

Community college gains follow enrollment losses

Iowa Lakes Community College leads Iowa in enrollment increase

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

Iowa's community colleges have dealt with shrinking enrollment until this year, and Iowa Lakes Community College leads the state with its enrollment increase. The Iowa Department of Education recently released its enrollment data for the state's community college in an annual enrollment report.

For 2022, the 15 community colleges collectively saw an uptick of a half percentage point. Considering eight of the 15 schools actually continued a drop in enrollment, that's fairly miraculous. The Iowa Dept. of Education called the increase a "slight rebound." The 2022 Fall Enrollment Report stated that enrollment increased by a net 502 students from last year — a total community college enrollment in Iowa of 82,251. Enrollment has declined each year since 2010 when it peaked at 106,697 students.

The increased enrollment is seen chiefly in career-tech fields. Focusing on career and technical education, the increase in enrollment across the 15 colleges was 3.2 percent.

Iowa Lakes Community College has a total enrollment of 1,988 students with 872 full time (43.9% and 1,116 part time (56.1%) with the highest enrollment increase across the colleges at 8.5%.

Iowa Lakes students registered for 18,919 credit hours this fall with an average course load for full time students of 15.2 credit hours, the second-highest among the 15 Iowa community colleges.

Iowa Lakes Community College continues to attract students to its dual enrollment programs. Numerous Estherville Lincoln Central and North Union students at-

tend ILCC for dual enrollment. In fact, two-thirds of Iowa community college students attend part time with those numbers made up chiefly of high school dual enrollment students. Most joint enrollment students attend through contractual agreements in which the school districts pay tuition. Students participating in joint enrollment programs at Iowa community colleges account for 45.1 percent of enrollment. High school students accounted for almost 200,000 credit hours at the states' community colleges. On average, students in dual enrollment classes enrolled in 5.3 credit hours.

"Increasing community college enrollment bucks the national trend and recent historical trends," Jeremy Varner, administrator for the Iowa Department of Education's Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation, said. "Even with a strong labor market, we are seeing increasing enrollment, particularly in career-technical fields which lead to high-demand careers."

Iowa has invested heavily in industrial-tech education with career academies and state financial aid programs like the Last Dollar Scholarship, which reduces the student or family contribution to the student's tuition to zero — added after scholarships, grants, and other non-loan financial aid. Career academies reach students in high school with technical education that links with postsecondary career programs that get students into the workforce faster and with full training.

While fewer students enrolled in online courses this fall compared to last year, the numbers are above pre-pandemic levels. A total of 35,576 students enrolled in at least one

FALL ENROLLMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Enrollment
82,251
students



0.6%
increase
from last fall



Enrollment
increased at **7** colleges
and decreased at **8**



34.1%
of students enrolled
full time

online course, a 4.0 percent decrease from the previous year. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, 33,655 students enrolled in at least one online class.

Transfer studies have taken off in 2022. During National Student Transfer Week in October, the Iowa Dept. of Education reported that nearly 5,000 (4,857) community college students enrolled in transfer majors, an increase of over 1,000 students compared with

transfer enrollment for Fall, 2021. This increase ties into part-time enrollment reaching an all-time record high of 65.9 percent of total fall enrollment and an increase in joint enrollment for high school students. The increase in transfer majors has happened because of an authorization over the last five years with the Iowa Association of Community College presidents. Community colleges can now adopt transfer majors. The

most popular transfer majors are Business Administration and Management, Psychology, Education and Teaching, Criminal Justice, Biology, Kinesthesiology, Social work, Engineering and Art. The transfer major allows the students to begin their program-specific coursework in their Associate of Arts and/or Associate of Science that will transfer seamlessly into related majors at four-year colleges

and universities. It's designed to help students save money by having all or the vast majority of their Associate degree credits transfer to the four year institution they attend.

About nine of every ten Iowa community college students are from Iowa. Residents of other states accounted for 7.9 percent of enrolled students and foreign nationals comprised 1.2 percent according to the report.

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The praise team was taking bets on how much time would pass before it all blew up.

"But now we're in love," Yackle said. The love the two musicians are in is the platonic love known to the Greeks as phileo — brotherly, sisterly, familial love. The musical groups at the church are like a family, both Blum and Yackle said.

"It is absolutely true of any group I've played for. It is a family. I think if I was stranded on the road or I had some big problem, I can think of five or six people who would say, 'I'll help you. I'll come out and get you,'" Yackle said.

Blom said, "It's because of Randy's talent. We've had a trombone player, clarinet player, an oboe and a flute player. We've had two different trumpet players who have been here. When you look at the people that have come from a distance — from Mankato and Fairmont and other places. [Yackle] has connections."

Like other churches, UMC's Sunday School program has experienced declining numbers. The pandemic and a large family relocating haven't helped. Yackle said he is directing a dozen kids for the Christmas program — some coming back just to be in the program. The program is December 11, and member

Ryan Ross, a longtime Sunday School teacher who's put three kids through UMC Sunday School is also singing. If Ross joined choir he'd fill in the second generation. Ryan's father, Denny Ross is a choir member and his daughter, Quimby, has sung in the choir as well. Other multi-generational families have provided music for the church. Steve Danielson's mother sang in choir, both of Nancy Anderson's parents, and others who are gone but have children who themselves have been in choir for at least five decades.

"The music program is going really well, and we want to keep it from dwindling and pushing in the other direction. We've picked up new choir members," Blom said. It's not necessary to be a member of UMC to sing with the choir. For singers who miss being in a choir, this one practices Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. and Sunday morning to run through just before worship at 9 a.m.

"If you want to sing in a choir we welcome anybody who has some musical background and loves to sing, and if you can't make it on Wednesday night, just come on Sunday morning and sing with us," Blom said.

The church installed a new organ last spring. Yackle said the church's commitment to

find and spend money on music makes the difference.

"It's such a nice, musical church because of the commitment from the church. They sent the grand piano to be fixed, and it's fixed beautifully. James [Grebe] comes in to tune the pianos," Yackle said.

Blom told Yackle, "We are lucky to have you," which Yackle followed up with, "I'm lucky to be there. I mean that sincerely."

Yackle has been part of nu-

merous community theaters in the area. He's currently directing a cantata in Fairmont. He said there were maybe three days in December that he isn't booked, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

"Part of my theater background that I like to apply to church is the background music behind baptisms, behind prayers, behind graduate honors and first communions to add to the experience," Yackle said.

"It's truly fun working here. The choir is fulfilling to play for and the congregation is so supportive and appreciative of the music. I like to bring classical themes in. I think a beautiful peace of, say, Mozart is a miracle within itself. It's not exactly written for the church, but it all comes from God. That's where talent comes from, and I think God has the good taste to appreciate what's sung and played in the context of worship," Yackle said.

The singing doesn't just

come from the choir, either, Yackle said.

"I think this is one of the churches I've been in where the congregation actually sings, and that's fun because then I can play hard with them and try to play with this great energy," Yackle said.

Estherville UMC is located at 102 S 8th St. in Estherville. All are welcome to Christmas Eve Worship Dec. 24 at 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.

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COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS PROJECT

CLIENTS OF UDMO

and those recommended by clergy members of the Estherville Area Ministerial Association are invited to participate in the **Community Christmas Project**. To participate, clients must secure a coupon from UDMO, and then present it to Duhigg Center on **Tuesday, November 29th, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM** to select Christmas gifts donated by businesses, clubs, organizations, individuals, and churches.



The Estherville FFA has proposed raising funds for an Ag Learning Center that would look something like this.

FFA, Continued from Page 1A

members. The center would help relate students to educational standards for the following classes: Animal Science; Survey of the Animal Industry; and Livestock Evaluation.

The plan is to house 10 goats in the center with students responsible for the chores needed to care for them.

"Goats are the test run," said Estherville FFA President River Rasmussen. "If fundraising goes well, we're definitely open to expansion."

Expansion could include aquaculture, raised garden beds, and other agricultural facilities to increase relevance to agricultural education standards.

Estherville FFA members will have the opportunity to house their projects at the center in a first-come-first-serve basis.

Budget

The fundraising goal of \$100,000 would fund the project in its entirety with some

room to spare. The most important piece is the shed, a 10-by-50-foot structure with a 10-by-50-foot overhang. The structure will be placed on a concrete slab. The indoor portion will be heated with an automatic water system installed.

The facility will also include electricity with security, and fence and parking space.

The site will have to be rezoned to agriculture by the city. Sewage, insulation and heating are considered a luxury cost.

The FFA is waiting for information on the insurance costs.

Advisor Matt Schroeder said the project is unique to Iowa.

Superintendent Tara Paul and the school board both gave the project support.

"I think it's awesome," said board member Jeff Soper. "I think it's a great project for the community and a great service project for the group," said Paul.

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Estherville Police Department to temporarily increase their staffing from 12 to 13 with the understanding that they would not fill the next patrol vacancy.

Bret Mace submitted a letter dated Nov. 7 to the council announcing his retirement from the Estherville Power Plant effective Jan. 3 with Jan. 4 the first day of five weeks of accrued vacation. Mace stated in the letter, "I have all the confidence that [the other staff members] are ready to continue at the plant...I feel very proud of all the changes and improvements made over this time period. I feel comfort in knowing I am leaving the plant in better condition for those following me than when I arrived."

Mace has been power plant operator for about 20 years.

The council also approved a Capital Improvement Plan from the city's airport commission. City clerk Beth Burton explained that the CIP is a wish list for the airport.

The council also received what mayor Kenny Billings called a clean bill of health from its auditors at Williams & Company. Daniel Dekker submitted the letter stating there were no findings in the audit — a status Dekker said was very good.

The council also set a public

hearing for its Dec. 5 meeting to rezone a property at 903 S. 19th Street currently zoned as Heavy Industrial but used for years as a farmstead by Joe and Jodi Grieg. The property would be rezoned to Agriculture. Joe and Jodi Grieg will be out of town on the hearing date, but their son, Clayton, said he would be present.

The council also set its Dec. 19 meeting for the time of a public hearing on a budget amendment. Burton said some of the items that came in over budget or were not included in the original 2022-2023 budget or an earlier amendment were a replacement overhead door for the police department, public works curb, gutter and resurfacing items, and adjustments to the line items for dam mitigation, facade grants, tax increment financing, and meters.

The budget also did not estimate high enough costs for the new pool, and a transfer is proposed to cover those costs as well, Burton said.

The council also reviewed an update to the city's safety policy manual. Clayton said the adjustments were sent to the city's insurer and "they were happy with it."

The next meeting of the Estherville city council will be Monday, Dec. 5 at 5 p.m. in the council chambers of city hall.



THANK YOU
I would like to thank the voters of Emmet County for their support in the November 8th Election.

I look forward to serving Emmet County for the next four years.

Thanks again,
John Pluth

Paid for by John Pluth for County Supervisor

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