RockValleyCollege

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
September 22, 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, September 22, 2026. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

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. Gloria Cardenas Cardia
Mr. John Nelson (arrived 5:17 p.m.)	Ms. Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, Student Trustee

The following trustees were absent at roll call: Ms. Terri Knight 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 (via Teams); Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Chief Operations Officer; Attorney Matthew Gardner, Robbins Schwartz.

Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence

No trustees attended by means other than physical presence.

Board Chair Gorski gave mail to Vice President Ellen Olson for handling.

Communications and Petitions (Public Comment)

Ms. Erica Reed addressed trustees regarding October being Domestic Awareness Month. Since she did not see any events on the subject at RVC, she recommended that brochures from Remedies and the Family Peace Center would be appropriate. She also provided the information to Chief Academic Officer Dr. Amanda Smith. Board Chair Paul Gorski asked her to repeat her opening statement, confirming that she does not represent any organization and is a volunteer advocate.

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General Presentations

There were no general presentations.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2026, Committee of the Whole (CotW) meeting and the August 25, 2026, Regular Board of Trustees meeting.

Dr. Spearman noted the scrivener's error on page 4, Item 4 of the Board Policy Manual Update: Article 4-Students /First Reading in the CotW minutes and that it has been corrected to read Dr. Terrica Huntley instead of Dr. Terrica Smith. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Action Items

1. **BR8420 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – August 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 August 1, 2026, to August 31, 2026. The total is $5,893,627.03.

A motion was made by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, to approve BR8420. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

2. **BR8421-A –Approve Purchase Report-A – FY2027 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 8421-A.

A motion was made by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, seconded by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, to approve Board Report 8421-A. Vice President Olson clarified the Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E) budget for the Downtown West campus. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

3. **BR8421-B –Approve Purchase Report-B –FY2027 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 8421-B.

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, to approve Board Report 8421-B. Vice President Olson clarified that the mileage for Item C. Police Vehicle being replaced was 118,743 miles. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

4. **BR8422 – Approve Illinois Cooperative Work Study (ICWS) Grant Agreement**

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves Board Report 8422.

A motion was made by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve Board Report 8422. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

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5. BR8423 – Approve Update to Rock Valley College Board Policy Manual Article 4 – Students – Second 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**.

A motion was made by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza, seconded by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, to approve Board Report 8423. Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Patrick Peyer reported that Article 4-Students was presented to and reviewed by the Student Government Association, and there were no questions. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by a majority roll call vote. Trustees Trojan, Cardenas Cudia, Simpson, and Gorski voted yes. Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza voted yes (advisory). Trustee Nelson voted no.

6. BR8424 - Approve Amended 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 Amended Rock Valley College Foundation and RVC Athletic Turf Fundraising Agreement.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve Board Report 8424. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Trustee Trojan confirmed that the Foundation Board has reviewed and approved this amended agreement.

Other Business

Unfinished business:

1. 20-Year Vision

At the last meeting, Trustee Cardenas Cudia asked what do we want the College to look like in 20 years. Noting that Trustee Cardenas Cudia saw this as a vision, similar to President John Kennedy's vision to go to the moon, Board Chair Gorski indicated this would be a good team-building conversation at the board retreat in January 2027. Vice President Heather Snider will lead the discussion. Discussion ensued how results of this discussion would be passed on to the appropriate people in 20 years.

2. Follow up on discussion regarding hiring talent

Board Chair Gorski noted that he misinterpreted Trustee Trojan's intent on his comments at the last meeting and wants to be sure the College focuses on hiring talent that matches the community. He then used Dr. Barnes' department as an example of balance, as it has a great mix of internal and external opportunities for talent. Discussion ensued.

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3. Appointment of the Representative of Teaching, Learning, and Communications
This item was tabled, as Board Chair Gorski asked Attorney Gardner to confirm if the liaison position could be assigned to the student trustee. Trustee Nelson noted that this is part of the litigation he's involved with at Joliet Junior College and thinks that ICCB may have some guidelines.

4. Follow-up to Questions at 9/8/26 Committee of the Whole (CotW):
- Dr. Spearman explained upcoming events in the packet.
- The document answering questions raised at the September 8, 2026 CotW meeting was placed at each trustee's seat at the meeting.
- Dr. Spearman confirmed that the K20 and Workforce Development Collaborative to be held September 25 is by invitation and is not open to the public.
- Trustee Trojan noted that the Head of School at Christian Life wants to develop AI, engineering technology and will attend the Collaborative on September 25.

5. Trustees are invited to attend the K20 and Workforce Development Collaborative to be held September 25, 2026. RSVPs are requested.

New business:
- Trustees are invited to attend the Belvidere Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner to be held October 7. RSVP to Ann Kerwitz by September 25. Trustee Trojan indicated he would like to attend.

Updates/Reports

1. President's Update- Dr. Spearman
- Attended the first RVC-NIU 2+2 engineering meeting of the fiscal year and provided an update.
- Met with Dr. Trevonne Thompson, the new regional dean of the UIC College of Medicine.
- Attended board meetings of the Region 1 Planning Council, Growth Dimensions, and The Workforce Connection.
- Although the College did not receive the $6M manufacturing academy grant, we have submitted a proposal for another AI grant.
- Attended a recent meeting of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) and was informed that the ICCCP will continue to focus on the community college baccalaureate in alignment with Governor Pritzker.
- Congratulated Jennifer Thompson, executive director of college communications, who has been named co-chair of the ICCCP Legislative Committee.
- ICCCP presidents are having regional meetings with K12 Superintendents to discuss the impact of the Dual Credit Quality Act.

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- Congratulations to Dr. Cindi Schaefer Tobin who has been selected as president-elect of the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.

2. Leadership Team Update

- Dr. Keith Barnes reported on Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated from 9/15-10/15 and the CEB Fall 2026 Symposium to be held October 2. He will represent RVC at the SUCCESS Program Kickoff at Illinois State University; and will give a presentation at the Illinois Council of Community College Administrators (ICCCA) Fall 2026 Conference to be held November 18-20.
- Dr. Patrick Peyer announced that the ribbon cutting for the athletic fields will be held September 23 and that the annual College Fair will be held October 6. More than 100 schools will be represented.
- Ms. Heather Snider provided an enrollment update, noting that fall classes began August 15 and classes that run the second 8 weeks begins October 10. She also noted that October 10 is Community Day at the Downtown West campus and that Manufacturing Day ito be celebrated October 16 at the ATC is being coordinated by CEANCI (Career Education Associates of North Central Illinois). In response to a question from Trustee Trojan, Ms. Snider will confirm if any private schools are invited.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley welcomed Anderia Barnett, new executive assistant in HR. She also provided an update on Classroom Building II and Downtown West, noting that the punch list has 3,260 individual items, of which 1,716 are closed, leaving 1,544 to be completed.
- Ms. Ellen Olson provided an update on the annual audit, noting that the college field work is done, the single audit is delayed pending release of OMB compliance guidelines, and the Foundation field work is finishing up now. The goal is to present the final audit to the Board in November, possibly December.
- Dr. Amanda Smith gave an update on the faculty tenure cycle and process. There are 27 in tenure track, seven in the third year, and 53 full-time faculty serve on tenure committees.

3. Student Trustee Report:

Student Trustee Sarah Ortiz Espinoza provided an update on Student Government Association (SGA) activities, including Fall Day on October 1. She also explained that the Model United Nations conference will be postponed to early March 2027.

Trustee Trojan recommended that SGA add information on available scholarships to the tables they plan to set up at difference campus locations. Dr. Patrick Peyer added that scholarship information resources can be added where it makes the most sense.

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4. RVC Foundation Liaison Report:

Trustee Trojan announced that the fundraising goal for Downtown West is $3.5 million. Trustees are invited to attend the Foundation's Alumni Breakfast to be held October 1 at the downtown location, as well as the Annual Scholarship Luncheon to be held October 30 at the Hard Rock Casino. During the two scholarship periods, the Foundation has awarded 463 scholarships to 418 students, and over $800,000 was awarded. Of this, $193,000 was awarded to 16 engineering students.

5. ICCTA Report:

Trustee Nelson explained that he was unable to attend the ICCTA meeting held last week.

6. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Nelson announced that he has been an active member of the faculty negotiations team and announced that a contract agreement has been reached.
- Trustee Cardenas Cudia asked if Trustee Simpson was interested in attending ICCTA meetings. Trustee Simpson responded that she works every weekend and is not available.
- Board Chair Gorski acknowledged Trustee Nelson's thoughtful discussion of internal auditor, Trustee Cardenas Cudia's 20-year vision, and Trustee Trojan's comments on hiring talent.
- Trustee Simpson had no comments.

7. Personnel Report (BR8425) - 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.

Next Meetings

The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on October 6, 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 October 20, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Bob and Norma Trojan Room (#1300), at the Advanced Technology Center, 1400 Big Thunder Boulevard, Belvidere, IL. NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION.

Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:26 p.m., Trustee Nelson 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

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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.

Reconvene Open Session

At 7:30 p.m., Trustee Nelson made a motion, seconded by Trustee Cardenas Cudia to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Adjourn

At 7: 33 p.m., Trustee Cardenas Cudia made a motion, seconded by Student Trustee Ortiz Espinoza to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Ann L. Kerwitz.

Kristen Simpson, Secretary

Paul Gorski, Board Chair

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