BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
NASHVILLE EDUCATION CENTER
JULY 14, 2026

WELCOME

President George Evans opened a community meeting at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 14, 2026 at the Nashville Education Center. Trustees Craig Finke and Linda Stover were present. Student Trustee Andolini Gray was present.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included President George Evans, Madison Althoff, Alison Bauza, Alan Boerngen, Michael Christensen, Jessica Foster, Carrie Hancock, Chris Holloway, Chris Hottes, Traci Masau, Kali Michael, Julie Obermark, Josh Paddock, Staci Palm, Josie Spihlmann, Jeff Thomas, and Fran Windler.

Community members in attendance included Kim Daughtery, Dee DeMoss, Karen Droste, Tina Ford, Kim Gill, Tara Hall (Senator Plummer's Office), Andy Kirchner, Terri Kurwicki, Steve Launius, Melissa Meador, T. J. Morthland (Congressman Mike Bost's Office), Karianne Schnitker, Keith Senior, Linda Summers, Will Summers, and Nicole Vogt.

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 up 3.5% in headcount and 13.4% in credit hours for the Fall 2026 semester. Enrollment continues trending in a positive direction.

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)

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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.

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 asked if the increase in enrollment is in headcount or in the number of credit hours being taken per person. President Evans confirmed the enrollment growth reflects more students taking classes, rather than students taking more credit hours. The College has seen a decline in the average number of credit hours students take compared with 10 years ago, largely because approximately 80% of students work while attending college. The increase in dual credit enrollment has also contributed to the increased enrollment trend, growing from less than 8% of total enrollment 10 years ago to approximately 28% to 30% today.
- President Evans was asked how there can be more people taking courses with less and less population each year. Despite the declining population, Kaskaskia College has increased enrollment by adding programs that address workforce needs throughout the district. Growth has been especially strong in vocational trades, including electrical, welding, and HVAC programs. The College has also expanded offerings in manufacturing, health care, and agriculture, which represent three of the district's largest employment sectors. In addition, approximately 150 students participate in KC Now, further contributing to enrollment growth.
- A community member asked how the vocational trades are marketed to K-12 level students. Kaskaskia College promotes vocational trades to K-12 students through its Mobile Manufacturing Lab, an interactive, mobile learning facility that visits schools, community events, parades, and junior high campuses. The College also participates in 8th-grade career nights which introduce students and parents to career opportunities, vocational programs, and dual credit options. Staff emphasize the strong earning potential available through local manufacturing careers and remain willing to bring outreach programs directly to junior and senior high schools and throughout the district.
- A community member praised Kaskaskia College for its strong partnership with local schools and its commitment to providing hands-on learning opportunities to future students. The College hosts students from his school on campus twice a year to do research papers in the Library. The College also hosts 8th-grade and sophomore career days. District high school students are invited to a vocational trades event at the Harrly L. Crisp Manufacturing & Trades Center in the Spring where students explore robotics, construction, electrical, HVAC, and welding through demonstrations and interactions with instructors.
- Dean of Workforce Engagement & Industrial Career Services Joy Fitts shared that many area businesses employ individuals who enter the workforce directly after

high school without a certificate, degree, or formal training. Employers often send these non-traditional students, typically age 24 or older, back to Kaskaskia College for additional education and/or training. The College also has apprenticeships set up where the employer sends students who do not have formal training to the College and the employee is trained in manufacturing and industrial trades.

- Further discussion focused on the ongoing challenges manufacturers and businesses face due to population decline, particularly their difficulty attracting and retaining qualified, engaged workers to sustain the workforce for future generations and ways the College, businesses, high schools, and junior highs can collaborate to meet these ongoing challenges. The College recognizes and promotes multiple pathways to career success. One way is through short-term training in fields such as welding, carpentry, manufacturing , and allied health fields which do not require a bachelor's or associated degree and can lead to stable, well-paying careers. The College offers certificate programs as well as entry-level skillset courses.
- A community member asked if there has ever been enough demand to create some of those programs during non-traditional hours like evenings for courses that include lab hours. The College is willing to offer career and technical programs during nontraditional hours, including evenings, when there is sufficient demand. Classes generally require approximately seven to eight students to cover costs, noting the College prioritizes public service over profit. The College also supports employer partnerships, including tuition assistance and apprenticeship models in which employees work for a company while attending classes. Evening courses are currently available in welding and HVAC, and faculty work to provide daytime employees with access to labs so they can complete required training.
- Additional discussion focused on the decline in the number of dual credit courses being offered at Nashville High School due to the loss of credentialed instructors through retirement or resignations. President Evans advised that Nashville High Schook ranks number five out of seventeen high schools in the district offering dual credit realizing there is still opportunities in this area. The new principal of Nashville High School acknowledged the concerns expressed and recognized the significant benefit these programs provide to students and their parents. An emphasis will be placed on strengthening the partnership between the College and Nashville High School while future hiring efforts may prioritize teachers who are willing and qualified to teach dual credit courses.
- Participants expressed interest in the Nashville Education Center being used to expand dual credit opportunities and other education programs at the Center. The group discussed the current coop between Okawville High School and Nashville High School for three nursing courses that are currently being taught at the Nashville Education Center through partnership with the College. President Evans suggested there may be collaborative efforts with local employers through the KC Now program to develop some type of additional program which is not being offered in Washington County and which is an industry need not currently being met in the community.

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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.

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.

REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

The President's Report to the Community is the annual report card of what the College has done in the past year. President Evans shared highlights of the information provided in the report and encouraged attendees to review the publication for additional information.

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.

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.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

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