

**Rock Valley College Board of Trustees
Illinois Community College District No. 511
3301 Mulford Road, Rockford, IL, 61114
Educational Resource Center, Performing Arts Room, Room 0214
Regular Meeting
October 28, 2025, 5:15 p.m.**

MINUTES

Call to Order

The Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District No. 511, Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb, McHenry, Ogle, and Stephenson Counties, Illinois convened in the Performing Arts Room (PAR), Room 0214, in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus on Tuesday, October 28, 2025. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Due to the absence of Board Secretary Jenna Goldsmith, Bob Trojan acted as secretary until she arrived.

Roll Call

Mr. Paul Gorski
Ms. Kristen Simpson
Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia
Student Trustee Mr. Isiah Blake

Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Mr. John Nelson-arrived 5:32 p.m.
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith-arrived 5:36 p.m.

The following trustee was absent at roll call: Ms. Crystal Soltow.

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Ms. Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Huotari, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Chief Operations Officer; Attorney Matthew Gardner Robbins Schwartz.

Board Members Attendance by Means Other Than Physical Presence

No board members attended by means other than physical presence.

Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)

There were no communications, petitions, or public comments.

Recognition of Visitors

There were no visitors to be recognized.

General Presentations

There were no general presentations.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting and the September 23, 2025, Regular meeting.

There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Action Items

1. BR8319 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – September 2025)

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the claims sheets from the Ellucian check register for the period from September 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025. The total is \$3,797,344.23.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve BR8319. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

2. BR8320 – Purchase Report A-FY2026 Amendments

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the items marked with an asterisk on Purchase Report A – FY2026 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8320. No changes have been made since the October 14 Committee of the Whole meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

3. BR8321 – Purchase Report B-FY2026 Purchases

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the items marked with an asterisk on Purchase Report B – FY2026 Purchases.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8321.

Discussion ensued regarding Purchase Report B. Ms. Ellen Olson stated that there have been changes since the October 14th Committee of the Whole Meeting in the janitorial and mechanical areas. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

4. BR8322 – Levy Year 2025 Estimated Taxes Required and Setting Hearing Date for Truth-in-Taxation

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the following estimates for the amount of taxes necessary to be raised by taxation for the levy year 2025.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8322. There was no discussion or comments. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

5. BR8323 – Second Reading: Update to Rock Valley College Board Policy Manual, Article 2-Operations

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the updates to Article 2-Operations of the Board Policy Manual. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve Board Report 8323. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

6. BR8324 – Review of Athletic Turf Fundraising Agreement Between Rock Valley College and the Rock Valley College Foundation

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Rock Valley College Foundation and RVC Athletic Turf Fundraising Agreement.

A motion was made by Trustee Simpson, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8324. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

7. BR8325 – Rock Valley College Lease Agreement with OSF Healthcare System – Third Amendment

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Third Amendment to the original Lease Agreement between Rock Valley College and OSF Healthcare System. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8325. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

8. BR8326 – Fire Tower Intergovernmental Grant Agreement Between Rock Valley College and the City of Loves Park

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Fire Tower Intergovernmental Grant Agreement between Rock Valley College and the City of Loves Park. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8326.

Discussion ensued. In response to a question from Board Chair Gorski, Vice President Rick Jenks gave a brief history of the Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Loves Park. The local fire department and Rock Valley College were looking for a place to train closer than Byron. Chad Roth spoke with the local fire chiefs, and the City of Loves Park had available land. At that time, Dr. Spearman secured funding from our legislators. This was a community team effort.

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

9. BR8327 – Fire Tower Ground Lease Agreement Between Rock Valley College and the City of Loves Park

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Fire Tower Ground Lease Agreement between Rock Valley College and the City of Loves Park. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8327. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Other Business

1. **New Business** – There was no new business to be discussed.
2. **Unfinished Business** – There was no unfinished business to be discussed.
3. **Trustee Conference Reports**

Board Chair Gorski asked the trustees who attended the ACCT Leadership Congress in New Orleans to give a brief report on their experience.

a. Trustee Simpson said that she had a valuable experience at the ACCT Leadership Congress and that the RVC presentation was well-received. She attended a session on board retreats and learned that they should be more enjoyable and not all business. Trustee Simpson will continue her report at the November 4th Committee of the Whole meeting.

b. Trustee Trojan commented that it was a good conference. There were 1,800 attendees and 21 of the 142 sessions were on Artificial Intelligence (AI). RVC's presentation on Strategic Planning was by far the best of anything he saw. Most presentations were roundtable discussions. Trustee Trojan reported on a few sessions, including creating a culture of innovation. The impact of low graduation rates requires schools to embrace personalized learning that can be provided by companies like Cengage. Trustee Trojan also attended a session where Northwest Arkansas Community College had a cybersecurity attack, and they talked about their experience. When it happened, the insurance company took control, and the school eventually put everything in the cloud. He asked if we have insurance for a cybersecurity attack similar to this, and Vice President Jenks responded yes. Trustee Trojan attended a luncheon in which an AI professional consultant was the speaker. Some of those points made during that speech should be considered by RVC when we step into the AI space: 1. How can we make RVC the place for employers and industry to turn to for talent? 2. The Board needs to ensure that RVC has a clear strategy, appropriate policies and organizational agility when it comes to the AI field. ChatGPT seems to be a main source of AI at this point.

Trustee John Nelson arrived at 5:32 pm

c. Trustee Nelson commented on his conference experience. The sessions were great, including Rock Valley College's presentation. An ICCTA representative congratulated him on a great team and a very good presentation. Trustee Nelson attended a session where they discussed a new law case regarding free speech on campuses. This was reviewed in the 3rd circuit. They are analyzing the Supreme Court decision in Texas, where censure is permissible as long as it is not in writing. The case is currently pending.

5:36 p.m.— Trustee Jenna Goldsmith arrived

Updates/Reports

1. President Update

Dr. Spearman updated trustees on various topics:

- On October 10, we celebrated RVC's birthday with a Rockford Register Star letter to the editor sharing the significance of education in the area.
- The same day, we held a book launch for Professor Dr. Daniel Blumlo's book, *Rock Valley College: The Campus History Series*.
- From October 22-25, we had a team of people attend the ACCT Leadership Congress in New Orleans, LA. The team included Trustees Kristen Simpson, John Nelson, and Bob Trojan, Vice President Heather Snider, and Studer Education Consultant, Dr. Julie Kunselman.
- RVC is one of the 200 community colleges that are eligible to apply for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The prize is worth \$1 million. The Aspen Committee accumulated data about Rock Valley College in order to finalize the list of 200 eligible community colleges.
- Stellantis provided a \$10,000 check to the RVC Foundation to help purchase toolkits for our automotive students.
- We celebrated Manufacturing Month at the ATC, which Dr. Hansen Stewart and Trustee Bob Trojan will share more about later in the meeting.

2. Leadership Update

- Dr. Keith Barnes announced 1) The Office of Cultural Excellence and Belonging (CEB) is hosting its 2025 Fall Symposium on Friday, October 31, in the Student Center Atrium. Lunch will be provided and attendees will learn about listening circles. 2) The CEB office won the Student Affairs Halloween Decoration Contest. 3) RVC will hold a trunk-or-treat on Thursday, October 30, from 5-8 p.m. 4) The Rockford Ice Hogs will host their annual Day of the Dead Night on Saturday, November 1, 2025. Last year the Ice Hogs Community Fund donated \$5,000 to ALAS.
 - Trustee Nelson asked if trustees are encouraged to attend the Ice Hogs game and how do people bid on the jerseys. Dr. Barnes was not sure, but he said that trustees could buy tickets to the game.
 - Board Chair Gorski asked if the CEB Office was involved in the suicide awareness walk earlier this month, as the Board would like to be reminded about events like this. He said he appreciates the campus being a part of this effort.
- Dr. Patrick Peyer gave an update on fall athletics. 1) Men's and women's soccer will be in the regional tournaments soon. 2) Women's volleyball has one more weekend of play prior to their seeding for next weekend's tournament. Basketball and other winter sports will start in the next few weekends. 3) The Personal Success Counseling program hosted a National Suicide and Mental Health Awareness Walk.

- 4) RPS Career Expo was held on October 15th at Sportscore II. RVC faculty and staff attended and provided information on several academic programs.
- 5) RAISE held an open house on October 20th for prospective students and families.
 - Trustee Nelson asked when bowling starts. Dr. Peyer responded that the bowling team is in their pre-season now, and they start their actual season in December or January.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley announced that the Human Resources Department hosted the annual Supervisor 101 training where 14 people participated. Thanks to Justin Severson for organizing this important training.
- 2) Biometric screening was done for benefits-eligible employees. Thanks to Brie Grable and OSF St. Anthony for their partnership through RVCare.
- 3) November 3 - 23 marks the period of time for open enrollment.
 - Trustee Nelson asked who's qualified for biometric screening, and Dr. Terrica Huntley responded that all full-time benefits-eligible employees can take advantage of this screening.
 - Board Chair Paul Gorski asked if we get a discount from the insurance policy if we have higher participation in biometric program.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley on behalf Dr. Hansen Stewart provided the following updates:
 - 1) Manufacturing Day update: 252 students and several industry leaders attended. Students loved the RVC demos, robots, and Roosevelt students were especially excited since they are signed up for forklift classes.
 - 2) RVC received a \$110,000 grant from ICCB's Non-credit Strategies at Work Grant, which starts on January 1, 2026.
 - 3) On November 5, Parkland College in Champaign, IL will tour our Aviation Career Education Center (ACEC) and have a conversation with RVC Leadership.
 - Trustee Trojan asked how the \$110,000 be used. Vice President Heather Snider stated that it will be used for wrap-around services for non-credit programs.
- Vice President Heather Snider gave the following enrollment updates:
 - 1) Fall credit enrollment is 4% ahead of last year, 4% ahead of budget, and we have met the stretch goal.
 - 2) When all terms for FY26 are combined, we are 4% ahead of last year, 83% to budget, and 79% to the stretch goal.
 Trustee Trojan asked if spring will be equal to fall enrollment. Vice President Heather Snider responded that we're trying to keep it level, but fall is always higher than the spring.
 - Trustee Nelson asked if spring is 50% below or average? Vice President Heather Snider stated that we're trending a bit better than last year.
 - Kudos to Marketing and Communications for receiving a Gold Medallion award for RVC's 60th Anniversary Campaign from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations. This is a premier regional competition for innovative work done at two-year institutions.
 - On behalf of Dr. Amanda Smith, the academic theater department performed a fall play, *Declaration*, directed by Jen Thompson. There were nearly 200 attendees.
- Vice President Ellen Olson did not provide a report.

- Vice President Rick Jenks gave the following operations updates: 1) He acknowledged the IT team for upgrading all of our computers to the Windows 11 mandate. The IT team had to build the Windows 11 image for RVC and push it out to 1,702 computers. They worked on 3,248 computers in less than three weeks. Congrats to the team for a job well done. 2) Starlight Theatre won seven Lou Awards and was nominated for 20. Their 2026 season will include plays such as *Something Rotten*, *Wizard of Oz*, and *Once on this Island*.
 - Trustee Cudia would like an awards list with bullet points, like those won by Starlight or our MarCom Department so that trustees can publicize it when they are out in the community.

3. Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) Report

Trustee Nelson commented that ICCTA did not meet in New Orleans during the ACCT Leadership Congress, nor did anyone from Illinois run for ACCT board. The next meeting will take place on November 14th and 15th, and he encourages other trustees to attend.

4. Student Trustee Report

Student Trustee Isiah Blake provided an update on recent student activities including SGA, Black Student Union, and InterVarsity. He summarized his report of attendance at the ICCSAA conference, especially the importance of observing things around you and taking the initiative.

- Trustee Trojan asked how many students participate in the student clubs. Student Trustee Blake said usually around 8-12 students per club, but BSU and InterVarsity are starting to have increasing members. SGA has about 10-12 students currently
- Trustee Nelson asked if more clubs are being created. Student Trustee Blake said that some clubs just aren't active, although they have been approved. He guessed there are about 12 active clubs with active participation.
- Trustee Cudia stated that at one time there were about 40 clubs. Student Trustee Blake responded that some of the clubs are defunct.

5. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Cudia talked about her past attendance at trustee conferences. 1) During the conference presentations she attended in New York City, she thought "We're already doing that." At that time, we didn't present, but shortly after that, here we are, presenting at conferences like the ACCT Leadership Congress. It provides us a good opportunity to learn, and it makes me very proud how we're being recognized nationally. 2) Trustee Cudia is very interested in the topic of AI. She signed up for a CLR class on AI, but is on a waiting list. Trustee Cudia said she feels inspired to take classes in the spring.
- Trustee Goldsmith reported that she attended some campus events recently: two of them were on campus, and one was virtual. Going to events is a good reminder of the student experience at RVC. Dr. Goldsmith attended the First Tuesday lecture last month about cattle deaths. Then, she went to the Banned Book panel discussion, which was packed with people. The discussion was interesting and inspiring. Last week, she went to the reading of the *Rockford Anthology*, which was held at Rockford University. It is a great book.

- Trustee Nelson asked how much the book was, and Trustee Goldsmith responded, \$24.99.
- Trustee Trojan stated that RVC was the only school in the area to recognize Manufacturing Day. State-wide visitors of associations were present. We're part of Makers on the Move, where attendees were able to sign the bus, which travels to different manufacturing sites. Trustee Trojan attended the 75th Anniversary Hennig open house, which included Dietmar Goellner's mention of Dr. Spearman and his willingness to work with Hennig in a cooperative spirit. Hennig was also part of the CEO challenge.
- Trustee Simpson mentioned that she had a picture from her travels to New Orleans, which featured a ghost.
- Trustee Nelson participated in a tour group through the 9th Ward in New Orleans, in which he saw the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.
- Board Chair Gorski thanked Trustee Trojan for acting as board secretary. He also extended his thanks to the IT staff and their work in updating the campus computers. Board Chair Gorski announced that soon they would be discussing the contract renewal for Dr. Spearman and faculty alike. Thanks to all for being productive in the community.

6. RVC Foundation Report

Trustee Trojan provided an update on the RVC Foundation. There were 82 attendees at the family breakfast in October. The panel focused on three students who had received scholarships. They expressed their heartfelt thanks to donors. On November 7th, the Foundation will hold the Scholarship Luncheon; 360 people are signed up with many on the waiting list. Dr. Spearman and Brittany are having continuous discussions with large donors. The Foundation is preparing a request for an additional staff member in order to help raise funds and ensure that information is getting out about their scholarships.

- Board Chair Gorski commented that he liked Brittany Freiberg's report at the October 14th Committee of the Whole meeting.

7. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report

The FOIA report was accepted as presented.

The Personnel Report is included in the packet.

Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:44 p.m., a motion was made by Board Chair Gorski, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn to closed session to discuss: 1) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees per Section 2 (c)(2), in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Reconvene Open Session

At 7:03 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to adjourn the closed session. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote. No action was taken as a result of closed session.

Next Meeting

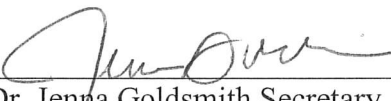
The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on November 4, 2025, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular Meeting will be held on November 18, 2025, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

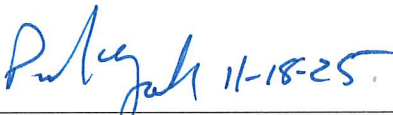
Adjournment

At 7:05 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to adjourn the Regular meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Ann L. Kerwitz



Dr. Jenna Goldsmith Secretary



Paul Gorski, Board Chair

