



**Sauk Valley**  
Community College



**SVCC**

2024 REPORT TO THE  
**COMMUNITY**



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Sauk Valley Community College is proud to be your community college. SVCC's faculty and staff are dedicated to improving the lives of our students and enriching our communities.**

Our strategic plan renews the college's commitment to make the Sauk Valley a great place to live, a great place to work and raise a family, and a great place to retire. The Impact Program continues to be a cornerstone of this strategic plan.

Sauk Valley Community College's Impact Program provides every young person in the Sauk Valley with the opportunity to earn their tuition at SVCC. The Impact Program is the most significant driver of economic development the Sauk Valley has ever known. Next year, the Impact Program will be fully implemented, and these high school students throughout the Sauk Valley will be volunteering thousands of hours of community service annually. Through volunteerism, they will learn about their communities and the importance of service while giving nonprofits the help they desperately need. High school graduates throughout the Sauk Valley will earn tuition at SVCC, allowing them to complete transfer and technical degrees while accruing little-to-no debt. They will be landing great jobs in the Sauk Valley, paying taxes in the Sauk Valley, raising families, buying homes, and becoming the next generation of leaders in the Sauk Valley.

**The Impact Program is a reality now!** More than 1,200 high school students are enrolled, already volunteering thousands of hours, and the Sauk Valley College Foundation has raised more than 70% of its \$10 million goal to endow the Impact Program forever.

The Impact Program is but a part of SVCC's commitment to making the Sauk Valley a collection of thriving, economically developed, exceptional communities. As you learn more about the last year in the pages of this Report to the Community, we hope you share our appreciation for the many efforts of our students, faculty, staff, and community partners who made this another incredible year.

We are always looking for additional opportunities to expand and improve our partnerships. Just give us a shout, and we will respond!

**Sincerely, Dr. David Hellmich, President**



## LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

**We are so proud of our students and their diverse accomplishments. Please know that you are always welcome here at Sauk Valley Community College!**

**Dear Friends of Sauk Valley Community College,**

Thank you for taking the time to review our annual report and recognize all of our students' accomplishments and opportunities here at Sauk. We are proud to be your community college with course offerings that enrich every walk of life.

**Community Education** – Everyone is welcome to take a course in personal enrichment. Want to learn a new hobby, become a skilled computer user, or even learn aviation instrument training? Sauk offers expertise in a broad range of topics, and we have a course for you!

**Adult Education** – Since opening our doors over half a century ago, Sauk has continued to empower individuals with high school equivalency diplomas and learning English as a second language. Our students have gone on to excellent employment opportunities and immersion into our society with confidence and hope.

**Impact Program through Earned Tuition** – We are one year closer to having our inaugural class of incoming 1st-year students who will enjoy a tuition-free education by earning it first! Our Impact Program kicked off in 2022 with the first class of high school freshmen, and to date, they have donated over 46,000 community service hours to our district. It's an exciting time to consider Sauk as a high school student!

**Career Education** – Thanks to the cooperation from local businesses, thousands of Sauk students have graduated from our career technical programs and gone on to rewarding careers in commercial truck driving, HVAC, welding, and electronics. Sauk Success Stories are born every semester on our campus!

**Financial Aid and Student Life** – Student success is our top priority. Sauk has significant financial aid resources to assist most of our students. We also offer programs to help our students engage in community service, student clubs and organizations and build lasting friendships. Small investments at Sauk reap tremendous rewards in life!

**Faculty and Staff** – Student success at Sauk is fantastic, thanks to our esteemed faculty and staff. Did you know Sauk students who transfer to universities excel and often graduate at higher rates and higher GPAs than their peers? This academic success rounds out what we stand for here at Sauk - strong foundations in academics and unrivaled student success.

**Sincerely, Bob Thompson, Chair, Board of Trustees**



## INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY . . .

The faculty and staff at Sauk Valley Community College understand the significance of investing in the community that invests in you. Our mission would be impossible without the support of our local community; therefore, we are committed to contributing time, talent, and resources to improve our region.



### WELDING FOR VETERANS

In the spring of 2023, SVCC welding instructor Scott Gillihan contacted our Director of Business Training and Community Education, Brenda Helms, with an idea to offer a class on the basics of welding to give back to our local Veterans. Our Business and Community Education Department received the Non-Credit Workforce Development Grant from ICCB, which covered the cost of supplies and most of the instructor's salary.

SVCC's first Welding for Veterans class was held on June 18, 2024, with a four-hour morning and evening class. Eighteen students attended with free tuition and received the necessary supplies for the class, including a welding helmet, gloves, boots, a jacket, and glasses.


Any Veteran or active military member with proof of a DD214 is eligible to participate in the class. The Business and Community Education Department plans to offer more courses in December and January.



### U OF I EXTENSION

SVCC entered into a community partnership with the University of Illinois (U of I) Extension in October. The U of I extension aims to promote environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity in Illinois communities. Bruce Black became a Skyhawk this year not only as our on-campus representative of the extension, but also as our new professor of Horticulture. The Extension's partnership with SVCC has provided an array of agriculture-centered events, workshops, and community education offerings both on campus and in the general Sauk Valley Area and even led to the creation of our first campus greenhouse in the spring of this year!





*"The greenhouse will allow the SVCC Ag Program to reach out to and connect with 'non-traditional' Ag students. Many students enjoy working with plants recreationally, but students may not understand how a greenhouse is truly connected to Agriculture." - Kevin Larsen*



## AG PROGRAM DONATIONS

Since its birth in 2017, the Agriculture Program has blossomed. Having a greenhouse on campus allows for developing an upcoming Horticulture degree and certificate program and allows our students to get involved in their local community. In the coming year, the SVCC Ag Program intends to donate pumpkins to the Dixon Scarecrow Festival and may house the petunias for Dixon's Petunia Festival.



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Sauk Valley Community College was 'over the moon' to host a total solar eclipse watch party on campus this year! On Monday, April 8, 2024, over 50 guests gathered on the East Lawn to watch the eclipse with glasses provided by the SVCC Learning Commons and Science Club. SVCC's very own professor of Physics, Dr. James Chisholm, led the group in using eclipse viewing boxes. While the Sauk Valley Area did not experience true totality, we witnessed a peak coverage of about 90% at 2:04 p.m. What a stellar way to learn more about the natural world!



## . . . AND MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS

**This school year, Sauk Valley Community College was honored to step into the American Pakistan Education Exchange (APEX) program alongside Bristol Community College in Fall River, MA, and Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore, Pakistan.**

The idea originated when SVCC Professor and International Programming Coordinator Dr. Paul Edleman met Kinnaird College Professor Zubda Zia at a convention in 2022. Professor Zia expressed an interest in bringing some of her students to the US for short visits to help bridge the cultural divide between our countries and create a forum to share diverse perspectives. Professor Edleman, also interested in achieving those goals, saw an opportunity for SVCC to expand our international programming and bolster the study abroad, overseas faculty liaison, and professional exchange programs and jumped into action. Working alongside Bristol College Professor Farah Habib, Paul and Zubda applied for grant funding and built the APEX program from the ground up.

As a part of the APEX program, a small cohort of students from each college collaborates on academic and co-curricular activities as a form of cultural and educational exchange. Additionally, the Pakistan delegation visits classes and participates in shared collegewide roundtables. Through the program's activities, participants learn about other cultures and educational systems, broadening their critical thinking and ability to collaborate with individuals from different backgrounds.



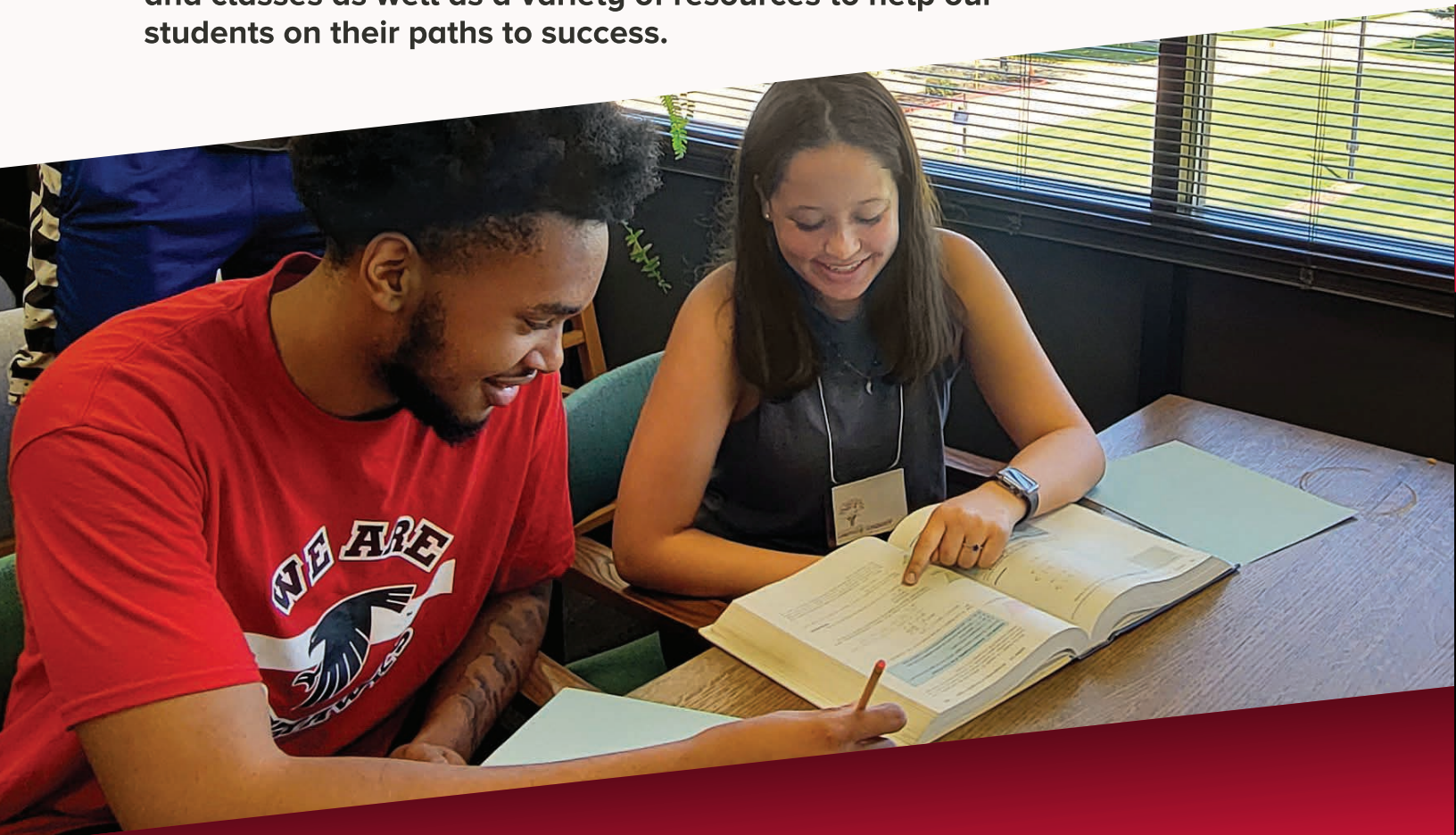


In October 2023, just over a year after Professors Zia and Edleman met for the first time, Kinnaird College made its first visit to Sauk Valley Community College, sending three faculty and seven students. For two weeks, the group split their time between SVCC and Bristol College, visiting each institution and its community. Our art students even joined the delegation for a field trip to the Art Institute of Chicago! In February 2024, four SVCC and four Bristol faculty made a 10-day return visit to Kinnaird College, where they participated in the college's 4th International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities, giving keynote addresses and leading workshops. Faculty also had their share of fun, participating in cultural events and visiting surrounding historical sights and local rural villages during the trip. We plan on making another return trip in the spring of 2025; this time joined by Sauk students!



## EXPANDING OUR ACADEMICS

Sauk Valley Community College is dedicated to providing a quality education for students. We work hard to support a broad catalog of programs and classes as well as a variety of resources to help our students on their paths to success.



### WRITING CENTER

This year, the Learning Center, comprised of the Library, Tutoring Center, and Writing Center, expanded the Writing Center portion into what used to be a faculty lounge. Now two rooms, the Writing Center offers a space for four students to each have one-on-one writing support from a tutor and a space for students and tutors to lounge or study privately.

The Writing Center has also hired two new professional consultants to accommodate the growing number of students using the center's services. Zac Forkner, director of the Writing Center, says, "Writing is not a solo act. Writing is collaborative. We want to promote a collaborative environment. Even professional writers have editors."



## **POLICE ACADEMY**

The SVCC Police Academy has just graduated its fifth class of officers. The Academy has graduated approximately 141 law enforcement officers since the program's launch with 36 cadets enrolled in the current class.

The Academy continues to grow and improve since its implementation in 2023. While the first class was held for 14 weeks, or 560 hours, the next class, and all others to follow, were changed to 16 weeks, or 640 hours, in compliance with the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. Instructive teams conducting training regarding Firearms, Control and Arrest Tactics, Standardized Field Sobriety Testing, Traffic Stops, Occupant Control, and other areas have also been newly implemented. Additionally, used squad cars were graciously donated this year by the Dixon Police Department, Sterling Police Department, and Ogle County Sheriff's Department for use in training areas.

Sauk Valley Community College is proud to provide a space for our local law enforcement agencies to train the next generation of officers, and we hope to watch the program continue to grow in the coming years.



## HONORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Here at SVCC, we take pride in our Skyhawks' achievements. Sauk Valley Community College has had a successful and exciting year, involving visits from Illinois State Representatives and new awards for our athletics department.



**Sauk Valley Community College  
always encourages students to  
“Soar to Success.”**

**That is why Skyhawks are always  
thrilled about opening our doors to  
leaders in our community.**

## REPPIN' SVCC

On January 30, SVCC hosted State Representatives Ryan Spain, Brad Fritts, and House Minority Leader Tony McCombie. Escorted by Dr. Lori Cortez and Dr. Jon Mandrell, our reps met with Impact staff. They learned about the program, visited the Police Academy's simulation lab, and interacted with the mannequins used by our Health Professions programs. It was an honor to host Representative Spain, Representative Fritz, and House Minority Leader McCombie for the morning.



For our 2023-24 school year performance, the SVCC athletics department received the Arrowhead Conference's All-Sports Award. This award recognizes the overall achievement of all SVCC sports combined, with a point system based on each sport's overall finish in the conference standings.



## ATHLETICS

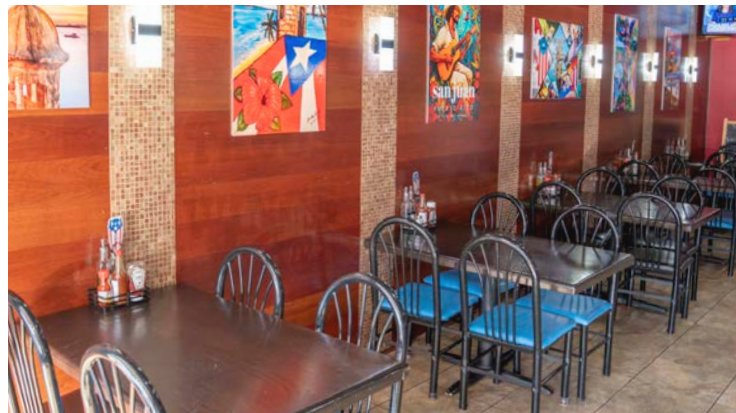
SVCC sent four teams to compete in the NJCAA Championships this last season: Women's and Men's Cross Country, Women's Tennis, and Women's Volleyball. Both Cross Country teams were Runner's Up, Women's Tennis took home third place, and Women's Volleyball placed first and became NJCAA Region IV Champions!

## GROWING THE 815

The Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College has been dedicated to providing professional guidance to individuals and small businesses since 2017. This year, the SVCC SBDC soared above our expectations.



Leo's Marvelous Bites offers delicious Puerto Rican cuisine and a heartwarming backstory. Main cook and part-owner Celia Fernandez named the restaurant in honor of her late brother, Leoner "Leo" Melendez, an ardent fan of Marvel Comics. The business that once started as a small pop-up tent at events and farmer's markets opened its doors in November 2023, with over 200 people attending in support at the ribbon cutting a month later. Alongside her brother and sister-in-law, David and Violet Solis, Fernandez works to honor her brother by doing what she does best: cooking mouth-watering food.





Since its launch, our SBDC has:



- Advised over 900 clients
- Helped to jump-start over 135 new businesses
- Created over 350 new jobs
- Retained 250 existing jobs.

**We take pride in being a helpful, friendly resource for entrepreneurs in our community. A few impactful success stories from 2024 are Leo's Marvelous Bites and Refuse to Quit Fitness.**

Refuse to Quit Fitness, a commercial gym in Morrison, IL, evolved from a former WACC CEO student's passion for fitness and big dreams to a brick-and-mortar business. Evan Ernst approached the SBDC in September 2023 with experience in the daily operations of a gym and questions regarding registration as a formal business and funding. An advisor assisted him in creating a comprehensive business plan and obtaining funding through applications and letters of support. After six months of collaboration, Refuse to Quit Fitness officially opened its doors at 222 West Main Street in Morrison, IL.





## A LASTING IMPACT



In partnership with Polo community leaders, the Impact Program kicked off it's Marcos Endowment Challenge. The goal was to raise \$600,000 for Impact students from Polo Community High School. This amount will fund Polo students in perpetuity to attend SVCC under the Impact Program. Thanks to generous gifts from the Polo Lions Club and Polo Schools Foundation, amongst other donors, we raised \$475,000 to support Impact students in Polo. How lucky are we to be supported by our local communities in pursuing education for our youth!

Dr. Kelly Mandrell, Superintendent of the Polo School District and Aplington Middle School Principal, shared her perspective on why the Impact program is so significant for students and our entire community: "At this time, employers are looking for qualified applicants for their positions. The Impact Program supports making education affordable for students and teaches the students responsibility and civic duty. It is crucial in our small communities to have the next generation willing to help with service organizations. By teaching civic duty to our students at a young age, they will be more willing to be active as adults. This, in turn, is a great PR for employers! When a person gives to the Marco Challenge or any of the Impact Programs in general, they are helping not only with education but also with helping our students to be more well-rounded."



## DISTRICT-WIDE

- 229 Nonprofits** Volunteer Partners – Participating Nonprofits
- 47,865 Hours** Total Volunteer Hours Completed by Impact Students
- 24,754 Hours** Total Volunteer Hours Completed 2023-2024 by Impact Students
- 1,144 students** Total Students Registered for the 2023-2024 Impact Year
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- 73%** Impact students district-wide persisted to the 2024-2025 program year
- 85%** Impact Class of 2025 persisted to year 4 in the program (Pilot cohort - Fulton & Prophetstown)
- 90%** Impact Class of 2026 persisted to year 3 in the program
- 61%** Impact Class of 2027 persisted to year 2 in the program

## POLO HIGH SCHOOL



- 10 Nonprofits** Volunteer Partners in Polo
- 2,552 Hours** Total Volunteer Hours Completed by Polo Students
- 74%** Polo Impact students persisted to 2024-2025 in the program
- 65%** Polo Impact freshmen persisted to year 2 in the program
- 83%** Polo Impact sophomores persisted to year 3 in the program
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