BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
TRENTON EDUCATION CENTER
AUGUST 6, 2026

WELCOME

President George Evans opened a community meeting at 11:59 a.m. on Thursday, August 6, 2026 at the Trenton Education Center. Trustee Bryan Holthaus was present. Student Trustee Andolini Gray was present.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included President George Evans, Alan Boerngen, Michael Christensen, Cary Day, Joy Fitts, Carrie Hancock, Sara Hanks, Brian Holthaus, Chris Hottes, Darrel Johnson, Justine Milicevic, Julie Obermark, Joshua Paddock, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, Sarah Ratermann, Josie Sphilmann, Kelsey Tate, and Amy Zanton.

Community members in attendance included Ann Albers, Amanda Ennen, Quinnley Evans, Tuck Evans, Roger Freeze, Donna Goetz, Enrique Guerra, Elie Kohrmann, Lydia Links, Chad Litteken, Tricia Litteken, Mike McDermiel, Christy Murphy, Chris Rarick, Greg Reichmann, Michelle Stockmann, Amy Strake, AJ Warnecke, and Joe Wieter

Media present was Matt Wilson from Breese Journal.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Evans led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE

ENROLLMENT UPDATE

President Evans presented an update on enrollment based on reimbursable credit hours for the last six academic years. Credit Hours increased 1.3% from Fiscal Year 2025 to Fiscal Year 2026. Compared to same day as term last year enrollment is currently up 1% in head count and 4.39% in credit hours for the Fall 2026 semester.

Enrollment continues trending in a positive direction. Kaskaskia College has experienced significant growth over the past five years, driven by several key factors which include the expansion of dual credit opportunities; a strong personal touch, with the college emphasizing individualized student support and maintaining active, visible, and engaged relationships throughout the community; growing recognition of alternative pathways to success in higher education; and changing perceptions of career success, as students

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and families increasingly weigh the cost of four-year degrees against affordable, career-focused education and workforce training.

The electrical program at the Trenton Education Center is one way the College responded to regional workforce needs by redesigning its industrial technology and electrical programs in collaboration with local industry and labor partners, including IBEW Local 309. By investing in updated programming and strong partnerships, enrollment in the electrical program has grown from just four students to seventy-eight students.

President Evans discussed the expected population decline in coming years and how the College will address that issue by continuing to capture market share of graduating high school seniors.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING
President Evans presented information on the operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026. The budget is funded by 40% tuition & fees, 33% state government, 23% local government (property taxes), and 4% other. Based on the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Funding Act of 1965, the budget should be funded by 1/3 state government, 1/3 local government, and 1/3 tuition and fees. Due to discrepancies in the community college funding formula and the lack of state funds, the College is not funded at these levels. President Evans shared data from the ICCB Fiscal Year 2027 Funding Formula showing the actual funding the College receives versus what the College should be receiving. The College should be funded $274.72 per Credit Hour Rate, however, with the State Adjustment of $215.02, the College is only receiving an Effective Credit Hour Rate of $59.70. Representatives from community colleges continue to meet with legislators to draw attention to rightsizing the funding model to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers and students.

President Evans shared that the College is one of three community colleges out of forty-five in Illinois where the majority of the operating budget does not come from property taxes. Community colleges in northern Illinois are funded between 50% to 51% by property taxes where the College is funded only 23% by property taxes. The College does take into strong consideration the impact on tax bills.

President Evans discussed the following cost savings initiatives for the College:
1) Continuous and aggressive pursuit of right-sizing the community college funding formula, 2) health insurance revisions, 3) smarter scheduling driven by student demand, 4) continued pursuit of federal and state grants, 5) re-aligning of College programs and resource management, and 6) continued focus on student retention.

DISCUSSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION CHANGES
President Evans advised that although the Illinois Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) has not yet passed legislation or become law, it remains a topic of discussion. President Evans shared information on HB 5319 and SB 4034 which amend the Public

Community College Act to permit community college districts in Illinois to offer bachelor's degree programs if certain conditions are met.

President Evans highlighted the historic partnership with Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), which enables students to earn an associate degree from Kaskaskia College and a bachelor's degree in agriculture from SIUC on the College's main campus. SIUC instructors teach the courses at Kaskaskia College, helping students reduce or eliminate transportation and housing expenses. The cost to earn this bachelor's degree is around $35,000.

The Illinois Dual Credit Quality Control Act was signed into law June 30, 2025. The Act helps streamline dual credit offerings between high schools and community colleges and forces collaboration between high schools and community colleges. The Act ensures dual credit offerings awarded in Illinois are meeting quality standards as determined by the Illinois Community College Board and the respective community college accrediting agency.

On the federal side, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act signed into law on July 4, 2025 included a provision granting Pell Grant eligibility to certain short-term, career-focused certificate programs. The Workforce Pell Grant will become effective July 1, 2026 and provides Pell grant eligibility for eligible workforce programs which are determined by the State of Illinois to have a high demand in that field, require a high skill level, and provide a living wage. Pell grants provide college students with federal funds to attend college without having to pay back those funds. These funds were previously limited to students enrolled in programs of 16-hour or more credit. With the new provision, students enrolled in eligible workforce certificate programs between 4 and 15 credit hours that are completed in less than one semester (between 8 and 14 weeks) are now eligible for PELL grant funds. The College's current program offerings that will now be eligible under Workforce Pell include the Certified Nursing Assistant Program and the Emergency Medical Technician Program.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- A community member praised Kaskaskia College for its positive impact on the district and asked how local business leaders could help promote the College. President Evans encouraged them to advocate on behalf of community colleges with state officials, help reduce misconceptions about community colleges, and emphasize the College's affordable tuition, transfer opportunities, career programs, dual credit options, and scholarships. He also highlighted the College's broader economic impact, including helping families reduce education costs, preparing skilled employees for local businesses, and keeping graduates and their earnings within the community.
- A former Kaskaskia College student shared that he had always dreamed of attending Indiana University but discovered that the annual cost of approximately $60,000 could result in more than $200,000 in student loan debt. Instead, he accepted a Kaskaskia College Board of Trustees scholarship and has spent only a

few hundred dollars on his education. After graduating from Kaskaskia College in May, he plans to attend McKendree University for one year and complete his bachelor's degree in three years, thanks to the credits earned through dual credit coursework. His experience demonstrates the significant financial benefits of dual credit and community college pathways.

- A principal from Breese Central High School expressed appreciation for Kaskaskia College's strong partnership with area high schools. Through this collaboration, Breese Central offers thirty-one dual credit courses totaling 112 college credit hours, creating significant educational and financial benefits for students and families throughout the district.
- Another student expressed appreciation for the Jump Start program, which allowed her to complete English 101 at the Trenton Education Center for half the regular tuition cost. The program provides high school students and recent graduates with college courses taught by College faculty, while waiving 50% of tuition.
- A parent shared that her daughter was one of the original four students in the College's electrical program. After completing the program, she joined IBEW Local 309 and just completed her fourth-year apprentice exam. Because the program was significantly less expensive than a traditional college pathway, she completed the program debt-free and was able to purchase a home before turning twenty.
- Another parent noted that when she graduated from high school more than 20 years ago, only four dual credit courses were available. She commended the College and its partner high schools for now offering as many as thirty-one dual credit courses. As someone whose family is not originally from Clinton County, she recognized the importance of these opportunities, noting that relatives in another county do not have access to comparable dual credit programs.

ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

KC NOW

KC Now is a program developed in 2020 which allows high school students to take a college course not offered at their high school. High school students can take the course at the College's main campus, at one of the Education Centers, or online. The number of dual credit courses offered at the seventeen high schools within the College district vary widely with some districts offering limited dual credit courses. The KC Now program removes barriers to disadvantaged students who reside in districts that do not offer many dual credit courses. A variety of areas of study are available to students with new areas being introduced each year. In the 2026-2027 academic year, courses in agriculture, construction project management, and education will be introduced. College staff collaborate with high schools to develop a schedule which meets the students' needs.

The KC Now program has grown from two schools with four students in 2020 to 13 schools with 148 students in the 2025-2026 academic year. For students in the KC Now program, the matriculation rate to the College post high school graduation averages 64%. Some students have graduated high school with an earned college certificate and are entering the workforce upon high school graduation.

KC Now courses are offered at a 50% discount on tuition and fees with an additional 25% discount for students with financial need through the support of the Kaskaskia College Foundation. The KC Now program offers an outstanding value to parents and students as well as school districts as there is no cost charged to the high school.

8TH GRADE CAREER NIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

President Evans provided information on 8th Grade Career Night opportunities available to junior high schools in the district. College staff come to the school and meet with students and parents. Students complete a brief survey to see what their interests are potentially as a career and are introduced to different career opportunities and career pathway options. College staff assist parents and students in creating a roadmap of what courses they can take through their high school career taking advantage of the financial opportunities available to them through the Jump Start and KC Now programs. Information is also presented on the types of jobs available in the district, the wages for those jobs, and the labor demand in the district.

KC FOUNDATION UPDATE

Kaskaskia College provided more than $400,000 in financial aid to over 270 students during the past year, largely through support from community donors and partners. Community investment has helped many students complete their education with little or no debt. Compared with the estimated $120,000 to $160,000 cost of a four-year degree, a two-year degree at Kaskaskia College typically costs approximately $12,000 to $13,000 before scholarships or additional assistance. Through financial aid and scholarships, students are often able to reduce that cost substantially or graduate debt-free. The Kaskaskia College Foundation invested $40,000 in the KC Now program during the past year to help students begin their careers and achieve long-term success. The College also serves as an economic engine for the region, with approximately 60% to 80% of graduates remaining in the five-county area to pursue careers, raise families, and contribute to their communities.

REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

President Evans highlighted several items from the President's Report to the Community distributed at the meeting and encouraged attendees to review the publication for additional information.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

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Chair, Board of Trustees Kaskaskia College	Secretary, Board of Trustees Kaskaskia College

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