Rock Valley College

Community College District No. 511
3301 N. Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114

BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
5:20 p.m. Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Call to Order

The Rock Valley College (RVC) Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting convened on Tuesday, September 8, 2026, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) in the Educational Resource Center (ERC). Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:21 p.m.

Roll Call

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

Mr. Paul Gorski	Ms. Kristen Simpson
Mr. Robert 'Bob' Trojan	Ms. Terri Knight
Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia	Ms. Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, Student Trustee
Mr. John Nelson	

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

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

Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence

Trustee Trojan made a motion, seconded by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, to allow Trustee Crystal Soltow to join the meeting via teleconference. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Trustee Soltow joined the meeting via telephone. No other board members attended by any other means.

Communications and Petitions

There were no communications or petitions.

Recognition of Visitors

Ms. Terri Knight was introduced and officially sworn in to fill the Board vacancy created by Dr. Jenna Goldsmith's resignation.

The Board recognized Ms. Saba Jaffrey, who started on August 31, 2026, as the new Chief Operations Officer.

Review of Minutes

There were no comments, questions, or revisions on the minutes from the August 11, 2026, Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting.

General Presentations

1. Strategic Plan Refresh Update

Ms. Heather Snider, vice president of institutional effectiveness and communications, presented the Strategic Plan Refresh Update. Ms. Snider stated that the current strategic plan runs through 2027; work is ongoing to refresh the Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Core Values while maintaining existing pillars. Feedback was gathered through Professional Development Days, Cabinet retreats, and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

General consensus is positive; it effectively captures service (lifelong learning), target audience (students and community), and purpose (empowerment). The current vision is considered too lengthy; proposed updates will streamline focus around student success, personal/community prosperity, and excellence. Revisions will include the Core Values, the campus-wide "Caring Campus" initiative, and student/staff behavioral commitments.

The timeline and next steps are as follows:

- November 2026: Next update to trustees.
- January 2027: State of the College video release and scorecard review.
- February 2027: Town Hall for campus feedback.
- March 2027: Presentation of the final Strategic Plan Refresh for Board approval.

Teaching, Learning & Communications Discussion

1. Illinois Cooperative Work Study (ICWS) Grant

Ms. Snider presented the ICWS grant. The grant is a financial assistance program that supports Illinois resident undergraduate students participating in higher education cooperative work study programs. Rock Valley College is eligible to receive up to $40,304 under the agreement. Funds will expand student opportunities for internships, clinical placements, and cooperative programs with business and industry that align with their academic studies. The agreement is administered through the State of Illinois and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), governed by the Illinois Cooperative Work Study Program Act (110 ILCS 225) and Program Rules (Title 23 Part 1015). The Administration recommends that the Rock Valley College Board of Trustees approves the agreement for the period from July 1, 2026, through August 30, 2027.

2. FY2027 Enrollment Update

Ms. Snider stated that the Fall semester enrollment remains stable, tracking 4% ahead of budget and meeting the stretch goals. Combined Summer/Fall figures sit 5% ahead of budget and 1% ahead of stretch goals.

3. *Informational Only

a. FY2027 Adult Learner (Ages 25-45) Enrollment

Presented for informational purposes as an ongoing campus initiative. Board members requested that future reports include capacity/enrollment caps for restricted programs (e.g., collision repair, aviation).

Finance Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Cardenas Cudia

1. Purchase Reports

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

Purchase Report A – FY2027 Amendment

A. Downtown West Furniture – (Capital Instructional Equipment/Furniture – Downtown West Project)

1.	**Atmosphere Commercial Interiors**	**Rockford, IL**	**$**	**37,000.00*(1)**
				Not to Exceed

Action: Provide confirmation on whether the $37,000 furniture increase impacts the overall project contingency budget.

Purchase Report B – FY2027 Purchases

A. Commencement Regalia – (Other Contractual Services – Graduation and Commencement)

1.	**Herff Jones**	**Indianapolis, IN**	**$**	**29,000.00*(1)**
				Not to Exceed

B. Public Official Treasurer Bonds – (Tort – Treasurer Bond)

2.	**Marsh USA, Inc.**	**Chicago, IL**	**$**	**46,000.00*(2)**
				Not to Exceed

C. Police Vehicle – (Automotive – RVC Police Department)

3.	**Sutton Ford, Inc.**	**Matteson, IL**	**$**	**69,750.00*(3)**
				Not to Exceed

2. Cash and Investment Report

Ms. Olson presented the Cash and Investment Report through August 31, 2026. Total operating cash is $28,159,544. Total operating cash and investments are $111,124,183. The operating cash and investments have changed by $4,618,108 since July 31, 2026. Total capital funds are $54,275,232. Since July 31, 2026, the change in capital funds has been ($4,949,760). Ms. Olson stated that the total operating cash and investment funds were 102.72% of the FY2027 operating budget.

3. Internal Auditor Discussion

Trustee Nelson proposed establishing an internal audit function/committee and highlighted three priority focus areas: Advanced Technology Center (ATC), Finance, and Personnel.

Chair Gorski and Trustee Nelson will research model internal audit structures (e.g., City Colleges of Chicago) to draft specific scope/proposal language before issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Operations Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Trojan

1. Board Policy Manual Update: Article 4 – Students (Second Reading)

Dr. Terrica Huntley, vice president of human resources, presented the second reading of comprehensive revisions to Board Policy Manual Article 4-Students, facilitated by legal counsel, Robbins Schwartz, and campus leadership. Changes include:

- Updates to legal statutes, title alignments, and administrative procedures (37 procedures created or updated).
- Cross-alignment between the Board Policy Manual and the Student Handbook.
- Four policies are being recommended for deletion from the Student Section:
    - Non-Discrimination
    - Prohibiting Sex-Based Misconduct
    - Cultural Excellence and Belonging
    - Service and Other Animals

The above sections are recommended for removal from Article 4 because they are being elevated to campus-wide Operations policies that apply to all students, staff, and visitors.

2. Downtown West Update

Dr. Huntley stated the change order window is closing, and all final change orders must be submitted for review by the end of September. The punch list includes 3,247 items: 1,308 (42%) closed and 1,867 remaining. Active completion focus is scheduled through October 1, 2026. HVAC calibration remains the primary focus area.

3. Classroom Building II (CLII) Update

Dr. Huntley stated that the CLII renovation and expansion is currently in the design development phase. Bailey Edwards Architects will submit 50% design development documents. The Illinois State Historical Preservation Office approved the proposed placement of the second elevator. Value engineering is underway to accommodate the second elevator within the base budget. The targeted completion date for CLII is Fall 2028.

4. Change Orders

- **Downtown West Campus**

The Downtown West Campus contingency report was presented to the Board of Trustees. The contingency amount is $763,562.26, down from the starting contingency of $2,222,239.

5. FY2026 Annual Employee Personnel Update

Dr. Huntley presented the FY2026 Annual Employee Personnel Update as of June 30, 2026.

- **Total Full-Time Staff:** 413 employees (+5.46% increase from FY2025).
- **Appointments:** 93 total (52 new hires, 41 internal promotions/transfers).
- **Separations:** 40 total (including 6 retirements), representing a decrease of 17 employees compared to FY2025.
- **Turnover Rate:** Full-time employee turnover decreased to 9.69**%** (a 4.91% improvement from FY2025), attributed to professional development (Golden Eagles, Blue and Gray Leadership Academies, DISC training, and Supervisor 101 and 201 training) and interest-based negotiations.
- **Demographic Goals:** Discussion focused on outreach efforts to ensure workforce composition reflects or exceeds community demographic benchmarks.

6. Personnel Report

The September 2026 Personnel Report includes three placeholders: Integrated Reading and Writing Faculty, Nursing Faculty, and a Welding Faculty position. There were no departures.

7. Rock Valley College Events Calendar

Dr. Huntley discussed key calendar events.

New Business/Unfinished Business

Unfinished Business

Event Scheduling & Conflict Avoidance

- Board members requested that major institutional/foundation events (such as Starlight Theatre or major receptions) avoid scheduling conflicts with Board meeting nights.
- Board Liaison Appointment: Add the Teaching, Learning, and Communications Liaison vacancy appointment to the agenda as an actionable item.

New Business

Athletic Fields Naming Rights

- Administration requested Board direction on expanding the naming rights agreement terms from $500,000 over 5 years to $500,000 over 10 years to increase donor flexibility.

Consensus: The Board supported providing flexibility and expanding the agreement term to 10 years. An official action item will be placed on the upcoming Board agenda.

Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

The next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 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, October 6, 2026, at 5:15 p.m., in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) on the main campus.

Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:40 p.m., Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza made a motion, seconded by Trustee Trojan, 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), all in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Reconvene Open Session

At 7:27 p.m., Trustee Nelson moved, seconded by Trustee Knight, to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote. No action was taken during the closed session.

Adjourn

At 7:28 p.m., Trustee Cardenas Cudia made a motion, seconded by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by: Tracy L. Luethje.

Kristen Simpson
Ms. Kristen Simpson, Secretary

Paul Gorski
Paul Gorski, Board Chairman