

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
GREENVILLE EDUCATION CENTER
MONDAY – JUNE 30, 2025**

WELCOME

President Evans opened the meeting at 12:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the Community Engagement Meeting.

Trustees Craig Finke, Louis Kalert, and Laura Wedekemper were in attendance, along with Student Trustee Meagan Mahlandt. Jerry Moyer was present representing the Kaskaskia College Foundation.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included Cary Day, George Evans, Joy Fitts, Terri Freeman, Lyle Gross, Sandi Laurent, Julie Obermark, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, Nathan Wilkins, and Amy Zanton.

Community members in attendance included Kayla Curry, Mary Dickenson, Colton Evans, Daniel Glynn, Tara Hall, Kathy Hanke, Noel Harnetiaux, Elaine McNamara, Jerry Sauerwein, and Jeannie Trudel.

Media present was Jeff Leidel of WGEL Radio.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Evans led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE

ENROLLMENT UPDATE

Vice President of Student Services Amy Zanton presented the current enrollment report highlighting a 1.5% increase in headcount for the summer term and a slight decrease of 2% in credit hours. Fall enrollment is showing strong numbers, with an approximate 25% increase compared to this time in the registration cycle last year. A larger graduating class size from local high schools is a contributing factor to this enrollment growth. The College has surpassed its credit hour goal for the fiscal year, finishing approximately 5% higher than the previous year. After a 10% decline during the pandemic years of 2020-2022, particularly in FY2021, the College has exceeded its pre-pandemic enrollment levels. This recovery is significant, as many institutions in the state have not achieved similar outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION CHANGES

- **FEDERAL CHANGES**

President Evans provided an update on federal legislative changes related to higher education and potential cuts that may affect federal funding.

- The impact to community colleges in Illinois is expected to be minimal, and there is no immediate threat to overall enrollment.
- There are concerns regarding the future of the TRIO program. There is currently no clear guidance from the administration at this time.
- The workforce PEL has successfully passed through the Senate Workforce Agreement. The Senate is still working on its version of the comprehensive bill that includes the workforce PEL, which was previously at risk of being cut. Fortunately, not only has the PEL been preserved, but there is also a slight increase being reconciled between the House and Senate. This impact on community colleges is notable, especially in districts with many manufacturers and healthcare businesses that require short-term certificates in fields like manufacturing, welding, and health sciences. Many employers no longer mandate a two-year degree for successful employment, allowing students to start working after just six months of training through these programs. This timeframe aligns with the short-term PEL, benefiting students who need financial support.
- It is currently too early to assess the student loan process due to frequent changes to the President's plans to liquidate the Department of Education. While it is inaccurate to assume that all Title IV plans and PEL funds would disappear, the future of the Department of Education remains uncertain. The Department primarily serves as a pass-through agency for federal funds, which would then be allocated to the states. For now, the immediate impact to Kaskaskia College is expected to be minimal.

- **STATE CHANGES – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

President Evans provided a legislative update on changes occurring in the State of Illinois related to higher education.

- Community colleges have not been fully funded since 2002, currently operating at about 23 to 24 cents on the dollar due to a flawed funding formula. Recent years have seen small, incremental increases in funding, a welcome change after ten years of flat or negative funding. The State of Illinois is finally paying attention to higher education and is beginning to prioritize higher education funding after years of neglect.
- While Kaskaskia College depends on tax revenue, the College's geographic district includes many areas with forests, parks, and lakes

that do not generate tax income, unlike urban institutions with significant urban tax bases. As an equalization school, Kaskaskia College receives equalization funding, which is allocated from higher education funding to support rural schools in stabilizing their finances.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE

- The Community College Baccalaureate bill did not pass during the Spring session, but the Governor's office has expressed intentions to pursue it in the upcoming fall veto session. The Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents have endorsed the initiative. In the long term, Kaskaskia College prefers to collaborate with university partners to offer affordable education using its facilities rather than independently providing baccalaureate degrees. The College will have increased opportunities for collaboration with university partners.
- The Illinois General Assembly is currently supportive of higher education, with a strong emphasis on workforce development. The pandemic highlighted the urgent need for trained individuals in Illinois and across the United States, and Kaskaskia College is well-positioned to address this demand effectively.

DUAL CREDIT BILL

- The Dual Credit Quality Control Act was signed into law. The law mandates collaboration between high school districts and community college systems across Illinois regarding offering dual credit. Under this legislation, community colleges have the first right of refusal to partner with K-12 institutions for offering dual credit courses. There is an appeal process available to high schools through the Illinois Community College Board if the community college denies the dual credit course. The law also requires an annual meeting of representatives of the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Council of Community College Presidents, and K-12 institutions to discuss any issues related to dual credit. The College values its good relationships with K-12 partners and anticipates a more collaborative approach at the state level.

REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

President Evans shared highlights of the information provided in the President's Report to the Community which was provided to attendees. The highlights included information on the College's 85th anniversary; the College's dedication to training the area workforce and contributions to vocational trades in the district; the implementation of new certificate programs based on district needs identified; grants awarded; the various national, state, and regional awards received by Kaskaskia College, including being a finalist for the St. Louis Business Journal's Best Places to Work award, the Ellucian Impact Award, and the Partners in Progress Award; awards earned by College staff which included the

inaugural AAACE Faculty Award for Workforce and Professional Development, the 2025 Post Secondary Golden Owl Award, and IBHE Nursing Education Fellowships; the community impact the College has through the many differing events held on campus throughout the year; celebrations of student success; the new Gymnasium; a snapshot of the College's financials; and a "By the Numbers" section which provides pertinent statistics regarding the College.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

President Evans opened the floor for comments, questions, and suggestions from attendees.

- One attendee praised the partnership agreement between Kaskaskia College and the Greenville Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) for providing training to FCI residents and expressed a desire to continue the agreement, pending funding.
- Another attendee recognized the College for the pergola in Lincoln Park in Vandalia, which was manufactured and installed by the College's welding program.
- Additionally, an attendee noted that dual credit transfers effectively to out-of-state institutions as well as in-state institutions, highlighting that her daughter benefited from this opportunity.
- Another participant commended the College for incorporating dual credit into the Bond County CEO programs and thanked the College for its overall involvement in the CEO program.

KC FOUNDATION UPDATE

President Evans provided an update on the Kaskaskia College Foundation. In 2024, the Kaskaskia College Foundation raised \$487,000 and awarded over \$368,000 in scholarships that came in the form of 395 scholarships awarded to 252 students (some students received multiple scholarships) for the 2024-2025 academic year. The Foundation generates funds through an annual winter gala and a spring golf outing, which support scholarships and financial assistance for students based on financial need, including programs like KC Now.

KC NOW PROGRAM AND DUAL CREDIT UPDATE

Provost and Vice President of Instruction Services Julie Obermark provided an update on dual credit and the KC Now Program.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

Chair, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College

Secretary, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College