

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501
SALEM EDUCATION CENTER
THURSDAY – OCTOBER 2, 2025**

WELCOME

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

Trustee Laura Wedekemper was present.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included Mike Christensen, Cary Day, George Evans, Carrie Hancock, Christopher Hottes, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, Shawn Richards, Lisa Ring, Andrea Shipley, and Amy Zanton.

Community members in attendance included Todd Boles, John Cavaletto, Connie Cavaletto, Jessica Coleman, Nicolas Farley, Diane Keortge, Michael Koehnke, Bruce Kropp, Melanie Lusch, Phil March, Lisa Peck, David Rademacher, Sara Rose, Tyler Rose, Dennis Rosenberger, James Timpe, Jodi Trinkle, and Justin Venhaus

Media present were Bruce Kropp from WJBD and Dennis Rosebergh Salem Times Commoner.

President Evans addressed the water issues that led to the closure of the facility on August 18, 2025. Over the past five years, there were two significant incidents resulting in the necessity to close the Salem Education Center for a period. A clogged drainage system on the south side of the building necessitated closure of the facility, and shortly thereafter, a 100-year rain event caused water damage to the northern part of the building necessitated an additional closure of the facility. Despite these challenges, President Evans highlighted that Kaskaskia College's strong regional partnerships ensured operations continued smoothly.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Evans led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

RECOGNITION – BRYAN-BENNETT LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT

When displacement occurred due to the closure of the Education Center, many courses were successfully relocated to the Main Campus in Centralia, but one adult education program, serving vulnerable populations, required proximity for transportation reasons.

APPROVED 10/27/25

Bryan Bennett Library was notably hospitable, offering their space free of charge, ensuring that Adult Education students continued to receive uninterrupted service. A certificate was presented to Jodi Trinkle representing the library as a small gesture to honor the strong relationship.

STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE

ENROLLMENT UPDATE

Vice President of Student Services Amy Zanton presented the current enrollment report highlighting increases of 3.3% in Headcount and 2.8% in Credit Hours for the Fall semester compared to this point last year. 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.

President Evans highlighted that this marks the seventh consecutive year of increased enrollment for the fall semesters. This achievement is particularly noteworthy given that all nine counties, including Clinton County, experienced population declines in the last census. While there has been some growth in certain areas, it has not offset the overall losses, which have exceeded the gains. President Evans highlighted the growth in the number of graduating high school students enrolling in vocational trade programs, which has enhanced workforce training in the region.

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 potential closure of the Department of Education would have minimal impact on Kaskaskia College. Key services, such as Perkins and PEL grants, are mandated by law and must be funded, regardless of any executive orders. The current administration aims to transition some responsibilities for the dissemination of these funds from the Department of Labor to state governments, which would take several years. Perkins funding supports Career and Technical Education (CTE) with a distribution of 60% for high schools and 40% for higher education, and it is protected by law. PEL grants, part of Title IV, are also protected by law with approximately 60% of students being eligible for these grants which primarily serve economically disadvantaged populations.

- **STATE CHANGES – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

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

Community College Baccalaureate Development: The Governor's office has tasked community colleges to research and develop a plan to offer Community College Baccalaureates (CCBs) at some of the 45 community colleges in Illinois. These programs must address industry needs not being met by university partners or a specific need not being met in a given location. While no immediate actions are expected during the fall veto session, there is an expectation this topic will be brought up again during the spring general assembly. Kaskaskia College (KC) is aligned with its community college partners, but the College may not pursue this initiative initially due to existing relationships with Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE).

Dual Credit Control Act: Kaskaskia College has strong relationships with the 17 high schools in its district. The College played a role in addressing issues related to the Dual Credit Control Act. This act aims to:

- Protect the academic quality of dual credit offerings in Illinois, ensuring they meet the same standards as those taught on the college campus, including faculty credential requirements.
- Grant community colleges the first right of refusal for dual credit courses, directing high schools to communicate with local colleges about potential dual credit offerings. If there are no syllabi or curriculum arrangements made with the community college, the high school can appeal to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB).
- Foster collaboration between community colleges and high schools to work together to resolve dual credit issues before any issues escalate to the general assembly.

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 economic impact the College has in the district; the Career Pathways Tool including a brief discussion on the College's articulation agreements and dual credit offerings; opportunities for students through the KCNow program; grants awarded; the College's dedication to training the area workforce and contributions to the vocational trades in the district; the community impact the College has through the many differing events held on campus throughout the year; 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.

- Bruce Kropp asked about the future plans for the Salem Education Center. President Evans shared an example of the Anatomy & Physiology course taught by Dr. Engel at the Salem Education Center. This course is a requirement for students

pursuing an associate's degree in the health care fields. This allows students to take a 4-credit hour class at the Center for \$600, compared to \$2,500 at a university, making it a more accessible option. These types of courses will continue to be offered along with general education courses as needs are identified for this location. Additionally, the College will continue meeting community needs by offering non-credit courses such as classes on how to use an iPhone and KICK classes where students participate in such classes as building with Legos and creating rockets. The Education Center will remain vital, focusing on continuing education.

- A question was raised regarding the most significant workforce needs in the district. President Evans responded that manufacturing is the largest employer within the 9-county district, followed by healthcare in second place and agriculture in third.
- A question was asked regarding proposed changes to a bill that would cover tuition for all college students under a certain income. President Evans explained the PELL grant which already provides federal dollars to economically disadvantaged students to earn a degree. PELL funds do not have to be paid back. The State MAP grant is similar to the PELL grant; however, there are not as many funds available under MAP. Sixty percent of the overall student population are economically disadvantaged. The second population group served consists of middle-class families whose income is just above the threshold for PELL grants, making them eligible for scholarships through the Foundation. Despite appearing financially stable on paper, these families often struggle to afford college, leading to student loans that can result in significant debt. The College's internal philosophy emphasizes that no student will be turned away due to financial constraints. While the Foundation cannot support every student, it is committed to finding ways to assist those in need.

KC FOUNDATION UPDATE

Executive Director of Development Michael Christensen provided an update on the Kaskaskia College Foundation.

- This year, there has been a focused effort to secure grants from some of the organizations the Foundation collaborates with. This effort resulted in funding for a spectrometer for the chemistry program and can also support students in health care fields. The spectrometer provides students the ability to transition from theoretical to practical applications in the sciences. In addition, the Southern Illinois Builders Association (SIBA) has provided a new drone to enhance the architecture program.
- A total of \$368,000 has been awarded in scholarships to 252 students, with 395 scholarships distributed. This funding plays a crucial role in making education more affordable for students and their parents.
- The College recognized the invaluable contributions to the advancement of education of former Illinois State Representative John Cavaletto who played a pivotal role in acquisition of the Animal Disease lab to Kaskaskia College.

The Kaskaskia College Agricultural Education Center was renamed the John D. Cavaletto Agricultural Center.

- The annual winter gala will be held on November 15, 2025, in the Lifelong Learning Center at the College's main campus. The entertainment will be Dueling Pianos. Tickets are \$85 but the Foundation is also looking for sponsors for the event.
- The new President of the Kaskaskia College Foundation Board is Ty Bates from Patoka, IL.

SUMMARY OF CAMPUS RENOVATIONS AND ATHLETICS UPDATE

- **Campus Renovations:** The College is nearing the completion of major renovations, having taken advantage of historically low interest rates in 2021. The updates focus on student needs, including classroom designs and furniture, reflecting the College's commitment to education and student input.
- **Gymnasium Update:** The new gymnasium is expected to be completed in 1.5 months. The old gym was initially intended as a practice facility; however, due to lack of funding a new gymnasium was never constructed. The College plans to host a celebration for the new facility and community members will be invited. The facility will also serve as a venue for career fairs and other events.
- **Athletics Strategy:** Changes in the NCAA transfer portal now allows student-athletes to choose their institutions. Kaskaskia College will not engage in paying athletes for their name or image but aims to strengthen regional partnerships. There will be an increased focus on recruiting local talent, with plans to coordinate meetings with the athletic directors from the 17 high schools in the district to gather feedback and enhance recruitment strategies. Additionally, the college will explore the feasibility of adding new sports that local students are currently participating in, such as bass fishing and bowling, which are not offered at the College. The College remains committed to maintaining competitiveness while transitioning its approach to local student recruitment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

Chair, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College

Secretary, Board of Trustees
Kaskaskia College