

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
HARRY L. CRISP MANUFACTURING & TRADES CENTER
JULY 29, 2026**

WELCOME

President George Evans opened a community meeting at 5:55 p.m. on Wednesday, July 29, 2026 at the Harry L. Crisp Manufacturing & Trades Center. Trustee Louis Kalert was present. Student Trustee Andolini Gray was present.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included President George Evans, Michael Christensen, Cary Day, Joy Fitts, Sara Hanks, Kellie Henegar, Tommy Henegar, Christopher Hottes, Mark Kohnen, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, Sarah Ratermann, Alexis Tate, Kelsey Tate, Cory Wellen, and Amy Zanton

Community members in attendance included Barri Allen, Gracie Borton, Tara Hall, Marcus Holland, Rob Jackson, Alan Johnson, Mel Kelly, Matthew Kemp, Bryan Kuder, Galen Mahle, Veronica Morrison, Pam Norville, Joe Ramey, Tara Ramey, Renee Rau, Dan Rice, Kendall Rooney, and Beth Smith.

Media in attendance was Bruce Kropp of WJBD-WSIQ.

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 2% in headcount and 7% in credit hours for the Fall 2026 semester as of the current date. Enrollment continues trending in a positive direction since the pandemic.

The increase in enrollment can be attributed to the increase in dual credit courses taught in the high schools in the district and the increase in dual enrollment courses taught by College instructors at a substantially discounted rate to high school students in the district.

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.

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 what percentage of the College's enrollment consists of dual credit students. President Evans explained that dual credit students represent approximately 28% to 30% of total enrollment. Although the College does not charge tuition for dual credit courses, it is still responsible for providing dual credit students with the same comprehensive support services available to all Kaskaskia College students.
- A community member praised Kaskaskia College for providing an accessible and affordable higher education option, noting that the College was the only opportunity available to her given her family circumstances. She also shared that two family members earned dual credit in high school and went on to become nurse practitioners. Their dual credit coursework reduced the number of classes and years required to complete their education, resulting in significant financial savings. She emphasized that the College offers tremendous value to members of the community.
- 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.
- A community member thanked the College for the informative presentation. As a graduate of the College's nursing program, she offered a suggestion for the Foundation to engage nursing alumni by encouraging them to contribute \$25 per month. She noted that, because nurses earn a good wage, this would be a reasonable and sustainable contribution.

- A nurse working in senior behavioral health advocated for expanded educational opportunities for senior patients, including lifelong learning, adult education, computer literacy and technology classes, and opportunities for socialization. The discussion centered around potential opportunities for the College to offer non-credit classes for groups of approximately five to seven seniors, possibly at their care facility. Suggested topics included using smartphones and other technology, history, and other areas of interest to older adults. The representative will be connected with the Coordinator of Workforce Development & Community Education to explore available options.
- A community member representing the National Guard asked about the number of students who are veterans or who are currently serving in the military. Typically, veterans who are no longer serving comprise approximately 6% to 8% of the College's student population with very few active military students. These students qualify for financial assistance through the Illinois Veterans Grant and additional funding available through the Kaskaskia College Foundation. The National Guard representative shared the different barriers veterans and military students face and highlighted the education benefits provided by the National Guard and asked the College to encourage students to consider this additional financial option.
- A community member emphasized the importance of Kaskaskia College's accreditation. She shared that her daughter participated in dual credit courses while in high school and was able to transfer those credits to a college in Ohio because of the College's accreditation. She also praised the College's staff for being supportive and helpful to students, as well as being accommodating when reserving meeting spaces for community events.
- A community member shared that she attended Centralia High School and completed numerous dual credit courses. After graduating early, she enrolled at Southern Illinois University Carbondale with one semester of college credit already completed. However, after attending SIU-C for one semester and incurring significant debt, she transferred to Kaskaskia College, where staff collaborated with her to establish a payment plan. She emphasized that the dual credit opportunities offered through Centralia High School provide significant financial savings, particularly for students balancing full-time employment with full-time college enrollment.

ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

DUAL CREDIT ENROLLMENT

President Evans presented an update on dual credit offerings for the 2025-2026 academic year. A total of 137 high school instructors were credentialed; a total of 2,768 students took dual credit courses; a total of 299 dual credit courses were offered; and a total of 21,241 dual credit hours were earned. Tuition for dual credit courses is 100% waived providing great financial benefit to students and parents. Students earn high school and college credit at the same time while taking the course at their high school. Students are introduced to college-level coursework through dual credit offerings.

KC NOW

KC Now is an opportunity for growth in the district. 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. The College waives 50% of that tuition and if the student is from an economically impoverished area, the Foundation provides an additional 25% discount in tuition.

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. As ambassadors for the College, President Evans asked attendees to share this information with Board members, superintendents, and school principals.

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 highlighted several areas in the report and encouraged attendees to review the information provided.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Chair, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College

Secretary, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College