

**Rock Valley College
Community College District No. 511
3301 N. Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114
BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
5:15 p.m. Tuesday, November 4, 2025**

MINUTES

Call to Order

The Rock Valley College (RVC) Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting convened on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) in the Educational Resource Center (ERC). The meeting was called to order at 5:16 p.m. by Board Chair Paul Gorski.

Roll Call

The following members of the Board of Trustees were present at roll call:

Mr. Paul Gorski	Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith	Mr. John Nelson joined the meeting at 5:50 p.m.
Ms. Kristen Simpson	Mr. Isiah Blake, Student Trustee
Ms. Crystal Soltow	

The following Trustees were absent at roll call: Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia. John Nelson joined the meeting at 5:50 p.m.

Also present: Dr. Howard J. Spearman, President; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence Belonging; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Ms. Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Ms. Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Huotari, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Operations, Attorney Matthew Gardner, Robbins Schwartz.

Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence

There were no Board Members attending by any other means.

Communications and Petitions

There were no public comments, communications, or petitions to be recognized.

Recognition of Visitors

There were no visitors to be recognized.

Review of Minutes

There were no comments on the minutes from the October 14, 2025, Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting.

General Presentations

There were no general presentations.

Teaching, Learning & Communications Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Goldsmith

1. Athletic Golf Program NJCAA Division II Request

Dr. Patrick Peyer, vice president of student affairs, presented the Division II Athletic Scholarship Update. Dr. Peyer discussed the history of how Rock Valley College's (RVC) baseball, softball, men's basketball, women's basketball, volleyball, men's soccer, and women's soccer teams moved from Division III to Division II, and how RVC provides scholarships to cover partial tuition and fees through course waivers for courses needed to earn a degree. Dr. Peyer explained that RVC funds athletic scholarships at 50% of the maximum allowable for the sports listed above, totaling no more than \$300,000 in scholarship expenses per year for four years. Dr. Peyer discussed the totals and successes of the scholarships that were issued for Fiscal Years (FY) 2023-2025. Dr. Peyer explained that the next steps will be to request FY2027-FY2030 to raise the scholarship level to \$400,000 annually, add Men's and Women's Bowling to the scholarship program list, and add the Men's and Women's Golf teams to the NJCAA Division II and to add them to the scholarship program list. Discussion ensued.

2. Authorization to Add Bowling as a Scholarship Funded Athletic Program

Dr. Peyer stated that the RVC bowling team has competed at the NJCAA Division I level for eight years. The bowling team has had unprecedented success nationally, winning the 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2024 NJCAA Men's Bowling National Championships, while the men also finished second in 2019, fourth in 2021, and third in 2025. The women have also won the National Championship in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and finished third in 2020. RVC would like to fund the Men's and Women's Bowling scholarships beginning in FY2027 and allocate a portion of approved athletic scholarships for the Men's and Women's Bowling to cover partial tuition and fees for courses needed to earn a degree at RVC.

3. Enrollment Update

Ms. Heather Snider, vice president of institutional effectiveness and communications, presented the FY2026 Enrollment Update. Ms. Snider stated that changes to the Enrollment Update have occurred since this is a busy time for enrolling students for both Winterim and Spring. Ms. Snider said that RVC is about 1.4% down from last year for Winterim, but RVC is already 2% over the budget for the Winter term and 95% to the stretch goal. RVC's Spring term is about even with FY2025 right now and is 57% to budget and 55% to the Spring enrollment stretch goal. Ms. Snider said if you look at RVC's year overall, including Summer I, Fall, Winter, and Spring, RVC is 4% ahead of where it was at this time last year; 82% to the budget and 78% to the stretch goal. Discussion ensued.

4. Strategic Plan Update: Persistence Strategies

Dr. Peyer presented data from RVC's partnership with Interact Consulting. Persistence from fall to spring improved to 78%, reaching 81% in 2024–2025. Dr. Peyer shared data analyzed by age, race, and student engagement activities. Students who attended New Student Welcome sessions, met with advisors, or completed Student Success (ST 100) courses showed significantly higher persistence rates. Discussion covered potential tools to support multilingual

students and the need for technology to improve language accessibility. Trustees emphasized the importance of trend data and actionable retention strategies.

5. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force Update

Dr. Hansen Stewart, vice president of career and technical education and workforce development, and Mr. Peter Held, dean of workforce development, presented the Artificial Intelligence Task Force Update. Dr. Stewart reviewed four phases of work to develop an institutional AI framework.

The areas of focus are: Policy & Ethics, Curriculum & Pathways, Teaching and Development, Innovation Labs, Communications and Engagement. Dr. Stewart and Mr. Held received campus feedback that showed “cautious optimism” toward AI adoption. The discussion topics included data privacy and academic integrity, as well as faculty training and professional development. Mr. Held stated that the Task Force group is working to establish a solid foundation and baseline and to thinking about the future. Dr. Spearman proposed an AI Center of Excellence to serve regional workforce needs.

Discussion ensued, and trustees commended the presentation and discussed the need to adopt policies, establish implementation timelines, and collaborate with community and industry partners.

6. *Informational Only*

a. “From Plans to Success: The Use of Scorecards and Quarterly Action Steps”

There were no questions or comments regarding the presentation of “From Plans to Success: The Use of Scorecards and Quarterly Action Steps.” RVC presented at the 2025 Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) conference in New Orleans.

Finance Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Cardenas Cudia

1. Purchase Reports

Ms. Ellen Olson, vice president of finance, presented the purchase reports.

Purchase Report A – FY2026 Purchases

A. Vehicles – (Fleet Replacement – Capital Service Equipment)

1.	Morrow Brothers Ford, Inc.	Greenfield, IL	\$ 101,703.00*(1)
----	-----------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------

B. Software – (Maintenance Services Software Support – IT Administration)

2.	Schneider Electric	Reston, VA	\$ 29,921.00*(2)
----	---------------------------	-------------------	-------------------------

2. Cash and Investment Report

Ms. Olson presented the Cash and Investment Report through October 25, 2025. Total operating cash is \$40,691,986. Total operating cash and investments are \$113,024,014. The operating cash and investments have changed by <\$10,408> since September 30, 2025. Total capital funds are \$85,468,701. Since September 30, 2025, the change in capital funds has been <\$4,033,269.> Ms. Olson stated that the total operating cash and investment funds were 105.20% of the FY2026 operating budget. Discussion ensued.

3. Third Quarter Vital Signs

Vice President Olson reviewed the First Quarter Year-to-Date Financial Report as of September 30, 2025. Ms. Olson stated operating revenues were at 32.9% of the budget, and State apportionments were expected to fall short by \$1.6 million due to formula adjustments. Healthcare costs are trending 4.7% above budget due to increased utilization, and payroll is running slightly under budget due to vacancies. Discussion followed on equalization formula impacts, SURS obligations, and other post-employment benefits (OPEB) reserves.

4. *Informational Only*

a. Quarterly Purchase Report Update / \$10,000 – \$25,000

There were no comments or questions regarding the Quarterly Purchase Activity Report for items between \$10,000 and \$25,000.

Operations Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Trojan

1. 2025 Campus Safety and Security Report (Clery Act Report)

RVC Chief of Police Mr. Tom Yehl presented the Clery Act Report for 2025. Chief Yehl stated that the purpose of the Campus Safety and Security Report is to provide the campus community with timely, accurate, and complete information about crime and campus safety, so they can make informed decisions to keep themselves safe. Compliance with the Clery Act enables RVC to participate in Title IV student financial assistance programs, such as Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study, and Federal Perkins Loans. Chief Yehl stated that the crime statistics are gathered for the main campus and satellite campuses. Chief Yehl noted only four reportable Clery crimes for 2025: Domestic Battery (dating violence), stalking, vandalism, and a drug law violation that happened in the vicinity of the Advanced Technology Center (ATC). Chief Yehl stated that the Annual Clery Report is available on the RVC website.

2. Downtown West Update

Mr. Rick Jenks, vice president of operations, provided a verbal update on construction at the Downtown West campus. Mr. Jenks stated that due to time constraints, the change order for the construction project did not make it into the meeting packet, so Mr. Jenks was providing a verbal update. Mr. Jenks said that the current change orders totaled \$228,000 (approximately 10% of the contingency budget). Significant changes included structural reconciliation and remediation of unsuitable soil. The contingency fund remains at approximately \$2,000,000, and the project is 60% complete, with substantial completion expected on July 1, 2026, and full opening on August 15, 2026. Mr. Jenks stated that the next step would be for the College to go out to bid for FF&E (fixtures, furniture, and equipment). Discussion ensued.

3. Classroom II Building (CLII) Update

Vice President Jenks stated that the team has been gathering information from faculty and staff and is now working on concepts and designs. In the future, the Board will be able to see “jello cubes,” also known as schematic design.

4. Change Order Update

Vice President Jenks discussed the following change orders:

- Turf Fields: Builders' Risk addition costs \$1,429.
- Bengt Sjostrom Theatre (BST) (Starlight) Lighting: The \$13,764 credit has been returned.

- Fire Alarm Replacement: An \$800 change order; \$51,700 remains in contingency.
- Health Sciences Center (HSC) 3rd Floor Buildout: Minor adjustments totaling \$29,751; \$173,849 in contingency remains.
- Exterior Tuckpointing: An additional \$50,559 for concrete seal replacements, offset by credits.

5. Personnel Report

Vice President Jenks reported that there is a placeholder for an Economics Instructor and one departure, Dr. Michelle Rotert.

6. RVC Events Calendar

Mr. Jenks discussed the November 2025 RVC Events Calendar.

- RVC Foundation Scholarship Luncheon at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Rockford, IL, on November 7, 2025.
- Native American Heritage Month kicks off on November 5, 2025, in the Stenstrom Student Center (SSC) Atrium.
- Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) Graduation, November 6, 2025, in the Educational Resource Center (ERC), PAR.
- Veterans Day Celebration on November 11, 2025, in the Stenstrom Student Center (SSC) Atrium.
- International Showcase on November 20, 2025, in the SSC Atrium.

7. *Informational Only*

a. Quarterly Employee Personnel Update

There were no comments or questions regarding the Quarterly Employee Personnel Update.

New Business/Unfinished Business

1. Unfinished Business:

a. Studer Education Contract Discussion: Board Chair Gorski stated that he and Dr. Spearman have not had a chance to discuss the Studer Education contract, so he is postponing the discussion to a later date to be determined.

b. Board Retreat Discussion: Trustee Simpson discussed her notes from the ACCT conference in New Orleans on making Board Retreats “fun.” Some of her suggestions were to bring students into the retreat, have student presentations, get to know each other on a personal level, and choose a relaxed location off campus. Trustee Gorski stated he would like Trustee Cudia’s opinion; he believes she would have some ideas, as she has participated in retreats for other boards.

2. New Business:

a. ACCT Leadership Summit in February 2026: Trustees Nelson, Cudia, and Soltow will be attending. Trustee Gorski would like at least one of the Trustees to call in to the February 10, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting to ensure we have more than the basic quorum.

b. Dr. Spearman informed the Trustees that the Northern Illinois Council of Governments has invited RVC to the Annual Legislative Luncheon on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, and that

the College will purchase a table for 10, in hopes that the Board of Trustees will attend. Dr. Spearman listed the Representatives who will be in attendance.

Ms. Snider gave a verbal Lobbyist Update on Illinois House Bill 1312 that was passed during the recent legislative veto session. The legislation includes new requirements for public colleges and universities in Illinois regarding immigration-related actions. Dr. Spearman was in contact with both the College's lobbyist, Dr. Litesa Wallace, and ICCTA's lobbyist, Liz Brown-Reeves, to provide input. Ms. Snider explained that the College is currently in compliance and will remind employees of related internal procedures. The College will continue to work with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and peer institutions to ensure compliance and address implementation challenges that may arise once the law takes effect.

Board Chair Gorski reminded Trustees that the College's website contains information on various awards, including the recent Starlight and Marketing awards, so there is no need for administrators to create a new report.

Adjourn to Closed Session

A closed session was not held.

Reconvene Open Session

A closed session was not held.

Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

The next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 5:15 p.m., in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.


Next Committee of the Whole Meeting

The next Committee of the Whole Meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 5:15 p.m., in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

Adjourn

At 7:16 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by: Tracy L. Luethje.


Dr. Jenna Goldsmith, Secretary


Paul Gorski, Chairman