

Rock Valley College

**Rock Valley College Board of Trustees
Illinois Community College District No. 511
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114
Educational Resource Center, Performing Arts Room, Room 0214
August 25, 2026, 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, August 25, 2026. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m.

A motion was made by Trustee Bob Trojan, seconded by Trustee John Nelson, to appoint Kristen Simpson as acting reporting secretary for this meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Roll Call

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

Mr. Paul Gorski	Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Ms. Kristen Simpson	Ms. Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, Student Trustee
Mr. John Nelson (arrived 5:24 p.m.)	

The following trustees were absent at roll call: Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia and Ms. Crystal Soltow.

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence and Belonging; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Diciolla, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Chief Operations Officer; Attorney Joe Perkoski, Robbins Schwartz.

Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence

No trustees attended by means other than physical presence.

Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)

Ms. Erica Reed reviewed the National Mental Health Curriculum in 2023 and found that out of 897 public graduate programs, only 15 required a domestic violence course, and 85 offered an elective. Ms. Reed suggested implementing domestic violence courses at the undergraduate level because they provide a RVC is an equal opportunity educator and employer. Learn more at [RockValleyCollege.edu](https://www.rockvalleycollege.edu).

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foundation for graduate courses. Discussion ensued. Trustee Nelson clarified that the board sets policy and does not select curriculum. Board Chair Paul Gorski encouraged Ms. Reed to write a letter to the President regarding suggested texts and curriculum. Dr. Amanda Smith spoke about the Domestic Violence Certificate that RVC offers, and that these types of discussions will continue.

Mr. Dick Rundall, President of Eliminate Racism 815, thanked the Rock Valley College (RVC) Board, Cabinet, and Chief Operations Officer Mr. Rick Jenks for opening the Downtown Campus. He also stated that RVC is a gem in our community. The Eliminate Racism 815 Group will be starting a youth leadership program.

General Presentations

1. Studer Education Update – Dr. Janet Pilcher, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Studer Education, presented an update on the partnership with RVC. This collaboration began in 2021, when initial assessments and leadership coaching were implemented. Studer's work with RVC will bring a new focus on building consistent leadership skills and aligning goals to the strategic plan. The Board of Trustees had no questions.

2. Grants Update- Vice President Heather Snider gave the grants update for 2026, which included state and federal grants over \$100,000, as well as total grant awards from FY2024-FY2026. RVC saw an increase in dollars due to steady grants that were initiated years ago, the Strengthening Community Colleges Grant, and congressionally directed capital project dollars secured from legislators. Discussion ensued. Vice President Snider confirmed that all grant dollars have been received and/or are being reimbursed. Trustee Trojan asked about the Artificial Intelligence Grant that RVC applied for, and Dr. Spearman said we will have an update next month.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2026, Committee of the Whole (CotW) meeting and the July 28, 2026, Regular Board of Trustees meeting. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Action Items

1. BR8416 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – July 2026)

The Board Report reads, in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the claims sheet from the Ellucian check register for the period from July 1, 2026, to June 31, 2026. The total is \$10,211,805.62.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve BR8416. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

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2. BR8417 – Election for Members of the Board of Trustees

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees acknowledges the scheduling of an election for members of the Community College Board to be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2027, to elect:

- Two (2) board members for a full term of six years each.
- One (1) board member for an unexpired term with four (4) years remaining.

A motion was made by Student Trustee Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve Board Report 8417. Board Chair Gorski confirmed with Attorney Joe Perkosi that the purpose of this board report is to confirm the dates of the election. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

3. BR8418 – Approve Update to Rock Valley College Board Policy Manual Article 4 – Students – First Reading

The Board Report reads, in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the revisions to Article 4 – Students, of the Board Policy Manual as reviewed and revised by Robbins Schwartz attorneys and College Administration. **Attorney Reviewed.** Discussion ensued. Board Chair Gorski encouraged Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza to bring this to the next Student Government Association (SGA) meeting for student review. There was no vote on BR8418, as this is the first reading.

Other Business

Unfinished business:

- Internal Auditor: Trustee Nelson wants an auditor to do a systematic audit for the following areas: transactions, procedures, restricted funds, enrollment data, human resources, payroll, executive compensation, capital use, facility management, State Universities Retirement System of Illinois (SURS) compliance, and investment policy compliance. He also believes that RVC should have an annual internal audit plan. Board Chair Gorski and Trustee Trojan think that the focus should be on limited areas. This discussion will be continued at future meetings.

New business:

There was no new business.

Updates/Reports

1. President's Update- Dr. Spearman

- Dr. Spearman gave thanks to the RVC staff and community for the ribbon cutting at the Downtown West campus on August 14. We had a strong team, which involved Chief Operations Officer (COO) Rick Jenks, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Ellen Olson, the marketing department led by Jennifer Thompson, Executive Director of Facilities Janet Taylor, and the RVC Foundation, which led the Downtown West Campaign.
- The K-20 Collaborative and Workforce Development Collaborative is scheduled for Friday, September 25 at the Downtown Learning Center.

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- Dr. Keith Barnes was nominated for a three-year term on the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Commission on Professional Learning and Leadership Capacity.
- Executive Director and President of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Dr. Brian Durham, referred Dr. Spearman to be appointed to the Governor's P-20 Council, which will focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and adult education.
- Ms. Saba Jaffery was hired to be our new COO, with a start date of August 31, 2026.

2. Leadership Team Update

- Vice President of Cultural Excellence and Belonging Dr. Keith Barnes talked about the school supply drive that was hosted from August 17-18. Employees donated supplies, and 500 students were helped.
- Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Patrick Peyer stated that the fall semester is underway, and fall sports have begun. RVC will host an athletic field ribbon-cutting on Wednesday, September 23, at 12:30 p.m. Student clubs have planned many activities for Welcome Week. The new vendor inside the Stenstrom Student Center, T and C Cooking Creations, opened last week. Dr. Peyer offered congratulations to Marcia Abrahams on her retirement from RVC.
- Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communication Ms. Heather Snider gave the FY2027 enrollment update. As of this week, fall enrollment is 1% ahead of last year, 5% ahead of budget, and the stretch goal has been met. FY2027 enrollment is flat compared to last year, 5% ahead of budget, and 1% ahead of the stretch goal.
- Vice President of Human Resources Dr. Terrica Huntley thanked Dana Coates for planning the campus-wide ice cream social. Leah Williams has started at the college as one of our HR Business Partners. Justin Severson and Allison Kaberg have also started in new roles in the Human Resources division.
- Vice President of Operations Mr. Rick Jenks spoke about the Downtown West punch list and said that this information is being entered into a database for tracking purposes. He also commented that opening the Downtown West campus was a successful team effort. The athletic fields are nearing completion and should be done by the end of August. The Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB), RVC, and architects met to discuss the additional elevator in Classroom Building II (CLII). It will be listed as additional funding for this project. Chairman Gorski thanked Mr. Jenks for researching the second elevator addition. This will be the last board meeting for Mr. Jenks as he is retiring on September 30.

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- Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Amanda Smith reported that nine new faculty have started this fall semester. RVC has awarded tuition waivers in the amount of \$10,025 to support students taking classes downtown. The First Tuesday Lecture will feature a history and performance on bagpipes. The fall Professional Development Day (PDD) will take place on Tuesday, September 8, and the Board of Trustees is invited to attend.

3. Student Trustee Update: Student Trustee Sarah Ortiz Espinoza reported on the Rockford Model United Nations conference being held at RVC on October 8-9. She also gave a Student Government Association (SGA) update, noting that student club representatives must attend SGA weekly meetings. Ms. Ortiz Espinoza also talked about her desire to create more social media opportunities for each of the student clubs.

4. RVC Liaison Report: Trustee Bob Trojan reported that the Foundation has accepted 847 scholarship applications. On October 1, the RVC Foundation will host the Golden Eagle Family Breakfast at the Downtown West Community Engagement Center. Finally, the Scholarship Luncheon will be held at the Hard Rock Casino on October 30 from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

5. ICCTA Report: no report

6. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Nelson encouraged students to register at the Downtown campus.
- Trustee Trojan talked about Board meetings being on the same nights as Starlight Theatre events.
- Trustee Simpson thanked Rick Jenks for the tour of the Downtown West Campus.

7. Personnel Report (BR8419) - Information only; the Personnel Report was accepted as presented with no questions.

8. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report - Information only; the FOIA was accepted as presented with no questions.

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Next Meetings

The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on September 8, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular Board of Trustees meeting will be held on September 22, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:58 p.m., Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza made a motion, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn to closed session to discuss: 1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting per Section 2 (c) (1); and/or 2) 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); and/or 3) The selection of a person to fill a public office, as defined in this Act, including a vacancy in a public office, when the public body is given power to appoint under law or ordinance, or the discipline, performance or removal of the occupant of a public office, when the public body is given power to remove the occupant under law or ordinance per Section 2 (c)(3), all in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

Reconvene Open Session

At 7:36 p.m., Trustee Trojan made a motion, seconded by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Action as a Result of Closed Session

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Student Trustee Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, to appoint Terri L. Knight to fill the vacancy on the RVC Board of Trustees. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Trustee John Nelson moved to reconsider the vote on filling the vacancy, seconded by Board Chair Gorski. Discussion ensued. The motion was not approved by unanimous roll call vote.

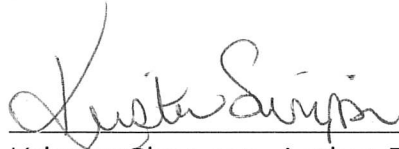
Board Chair Gorski asked that a Special Meeting be scheduled directly before the September 8, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting to swear in Terri L. Knight as trustee.

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Adjourn

At 7:42 p.m., Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza made a motion, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Carly A. Diciolla.



Kristen Simpson, Acting Reporting Secretary



Paul Gorski, Board Chair

