagnostic Medical Sonography	Electrical Engineering Technologies
Public Administration and Hospitality	Software and Mobile Application Development	Hardware Maintenance and Information Systems

Q: How can you be sure that the other colleges in the area don't already have this covered?

A: Each of the colleges in our region do a great job of meeting the needs of their students and filling specific niches for higher education. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Education specifically determined that Erie County's population currently "is not adequately served by established institutions of higher learning" and that the Erie County Community College would fill in the gaps.

A major focus when establishing the community college plan was to limit duplication with the educational offering that already exists in the region.

FAQS: ECCC BENEFITS OUR STUDENTS

Specifically, the goal of this effort was to avoid duplication of existing program offerings unless those programs were not readily accessible to the population we determined as benefitting from an Erie County Community College offering because of cost, accessibility, and number of enrollment slots available in existing programs or other limiting factors.

Further, there was a thorough review of continuing education offerings currently being provided by industry groups, secondary education institutions and propriety institutions, which are delivered on a not-for-college-credit basis. This review was to further ensure that the community college would not duplicate current offerings.



Q: Doesn't the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College offer everything we need in terms of community college education?

A: Not even close. NPRC can be a great option for certain students, but it does not, and never will have the capabilities to provide the post-secondary education of the **scope and scale that is necessary to meet the need for skilled and well-trained workers that local businesses and organizations need to grow and thrive.**

Beyond that, NPRC is not listed as one of the 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania because they don't have to follow any of the requirements set for in Community College regulations, including:

- They are not required to keep the tuition cost to below 1/3 of the operating cost of the college. By comparison, NPRC also costs \$185 per credit charge compared to ECCC's affordable \$105 per credit for an education in a bricks-and-mortar college setting right here in Erie County.
- They are not required to fund the acquisition of facilities, as community colleges are required to provide building of certain facilities within the first 10 years.
- They use a video technology method versus the traditional and successful community college method of instruction, which is vital to most technical training.
- They are dependent on other entities for facilities and labs, which are not always available.

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Q: What is Empower Erie and why do they care about a community college?

A: There have been several attempts in the past to establish a community college that fell short for one reason or another. Many residents in our community who understand the importance of a community college to potential students and the local economy refused to give up hope.

Empower Erie is a nonprofit organization with the sole mission of getting Erie County the community college it deserves. In late 2016, Ron DiNicola and Erie County Councilman Andre Horton launched the nonprofit to develop the complex and detailed application necessary for state approval, and to raise awareness about the need for a community college in Erie County.

Empower Erie is an all-volunteer organization with a board of directors that has donated thousands of hours to the effort. Empower Erie works with local and regional professionals to tap their expertise to help propel the mission forward and compensates those professionals through funding provided by a grant secured through The Erie Community Foundation, details below. A list of board members is available at www.EmpowerErie.org.

Q: I heard we are already paying for the other community colleges in the state. Is that true?

A: Yes. If you pay state taxes, then you are among the Erie County residents who have been helping to fund the 14 public community colleges that share an estimated \$292 million in state funding annually. ***We've been paying the bill to the tune of tens of millions of dollars for decades, while not reaping any of the benefits.*** That's not fair, and we intend to change it so Erie County residents have access to the many advantages of a community college right here at home.

Q: How much have Erie County taxpayers paid for the community college so far

A: Erie County Council committed \$60,000 to study the feasibility of the community college, and later approved an additional \$15,000 to communicate the findings of this study to the public and others. ***This total of \$75,000 amounts to 27 cents per resident in Erie County since 2016.***

In 2017, ***Empower Erie received a \$3.7 million grant commitment for the college from The Erie Community Foundation***, which oversees charitable funds of local philanthropists committed to improving Erie County. The bulk of monies for the grant originated from the Susan Hirt Hagen Fund for Transformational Philanthropy and a portion came from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. Empower Erie has used that money

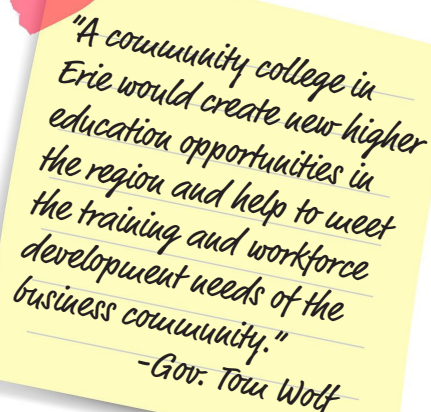
FAQS: ECCC BY THE NUMBERS

to prepare the application, respond to state requests, and educate the public, and will also use it to pay for start-up costs for the college.

Q: Will the ECCC raise my taxes in Erie County?

A: No real estate tax increases will be necessary to fund the community college.

The community college will be funded by Erie County receiving a share of an estimated \$292 million in state funding that is now distributed among 14 existing community colleges. In an October 2019 letter, Governor Tom Wolf proclaimed that the state can support a 15th community college in Erie without impacting the funding of the existing 14 community colleges.



"A community college in Erie would create new higher education opportunities in the region and help to meet the training and workforce development needs of the business community."
-Gov. Tom Wolf-

Additionally, funding will be provided through a portion of the \$5.5 million in gaming funds that Erie County receives annually from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

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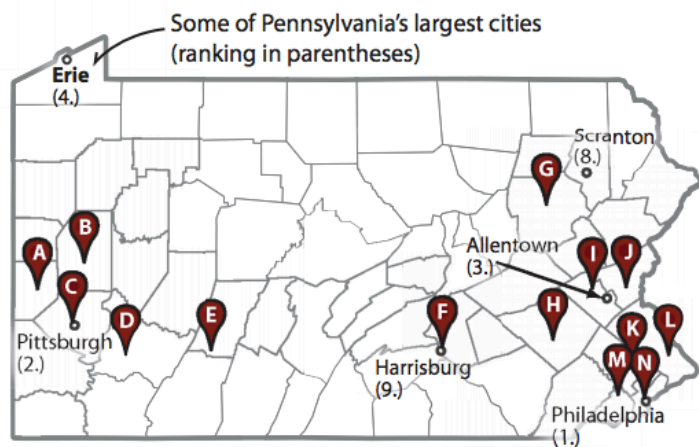
Q: Why doesn't Erie County have a community college?

A: Great question. We should. Back in 1963, state lawmakers passed the Community College Act that stated that a community college would be located within reasonable commuting distance of all Pennsylvanians. Today, Pennsylvania's community colleges are headquartered in 14 cities across the Commonwealth and **Erie remains the only largest city of its size in the U.S. without a community college.** Not to mention, local taxpayers have paid millions to erect and operate those colleges—colleges likely none of us have stepped foot into. We aim to change that and get our fair share of an estimated \$292 million in annual state funding.

State's existing community colleges vs. its most-populous cities

PENNSYLVANIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- A. Community College of Beaver County
- B. Butler County Community College
- C. Community College of Allegheny County
- D. Westmoreland County Community College
- E. Pennsylvania Highlands Community College
- F. HACC – Central Pennsylvania's Community College
- G. Luzerne County Community College
- H. Reading Area Community College
- I. Lehigh Carbon Community College
- J. Northampton Community College
- K. Montgomery County Community College
- L. Bucks County Community College
- M. Delaware County Community College
- N. Community College of Philadelphia



SOURCES: Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges; Watchdog.org

FAQS: ECCC HISTORY IN HARRISBURG

Q: Has the state Department of Education reviewed the community college plan?

A: They have, and we passed with flying colors. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) conducted a thorough review of our application and found that **our plan clears all the legislative requirements** under state law:

- We have demonstrated the need for a community college.
- We have demonstrated our ability to adequately fund the community college.
- Our population currently "is not adequately served by established institutions of higher learning."

Erie County's application has been under review for more than two years, and a special committee in November recommended moving the plan to the full State Board of Education. A board hearing is scheduled for March 18 in Erie, after which we are hopeful that we receive the green light to start preparing to open the community college in 2021.

Q: Why is Senator Joseph Scarnati, whose Forest County District is far from Erie County, fighting against ECCC approval?

A: You would have to ask Sen. Scarnati to get a full answer, but here is what we can conclude. Sen. Scarnati was a key champion of establishing the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, which primarily offers distance learning video conferencing classes to students in nine counties, including Erie County. The Erie County Community College, which would serve the county with the biggest population in the NPRC's 9-county region, is likely viewed as a potential competitive threat to the NPRC. In fact, the Senator stated this at a recent state Board of Education meeting. We think that the NPRC is a great asset for northwestern Pennsylvania and that both Erie County Community College and NPRC can thrive, and even work together to assure that as many people as possible have access to affordable educational opportunities. Sen. Scarnati sees things differently and has considerable political clout in Harrisburg that poses a threat to our plan. We are committed to not allowing that to happen.

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