

Illinois Community College District #511
Rock Valley College
3301 North Mulford Road
Rockford, IL 61114
BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING – RETREAT
Saturday, January 25, 2025, 8:00 a.m.
Woodward Technology Center Room 1308

Livestreaming Link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwa3Fs6l4pWAR_4iDZPTNZA
(The link opens to the YouTube page; access the Board meeting by clicking on the “Live” video icon with the date shown above)

MINUTES

Call to Order

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District No. 511, Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb, McHenry, Ogle, and Stephenson Counties, Illinois, convened in Room 1308 in the Woodward Technology Center (WTC) on the main campus on Saturday, January 25, 2025. Board Chair Robert Trojan called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Roll Call

The following trustees were present at roll call:

Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Ms. Kristen Simpson
Mr. Richard Kennedy

The following trustees were absent: Ms. Crystal Soltow, Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia, Mr. Paul Gorski, Mr. John Nelson, Student Trustee Nico Mikos

Also in attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Interim Vice President of Human Resources; Ms. Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance/Chief Financial Officer; Ms. Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President, Ms. Araceli Olvera, Interim Executive Assistant; Attorney Matthew Gardner, Robbins Schwartz; Mr. Jim Reed, Executive Director of Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

At 8:05 a.m., Board Chair Robert Trojan announced that because there is not a quorum, a formal Board meeting will not be held. However, the group will continue with discussion. Attorney Gardner concurred.

Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)

No communications, petitions or public comments were presented.

Recognition of Visitors

There were no visitors to be introduced.

At 8:10 a.m., Dr. Spearman announced that Mr. Jim Reed, executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), entered the meeting via telephone. The agenda has been adjusted so that the State of the College presentation and discussion will be held next. Mr. Reed will then present his legislative update at the new schedule time, 9:00 a.m., his expected time of arrival.

At 8:15 a.m., Trustee John Nelson entered the meeting in person. Board Chair Trojan announced that there is now a quorum and trustees will proceed with the formal meeting. Attorney Gardner confirmed that a roll call was not needed.

At 8:16 a.m., Trustee Gorski entered the meeting.

Discussion

1. State of the College

Ms. Heather Snider, vice president of institutional effectiveness and communications, reviewed the process of preparing the State of the College and 10-Year Financial Forecast presentations. Ms. Snider and Ms. Ellen Olson, vice president of finance, created videos of the presentations, which were sent to trustees prior to the retreat, thus giving trustees time to review the presentations and submit their questions prior to the meeting. Answers to trustees' questions were incorporated into the presentation shown later on the agenda titled, "Future of Higher Education: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)."

Ms. Snider added that the State of the College will be presented to employees at a Town Hall meeting to be held in February in the Student Center Atrium. The Town Hall meeting will be available virtually via Zoom and will be recorded for future reference. This event will also provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions.

2. 10-Year Financial Projections

Ms. Ellen Olson, vice president of finance, reviewed the 10-Year Financial Projections document, including the financial data, and revenue and expense assumptions, and answered trustees' questions. She noted that the College is aware of the projected State of Illinois \$3.2 billion budget deficit and is monitoring community college allocations.

In response to a question regarding how the College is handling mental health issues for students, Dr. Patrick Peyer, vice president of student affairs, explained that the College has counselors available to assist students, has received a \$120,000 grant to increase mental health awareness, and has an outside vendor to provide 24/7 mental health access for students.

With regard to possible reduced federal funding from the new administration, Vice President Snider added that the College is also monitoring updates from the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) as well as those from Robbins Schwartz attorneys. However, it is not yet known how RVC will be impacted.

Discussion ensued regarding monitoring important information distributed by ICCTA, Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) assumptions, SURS funding, when funding for OPEB might

be transferred to the College, and a contingency plan in the event of funding reductions. Dr. Spearman affirmed that the College is financially stable. Later in the meeting, Vice President Olson confirmed that a one percent (1%) reduction in EAV is equal to \$234,000 in revenue.

With regard to a question regarding SURS (State Universities Retirement System) funding, and although the College has no control over SURS, CFO Olson was able to find information as follows: “Historical underfunding is largely responsible for the current funded status of the System. As of June 30, 2024, SURS was 46% funded based on the actuarial value of assets with nearly \$24.3 billion in assets (actuarial value basis) and nearly \$2.5 billion in unfunded actuarially accrued liability.”

3. Workforce Development Noncredit Metrics Report

Dr. Hansen Stewart, vice president of career and technical education and workforce development, presented a review of workforce development activities for the first half of FY2025 (July 2024-December 2024). Details were provided for Continuing Education, Massage Therapy, HCCTP (Highway Construction Careers Training Program), Collision Repair, CNC Machining, Truck Driver Training, and Customized Training. Dr. Stewart confirmed that a follow-up report covering January 1 to June 30, 2025 will be presented to trustees at the August Committee of the Whole.

At 8:58 a.m., Mr. Jim Reed, executive director of ICCTA, arrived.

4. Legislative Update

The agenda order was amended due to the late arrival of Mr. Reed.

Board Chair Trojan introduced Mr. Jim Reed, executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, who used a PowerPoint presentation to provide an update on the Illinois 104th General Assembly, Bills of Interest, Legislative Priorities, and Lobby Day Projections.

Discussion highlights include:

- It is not yet known how the State of Illinois will handle the projected budget shortfall of \$3.2 billion. While some have been told to be ready for a 10 percent reduction and others expect an income tax increase, the State Board of Higher Education has asked for a two percent (2%) increase.
- Mr. Reed reminded trustees that state budgets fluctuate year to year, and a little increase for education is always included.
- Expect to see more legislation regarding dual credit.
- Pensions are underfunded, and Chicago will likely want more funding to cover its debt.
- A study by state universities indicates they'll need \$1 billion in additional funding. However, ICCB has created a work group to help determine the amount of additional funding needed for community colleges, possibly \$800 million - \$1 billion.
- Discussions will continue on the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), as community colleges are not meeting that goal. Of concern is that qualifying businesses are not seeking certification, are not readily available throughout the state, or do not need the additional business.
- Dr. Spearman added that although RVC has met its BEP goal, the Illinois Community College Council of Presidents (ICCCP) is addressing the situation throughout the state.

At 9:30 a.m., Trustee John Nelson left the meeting.

- ICCTA voiced its opposition to past legislation to have trustees elected by district rather than at-large, and it has been dropped.
- With regard to how community colleges are positioned for the future:
 - Younger students are embracing short term credentials
 - FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) growing pains could persist
 - Dual enrollment is accelerating
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay
 - Enrollment is stabilizing, but still requires focus
- Student Lobby Day is April 9, 2025; Trustee Lobby Day is May 7, 2025.
- A lobbyist for an individual community college could be of some benefit if the lobbyist understands the community college situation.

Trustee Gorski noted that Trustee Nelson left the meeting to attend the funeral of former Illinois Representative Chuck Jefferson. In respect for maintaining a quorum, Mr. Gorski stayed at the meeting.

Board Chair Trojan thanked Mr. Reed for attending the meeting and presenting pertinent information.

At 10:00 a.m., the meeting was recessed for a 10-minute break.

4. Return on Investment Academic Program Report

Dr. Amanda Smith, vice president of academic affairs, presented information on the 10-year enrollment trends for programs housed in the Aviation Career Education Center, the Health Sciences Center and the Advanced Technology Center, as well as the partnership with Northern Illinois University on the NIU@RVC Engineering program.

Dr. Smith added that the College is not looking to add any new programs at the present time, but is focusing on growing some of the newer programs such as Certified Medical Assistant. Also, students in the RVC@NIU engineering program do not need an associate degree to transfer, but can do so if they have taken the right courses.

5. Strategic Plan Update

Vice President Heather Snider reviewed the four pillars of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan (Access, Education, Training, Diversity) and provided a review of 2024 highlights. These include, but are not limited to, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reaffirmation of accreditation with no monitoring; launched the RVC Downtown West project; exceeded the credit hour budget goal; improved the on-time completion rate, improved graduation rates for Black/African American students, Hispanic students and White students; exceeded targets for contracts awarded to BEP recognized vendors; received multiple diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) recognitions; launched the collision repair program; and implemented CRM (customer relationship management) with credit and noncredit students.

Ms. Snider also explained the background of the Employee Culture surveys taken in 2021 and 2023 and introduced Dr. Terrica Huntley, interim vice president of human resources, who explained more about the surveys.

Dr. Huntley reviewed progress on improving employee culture, as well as results of the Employee Culture Surveys taken in 2021 and 2023. Action steps taken as a result of the surveys include, but are not limited to, live streaming Committee of the Whole and Regular Board meetings; publishing monthly leadership updates; Cabinet members visiting various RVC locations; and conducting support service excellence surveys for the Human Resources Department and the Institutional Effectiveness and Communications Department.

Discussion highlights include:

- The next survey will be taken in fall 2025 and will be electronic. Since confidentiality is a concern, Studer Education facilitated the 2023 survey.
- Results of the student survey were good.
- FMLA is a part of onboarding new employees. The HR Team is doing cross-training so more than one person can answer questions.
- Supervisor 201 training is currently being offered to employees.
- The College has been re-affirmed for 10 years by the Higher Learning Commission with no monitoring and the College's choice of pathway. Special thanks to Dr. Lisa Mehlig for her work with the re-affirmation process.
- As a result of the support service excellence survey, action steps for the Institutional Effectiveness and Communications Department include faster access to information and improving the grant tracking process. Execution steps include Plan, Adjust, Implement and Measure.

At 10:55 a.m., Trustee Gorski excused himself for a short time. Board Chair Trojan announced that although there is not a quorum, discussion will continue, and no action will be taken. The action was confirmed by Attorney Gardner.

6. Future of Higher Education: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Vice President Heather Snider opened the SWOT presentation by reviewing the differences between internal strengths and weaknesses, which are under control of the institution, and external opportunities and threats, which are positive and negative environmental factors that may affect the College. She then reviewed the strengths, weaknesses and the strategies to overcome the weaknesses as outlined in the presentation.

Dr. Spearman then reviewed the opportunities as presented by external factors. Opportunities include: new dual credit offerings and agreements; common course numbering; community college baccalaureate degrees; Lobby Day attendance to create awareness of priorities and needs; hire a lobbyist for RVC; need for education and training programs for the adult population; and workforce development (noncredit) programs with industry recognized credentials.

Discussion highlights include:

- The Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) is looking into common course numbering and offering baccalaureate degrees at community colleges (degrees offered would be those not offered by regional four-year schools).

- Administration and the Board may want to hold another Legislative Breakfast and invite all representatives in the College's district, maybe mayors too, perhaps in summer 2025.
- ICCCP has an aggressive legislative agenda, and it is important to have the ear of legislators through a designated lobbyist. Dual credit helps K-12 districts more than community colleges.
- RVC has the largest adult population without a high school diploma or GED. The Downtown West facility will help develop the platform for expanded adult education.
- A better term than "noncredit" is needed for workforce development programs.

At 11:20 a.m. Board Chair Trojan announced that Trustee Gorski has returned to the meeting and there is again a quorum.

Dr. Spearman then reviewed the threats that include: declining population and K-12 enrollment; Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) declines; continued underfunding of community colleges and potential decline in state funding; and passing Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) to colleges.

Discussion highlights include:

- With regard to declining populations and K-12 enrollment, the K-20 Collaborative held in conjunction with Studer Education garnered positive feedback from area superintendents who attended the event.
- Dr. Spearman serves on the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Equity and Adequacy Committee that reviews continued underfunding of community colleges.
- RVC has been setting aside funds to cover OPEB in the event the state transfers funding responsibility to the community colleges.
- The College has been very successful getting new grants, which has helped offset funding issues.
- How can RVC work with the Foundation to raise more money for scholarships?
- The College receives donations and has different levels of engagement with other entities who benefit from college programs. These include participation in advisory committees, provide special scholarships, and assist with curriculum. Some facilities are paying for nursing students to attend.
- A strong game plan and strategies are needed to align the adult education programs with the new Downtown West facility.

Other uncertainties include new federal executive orders and unfunded mandates in Illinois. The ICCCP community college presidents have been meeting to determine how the executive orders will affect community colleges and determine a game plan. With regard to unfunded mandates, Dr. Spearman explained that he receives legislative information weekly, and the ICCCP presidents regularly discuss proposed legislation.

Dr. Spearman also explained the internal process for aligning the State of the College and Strategic Plan with the College's mission, vision and values. With the assistance of Studer Education and following discussions at the Cabinet's retreat held in December, Vice Presidents Snider and Olson gathered data and created the State of the College document and video that was presented to trustees. This also will be presented to the college community in a Town Hall setting to be held in February and will include an opportunity to ask questions and complete a survey to be distributed to faculty and staff.

Board Chair Trojan commented that trustees may want to consider having future retreats to review more SWOT analyses, perhaps a 10-year SWOT plan to align with the Facilities Master Plan. Trustee Gorski added that he would like to see a shorter SWOT plan, perhaps three, four, or five years, but long enough to gather appropriate data.

Next Meeting

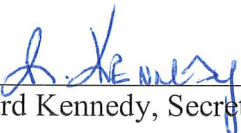
The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held February 11, 2025 at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR), Room 0214, in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR), Room 0214, in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, at 11:53 a.m., a motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Gorski, seconded by Trustee Simpson. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Ann Kerwitz



Richard Kennedy, Secretary



Robert Trojan, Board Chair