

SPOTLIGHT



**Inside:
'How community college
changed my life ...'**

Faculty, a college
president and students
on IVCC's impact

ILLINOIS VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CENTER FOR ACCESSIBILITY &
NEURODIVERSITY

SPRING 2023

Reading, Writing and Reality

Students who grudgingly enter Jennifer Bubb's developmental English and reading classroom expecting to drill down on reading, sentence structure and essay-writing are surprised by what they learn.

Bubb knows they don't want to be in a developmental-level course, at first. She follows their reasoning -- that by college, they've learned to read and write, so what are they really going to take from this class?

For a start, along with vocabulary and sentence structure, they pick up other tools that can serve them beyond the classroom. And ultimately, they learn there's no escape from Bubb's gaze or her questions or her expectations that "they think beyond the obvious." And, she promises, she DOES read the homework.

"We go beyond reading. They learn different notetaking and test strategies that they can use in other classes. They learn about managing their time. They begin to see how those life skills in my class prepare them for life, not just for school," she said.

"I want them to be critical thinkers. When they give me 'yes' or 'no,' I ask 'why?'" she said. "I don't accept 'I don't know' as an answer. Many students have never been asked their opinions. They're not used to being pressed. They learned if they said they didn't know and didn't make eye contact, a teacher would just move on."

Not Bubb. She stops to listen. She accepts her students as they come, but she doesn't hesitate to call them out. She learns who they are and calls on their participation. She also learns from them, in one example using a classroom exploration of slang terms to keep up on the latest trends.

After nearly 40 years -- half of them coordinating the Reading, Writing, and Study Skills Lab at IVCC -- Bubb will retire this spring. She plans to travel with her husband, Steve, and expand her sewing-and-craft lines for vendor fairs across Northern Illinois.

The RWSS lab closed in 2017 because of budget cuts, and Bubb ricocheted back into a classroom setting. Begun long before she'd arrived in 1998, the lab offered independently-paced, one-on-one classes for students who tested below college reading, English and math levels, and provided study skills training.



'I never know on any given day what I will say that will reach someone.'

Jennifer Bubb

Bubb signed on after teaching in grade and junior high schools, where she enjoyed a medley of duties. A stint substitute teaching further prepared her for the unpredictability of each day on campus.

"Students all bring their own stories, they come with all levels of skills. I have different tools in my toolbox to reach them at all different levels and to break things down in a language they understand."

The daily variety was invigorating. "In one day, I would work with students in all different topics, or with nursing students on study strategies or teaching different skills workshops in other classrooms."

Students over the years who found a faithful listener in Bubb have poured their stories -- heartrending or heartfelt, from page and from lips -- into her ears. "I'm proud they feel they can trust me. I talk to them in a way they feel heard. I'm honest; I tell it like it is, and they appreciate that. They see me as a friend, a mom, a grandma -- whatever they need me to be."

Despite an initial resistance, they tell her they've learned something in her classroom. So has Bubb. She's seen them blossom and grow confident, especially those that "felt like they weren't good at reading or writing but succeeded at the end!"

'Many of the students she has helped and empowered have also passed successfully through my own classes and gone on to meet their educational goals. Jennifer's patience, positive attitude and excellent teaching helped lay a strong foundation for this success. She has been a wonderful colleague and friend!' -- English instructor Kirk Lockwood

Instructor helps restore his 'voice'

Just as his college career was getting started, Daniel Sack received a blow. His placement scores deposited him in Jennifer Bubb's developmental reading and English classes.

"It hurt my ego; all my English was below high school level but my math and science scores were high. I was given 0900 classes and business calculus!" the accounting major said.

He felt defined by the placement, but as what? Was this all the Land of Promise had promised? "Where do I belong in society? I felt dumb."

He'd learned some English in his native El Salvador before immigrating to the United States in 2012, but he spent his high school years working through culture shock and attempting to fit in and absorb the way all his friends spoke. Then graduation happened, the people he thought of as his friends scattered, and he started over, alone.

Then came the IVCC class he was prepared to hate, and its instructor, Jennifer Bubb. She didn't seem to judge. And she listened. So on one particularly bad day, he confided in her.

"She was the only teacher that I could complain about the class, the culture, and the U.S. as a whole and get help as an answer. She listened and understood and respected me for my differences (cultural, linguistic or learning.)"

At one point, she even shepherded him to services when she feared for his well-being.



'There's something about being there with a person who wants to help you!'

Daniel Sack

That "people like her exist was mind-blowing!"

Above all, she gave him back a voice that had been mislaid in the transition to America. "It was important to me to have those communication skills. I have great ideas to communicate, but I didn't know how!" It's a voice that can be heard now in his classes and as a member of student government.

Bubb's lessons also taught him how to marshal his thoughts, papers and presentations - and he still taps into his binder notes to make sure he stays on track. It's become easier to wade through two languages - and properly - to make a point. The brainstorm in Spanish transfers smoothly over to English in presentation.

That all came with practice in the Reading, Writing and Study Skills lab. "That's where it clicked (for) me

doing it naturally!" There, also, he learned time management, dividing his tasks and conquering all the demands like school and friends. He was outspoken against the lab closure in 2017.

"It has helped me, and you don't realize how it can help other students," he told the administration. "This was me improving, a new version of me; imagine what it could mean to someone" who was a native English speaker, he insisted.

He stays in touch with Bubb on campus. "She doesn't beat around the bush. With her, I get a straight answer to my face. She's a great person! I learn more real stuff from her than in the real world, real information on how to work on myself. There's something about being there with a person who wants to help you!"

'Community colleges have the ability to change lives, and IVCC did that for my mom, for me, and for so many people I have met ...' -- incoming IVCC President Tracy Morris

(NIU Alumni Association publication)

In its nearly 100 years, IVCC has touched thousands of lives -- those of its students, their families, and in the communities that nestle around the campus. We wanted to share how IVCC changed the lives of some of the people we know.

Planting the seeds you need to succeed

IVCC embraced Raul Campos and his learning differences and taught him to aim bigger. Initially, Raul saw IVCC as a place to meet new people and make friends, but "IVCC helped me to see I can do more than just mow yards. I'm good with numbers, and I can do something like that later on."

His mother Margarita encouraged him that both socialization and business skills can combine to build the lawn care business he runs with his dad.

Now Raul acknowledges he's thinking longer-term, beyond the basic business certificate he's close to earning to an advanced certificate and possibly an associate's degree as well. He might consider continuing his college career online so he can stay close to home.

His mother, remembering a youth who struggled and misbehaved, enjoys watching her son's dawning classroom success, but his resolve doesn't surprise her.

She remembers the 8-year-old determined to play soccer, who year by year improved his game and in his final year led his undefeated team to the playoffs. Even his opponents singled out the plucky goalie for praise.

"People know him now because of that" standout performance on the field, she says proudly.

On campus, Raul had grown steadily more independent and is ambitious to land a student worker position on campus. He's been an eager participant at Meet & Eat roundtables and other chances to network.

Raul is taking some of the same courses Margarita did in obtaining her associate's degree in 2017. Her career had been on hold while she raised her family, but the degree was a dream come true. "It was like night and day! I'd always wanted to go back to school. I tried to tell everyone nothing is more important than to go to school and prepare for the future, and I was saying the same to him," she nodded at Raul.

Having a degree -- "gives me more confidence!" As her son changes, she's anticipating a change for herself, expanding her work hours.

At times, the mother/adviser becomes the student. While she advises him "you can do what you really want if you really want it -- and more," he has taught her that "everything is in there hiding; it just needs time to get out."

'IVCC helped me to see I can do more.'

Raul Campos



Discovering the Campus of Second Chances

November Rhodes discovered IVCC is a land of second chances, a place where the improbable becomes the possible and where the past doesn't hold her back.

Failing the Certified Nursing Assistant program in her first term stalled her ambitions to become a medical office assistant and left her discouraged and bitter over having even tried. The next dozen years brought highs – the birth of her son – and lows – a toxic relationship that left her hungry for trust, kindness and respect.

She found a new relationship and relaunched her college career with a new ambition and a new determination. She credits IVCC with “helping me find who I am today. It's nice to come here and be around normal people who are friendly and where there's always something, some way and somebody who can help. IVCC challenges me to be better.”

Accepting that her first time on campus wasn't wasted even if it didn't lead where she wanted, and bolstered by her partner's support, Rhodes set her sights this time on the nursing program. Once, it would have been a daunting prospect, despite her health field background, but a counselor's advice was an eye-opener.

Completing a slate of four more challenging courses would at last make Rhodes eligible to apply for the nursing program, and the counselor was confident that Rhodes was up to the challenge.

Immediately, a mirage transformed into a vision.

“That goal was bigger than the goal I had set for myself, but my counselor assured me it was possible!”

She re-took and passed CNA “so that F can never be used against me again,” and dove into tough courses like anatomy and physiology and microbiology. She earned a place on the academic honors list.

Some of her new confidence stems from her environment. “The kindness I'm shown at IVCC showed me there is kindness in the world. Before, I was in the wrong place and around the wrong people. People here understand that I learn differently, and I've found the drive in myself.”

She found support all around campus. English instructor Rose Brittingham told her “it's OK if I learn differently and that I wasn't the only person to struggle with that.” Tina Hardy, coordinator of the Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity, “was always kind and didn't judge me.” In the classroom, instructor Carmen Hartford supplied her with options for retaining and retrieving information.

Today Rhodes is “a single mom and a thriving student focusing on a nursing degree. I'm a better woman who practices kindness, and a better mother and example for my son. I can juggle all the plates spinning in my life! I had an opportunity before and blew it off. This is my time!”

'That goal was bigger than the one I had set for myself.'

November Rhodes



So, What's New?!

Spring brings a new president and an old friend

IVCC has a new president!

Dr. Tracy Morris of Spring Valley was appointed last December after a months-long search. She started on campus in April and succeeds Dr. Jerry Corcoran officially in July. Dr. Corcoran is retiring after 33 years as an administrator and the last 15 years as president.

Morris' history with IVCC began even before she was old enough to attend classes, and her hometown campus keeps calling her back.

She remembers her mother graduating from IVCC's nursing program. Morris herself graduated from IVCC before getting her bachelor's at Western Illinois University and her master's and doctorate at Northern Illinois.

She returned as an administrator in the counseling and student services departments before her career led her to administrative roles at Illinois Central College and Joliet Junior College.



Dr. Tracy Morris, center, poses with her parents (right), daughters (left) and husband the night she was appointed to the president's post by the IVCC board of trustees. (Community Relations photo)

"IVCC has been an important part of my life since I was a young child and it is a dream come true to be able to return to serve as the President for the college that has meant so much to me and to my family," Morris said in a press release at the time of her appointment.

Morris is the first IVCC graduate to be named its president.

She and husband Mike have two daughters, Zoe and Caroline.

Coming soon to a (computer) screen near you!

Graphic by Dawn Lockwood

A change is on the way! Brightspace, IVCC's new learning management system, will be appearing this summer. It replaces Blackboard.

Instructors have been working to transfer coursework and materials into the new system. Students will use Brightspace for class announcements, textbook information, assignments, course feedback surveys, and grades.

As always, if you need help with the new system, contact our Student Help Desk at shd@ivcc.edu

If it *Weren't* for IVCC, I'd never ...

Liza Buhr says she wouldn't be where she is today if it weren't for IVCC.

Poised to start graduate school this year, she's in a happier place, confident in attitude and determined in direction, ready to take the next step toward a career as a speech pathologist.

Her view as a university freshman a few years ago, though, was much bleaker. The high-school-graduate Liza welcomed university life as an escape from the mundane and too-familiar but wound up miserable, overwhelmed, and hopeless. It was a dark time.

"People said, you're a freshman and things will get better." But she couldn't see how it would. By mid-semester she was back in the Illinois Valley. Her mother convinced a skeptical Liza to visit IVCC, a campus that had never tempted her before. But, after all, she should (so her mother urged) do something.

Ultimately, IVCC gave her a place and the people to help her rebuild her crumbled self-esteem and expectations.

First, she met counselor Rene Prine. "She told me I wasn't a failure, everything was going to be OK, and I was lucky because I was just in time for the second eight-week classes to start – and let's get you in one!"

That first online psychology class "was a great stepping stone from the high school workload. And, it was nice to take gen-ed and not major-related classes like the university wanted me to. I still didn't know what I wanted to do and it was overwhelming, but (the university) didn't listen.

"I felt I was heard at IVCC, like it was my experience and I wasn't just going through the system."



'If it weren't for IV, I wouldn't have a bachelor's degree in hand and be preparing to enter grad school!'

Liza Buhr, IVCC Class of 2020

She soon discarded/ the myths about community colleges she and her peers had accumulated growing up.

Myth #1: IVCC is just High School 2.0. "That is so not true! It's your choice to not make it High School 2.0." There were familiar high school classmates, but she also made a fresh batch of friendships with people of all ages and from different towns who unfolded new prospects for her.

Myth #2: People that go to IVCC don't know what they're doing with their lives. "That's not true – they all knew what they were doing, were all highly motivated, highly driven and had great GPAs."

They sent her own ambitions soaring. She was leaning more toward speech pathology – and its formidable math and science requirements. "Everybody gave me more confidence when I thought I

couldn't. It shifted my mindset that I could do it."

She found support from her instructors and leaned on tutoring services. A discouraging math score left her feeling "there's no coming back from this," but she bounced back to earn an A in the course.

Graduation from IVCC in 2020 launched her in to university life a second time. It was better the second time around.

Looking back over that dark time, she's grateful her life unfolded the way it did because "I proved to myself I can do it and things will get better. It's not a walk in the park, but it made me a better person and taught me how temporary things are and how they can change. When I left IV, I felt I can go on. I'll be OK!"

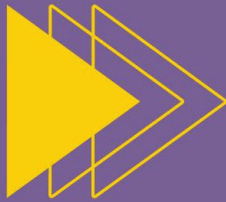
ILLINOIS VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ARE YOU READY FOR COLLEGE?

GET SET 

Ready to go, but looking for support as you start?

Enroll in Get Set, IVCC's short bridge-to-college program for students beginning or relaunching their college careers.



- Get familiar with campus tech
- Learn campus resources
- Learn ways to manage time & tasks
- Brush up your academic strategies
- Learn coping strategies to thrive

**Sessions begin the week of July 31, 2023,
before the Fall Semester opens!**



For more info or to apply,
scan the QR code

Contact:

Tina Hardy 815-224-0284 or
email tina_hardy@ivcc.edu

ivcc.edu/readyssetgo