

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
VANDALIA EDUCATION CENTER
TUESDAY – JULY 15, 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 Linda Stover were present.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included Wendy Blythe, Mike Christensen, Cary Day, George Evans, Cynthia Field, Julie Obermark, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, Zac Ricke, Lisa Ring, and Kylee Williams.

Community members in attendance included Charles Barenfanger, Walt Barenfanger, Ben Frazier, Jennifer Garrison, Tara Hall, Steve Henna, Jay Jolliff, Doug Knebel, LaDonna Koeberlein, LaTisha Paslay, Matt Rovenstine, Susan Teich, Todd Thoman, Reed Torbeck, and Zach Wuebbels.

Media present was Erica Foltz from I70 Media.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Evans led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

President Evans acknowledged the Alice Hudders Art Gallery located in the Vandalia Education Center. Thanks to the endowment of private donors, the art gallery will be at this location for perpetuity. Different art collections will be cycled through the gallery and the gallery will collaborate with local artists and art collectors. President Evans announced the College is collaborating with the donors to incorporate new landscaping and artwork outdoors at the Vandalia Education Center to enhance the outside of the art gallery.

A request at a previous Community Engagement Meetings held at the Vandalia Education Center was for the College to find specific programming that could be offered at the Vandalia Education Center. Due to some donors who have an interest in Fayette County and interest from our advisory board, a decision was made to move the Paramedicine

Approved 07/28/25

Program from the Main Campus in Centralia to the Vandalia Education Center. The program was moved to the Vandalia campus last year. The first pinning for the program is being held this evening at the Vandalia Education Center.

STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE

ENROLLMENT UPDATE

Dean of Enrollment Services Staci Palm 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 were concerns regarding the future of the TRIO program up until last week when the College was notified TRIO will be funded next year. The college is still awaiting grant confirmation to learn the specifics.
- The Adult Education Program is supported by both federal and state funding. While there are concerns about potential reductions in federal funding, the program currently receives about twenty-five cents on the dollar from federal sources. In contrast, state funding for the program remains stable.
- 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 the 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.

- An attendee inquired about the duration for students to earn new construction certificates. Provost Obermark explained that each certificate requires a couple of classes, allowing students to take one course per semester or both in the same semester, with scheduling flexibility to accommodate school or work commitments. The certificates are stackable to the project management degree; however, the students could exit out with the two certificates on their transcript if they wish to enter the workforce.
- Another attendee expressed gratitude for the College's cooperation in hosting events and recognized the pergola in Lincoln Park in Vandalia, which was manufactured and installed by the College's welding program.
- An attendee asked how the Vandalia campus specifically is doing overall. Education Center Director Wendy Blythe advised that enrollment for summer was low due to a lot of students wanting to take the summer off school. Fall enrollment is looking very good. Mrs. Blythe advised that multiple students attending SIU-E and SIU-C are taking classes at the Vandalia Education Center while they are home on summer break due to the proximity and lower tuition costs for those courses. Another attendee added that her daughter was home over the summer and took a course at Lincoln Land that was not offered at Kaskaskia College; however, Kaskaskia College proctored the test for that class. Discussion ensued regarding the courses offered at the Vandalia campus and the student services offered at the campus.
- Another attendee asked President Evans to share the opportunities available to students through the OKAW Vocational Center. The Center will be working

collaboratively with the three community colleges who have high school students in their districts who send students to the vocational center. Those colleges are Kaskaskia College, Lakeland Community College, and Lincoln Land Community College. Rather than competing for border students, the vocational center and the community colleges will work together collaboratively to identify regional needs in the area of the vocational center and will develop programs to meet those needs without duplicating services.

- Lastly, an attendee inquired about the percentage of adult learners who were not seeking credited courses but simply wanted to learn something new. It was noted that non-credit course enrollments are not tracked, making it difficult to quantify this population. However, the College provides facilities for these non-revenue producing courses, contributing to the community by providing this service to taxpayers.

KC FOUNDATION UPDATE

Executive Director of Development Michael Christensen 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, additional financial assistance for students based on financial need, including programs like KC Now, and other wraparound services. The Foundation hosts an annual scholarship reception where donors are able to meet and connect with the recipients of their scholarships.

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 1:06 p.m.

Chair, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College

Secretary, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College