

**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
July 22, 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, July 22, 2025. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Roll Call

Mr. Paul Gorski
Ms. Kristen Simpson
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith
Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia

Mr. Robert (Bob) Trojan
Mr. John Nelson
Ms. Crystal Soltow
Student Trustee Mr. Isiah Blake

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Ms. Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance/Chief Financial Officer; 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. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development; 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

Chief Financial Officer Ellen Olson reviewed the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis based upon a survey conducted of the Illinois Community

Colleges Chief Financial Officer (ICCCFO) group for input regarding their perceptions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to community colleges.

Strengths include stability in leadership and finances, affordability, location, offering short-term credentials, healthy operating fund balance and reserves, and the ability to provide financial aid.

Weaknesses included the enrollment demographic cliff resulting in a decrease in traditional-age students, State of Illinois budget challenges, migration out of Illinois, inability to increase tuition or local taxes to bridge the gap from underfunding by the State.

Opportunities include the possibility of offering baccalaureate degrees, emerging industries to build new corporate partnerships and new short-term certificates, and low-cost providers able to adopt to changing needs of students. Funding formula changes by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) can be viewed as an opportunity or a threat.

Threats include the federal political environment, higher education as a competitive market, higher education no longer seen as a value, unfunded mandates from the State of Illinois, and more complex legal issues that result in increased legal fees and litigation risks.

Strategies include recruitment and marketing toward adult learners, develop workforce partnerships, build strong programs and statements about the value of community colleges, maintain operating fund balance between 35%-50%, ICCB and ICCTA to maintain statewide awareness, and continue to share the Rock Valley College story to the district.

In response to trustees' questions, Vice President Olson explained that based upon calculations by the ICCB, community colleges are underfunded by 80% for the state's base operating grant, which is about \$20 million for Rock Valley College.

Board Chair Gorski added that he and Dr. Spearman have been discussing that the January 2026 board retreat could include a financial SWOT analysis as well as an enrollment analysis, so this discussion could be continued.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting and the June 24, 2025, Regular meeting. Trustee Trojan added that the minutes to be approved should include the minutes of the FY2026 Public Budget Hearing that was held June 24, 2025, but were included with the minutes of the Regular meeting held that same date.

Trustee Nelson suggested adding a friendly amendment to the motion to add approval of the minutes of the FY2026 Public Budget Hearing held June 24, 2025, if approved by Trustees Cudia and Trojan, who agreed.

A motion then was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to add a friendly amendment to the motion on the floor to separate the June 24, 2025, regular Board meeting minutes into two sets of minutes, those of the FY2026 Public Budget Hearing and those for the Regular meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

An amended motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting, the June 24, 2025, Regular meeting, and the June 24, 2025, FY2026 Public Budget Hearing. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Action Items

Board Chair Gorski announced that Item 4 on the agenda, the Studer Education Professional Development Partnership, would be moved to the beginning of the Action Items section, as two of the trustees may have to leave the meeting early, and he wanted to ensure they had an opportunity to vote on this item.

4. BR8302 - Approve Studer Education Professional Development Partnership

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the partnership agreement with Studer Education effective July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027, and payment of the annual fee. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Soltow, to approve BR8302.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the advantages and disadvantages of renewing the contract and what Studer Education would be doing to assist President Spearman and the Cabinet.

Trustee Nelson indicated he would like to have **Western Division** inserted in the description of where any controversy or claim would be filed as shown in #24 (b) Dispute Resolution, and asked Attorney Gardner if this could be done. Attorney Gardner confirmed that the correction could be made based upon attorney review and if approved by Studer Education, and would be considered the final contract.

Trustee Nelson made a friendly amendment to the motion on the floor, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to have **Western Division** inserted in #24 (b) Dispute Resolution of the contract pending RVC attorney review and approval of Studer Education. There was no further discussion, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

A motion was then made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve the contract as amended and consider it as the final vote on the contract.

Trustee Nelson commented that he sees no value to the Studer Education contract and will vote no.

The motion to approve the Studer Education contract as amended was approved by majority roll call vote. Trustees Cudia, Soltow, and Trojan voted yes. Trustees Nelson, Goldsmith and Simpson voted no. Student Trustee Blake voted yes (advisory). Before casting his yes vote to approve, Board Chair Gorski clarified that the previous board chair at the beginning of the Studer contract did not inform other trustees of what Studer Education was doing for the college; however, his vote is swayed by the results of the survey of the Cabinet who confirmed the benefit and value of Studer Education.

1. BR8299 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – June 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 June 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025. The total is \$3,989,444.33.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve BR8299. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

2a. BR8300-A – Purchase Report A – FY2025 Amendments

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the items marked with asterisks on Purchase Report A – FY2025 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8300-A. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

2b. BR8300-B – Purchase Report B – 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 B – FY2026 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve Board Report 8300-B. Trustee Nelson explained to the audience that these items were reviewed at the July 8, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

2c. BR8300-C – Purchase Report C – 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 C – FY2026 Purchases.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8300-C. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

3. BR8301 – Application for Permanent Approval Career and Technical Education Curriculum - Human Services Generalist Certificate

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the submission of a proposal to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to approve the Human Services Generalist Certificate. The ICCB Form 20 proposal includes:

Part A, Feasibility, Curriculum Quality, and Cost Analysis, and
Part B, Supportive Documentation and Data.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8301. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

4. BR8302 – Studer Education Professional Development Partnership

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

5. BR8303 – 2025-2027 Emergency Medical Technician Memorandum of Understanding Between Kishwaukee Education Consortium, OSF St. Anthony Medical Center Northern Region, and Rock Valley College

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Dual and Articulated Credit Memorandum of Understanding between Rock Valley College, the Kishwaukee Education Consortium, and OSF St. Anthony Medical Center Northern Region beginning August 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Soltow, to approve Board Report 8303. There was no discussion.

6. BR8304 – Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant Subaward Agreement: Highland Community College

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Rock Valley College Board of Trustees approves the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant Subaward Agreement, including reimbursement of up to \$1,060,899, between Rock Valley College and Highland Community College.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8304. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

7. BR8305 – Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant Subaward Agreement: McHenry County College

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Rock Valley College Board of Trustees approves the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant Subaward Agreement, including reimbursement of up to \$1,061,468, between Rock Valley College and McHenry County College.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Soltow, to approve Board Report 8305. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

8. BR8306 – First Reading: Amendment to Board Policy 3:20.010 - Job Posting and Hiring

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the amendment to Board Policy 3:20.010 (Job Posting and Hiring) forthwith.

Board Chair Gorski explained that this was a first reading and no vote would be taken until the August Regular meeting. If the amendment is approved, the Personnel Report will still be presented, but the Board of Trustees will no longer be voting on it.

9. BR8307- Personnel Report

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Rock Valley College Board of Trustees approves the personnel actions as described in the report.

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to approve Board Report 8307. There was no further 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.

Updates/Reports

1. President Update

President Spearman reported the following:

- The Leadership Updates recently shared with trustees were the result of the anonymous feedback for the Culture Survey conducted by Studer Education. These updates are provided to college employees to ensure they are aware of the valuable information shared during Board meetings.
- The final SMART Camp celebration for this year was held July 11, and Dr. Spearman was pleased to attend both as president and as a dad. Of the 15 students who were enrolled in each of the four weeks, 13/14 middle schoolers completed each week. Of these, 23 females and 31 males attended from Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. He thanked Dr. Hansen Stewart, Dr. Cindi Schafer Tobin and her team for their great work with the program.
- Dr. Spearman joined nearly 70 other presidents to participate in the President's Academy Summer Institute hosted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The institute provides a safe place and space for presidents to connect with colleagues, and share experiences, issues and solutions. Discussions included strategies for uplifting the leadership team, engaging the Board and awareness of the legal impact the federal administration has on community colleges.

In response to Trustee Cudia's question, Dr. Stewart confirmed that four cohorts were held this year compared to three that were offered last year.

Trustee Trojan added that he enjoyed reading the Leadership Updates and is looking forward to seeing future editions.

2. Leadership Updates

- Dr. Keith Barnes welcomed Lamis Diab to her new position as interim cultural excellence and belonging specialist. RVC is hosting the Health Equity Fiesta Tour on August 2 from 10:00-3:00 on Saturday, August 2. The fair's mission is to address health disparity issues, raise awareness, and provide free and low-cost health services to the underserved. The event has served over 3,000 in the last seven years.

- Dr. Patrick Peyer presented a number of updates: 1) RVC baseball player Ethan Storm has been selected by the Tampa Bay Rays in the 13th round of the Major League Baseball (MLB) draft; 2) RVC will be represented by our mascot Arvee at the ICCB booth at the Illinois State Fair on August 7, and by members of the CTE and workforce development team on August 14; 3) RVC will also be represented at the Boone County Fair from August 5-10. Volunteers and staff from the Center for Learning in Retirement (CLR) will provide support at the tent. Trustee Trojan recommended the college have Ethan Storm sign a dozen baseballs, in the event he becomes a leading MLB star.
- Dr. Terrica Huntley welcomed Allison Taylor, executive assistant, and Dana Coates, director of talent acquisition, to the Human Resources team.
- Vice President Heather Snider provided an enrollment update, noting that the College is 10% ahead of last year, 91% to the budget and 88% to the stretch goal. She also briefly reviewed the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report issued by the Region One Planning Council (R1PC). Due to the large size of the document, Ms. Snider will send a link to trustees.
- Vice President Rick Jenks provided several updates: 1) During the design process of the Classroom Building I remodel (CLI) in 2016 led by the Capital Development Board (CDB), an art piece was commissioned by CDB. Nine years later, the sculpture, designed by Chicago artist Boyan Marinov, was delivered to RVC and placed on the creek side, outside CLI; 2) Repairs to the water leaks that occurred in most buildings as a result of recent storms have been addressed. However, the leaks in the Woodward Technology Center were worse, but flooding was contained to areas with concrete floors, so there was no major damage, and cost about \$11,000. 3) During the tuckpointing project on the bridge turret, one section of the turret collapsed. Cost estimates to repair the turret are \$160,000 to \$210,000.
- Vice President Ellen Olson explained that the Cash and Investment report for June 1-30 has been completed. Due to the packet deadline, the report in the July 8 Committee of the Whole packet was from June 1 to June 27. The only changes were in operating cash and capital funds.

3. Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA) Report

There was no ICCTA report; however, Trustee Nelson commented that he will attend the ICCTA Executive Committee retreat in August.

4. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Nelson did not have any comments.
- Trustee Simpson encouraged everyone to attend *Mary Poppins* at Starlight Theatre, as two of her children and Dr. Spearman's son are in the show.
- Trustee Trojan reminded everyone that RVC is hosting the robotics competition at the PEC on Saturday. The competition features 32 teams from the Midwest area. Scholarships are offered, and teams are asked to bring donations for Noah's Ark.

- Trustee Goldsmith announced that *The Rockford Anthology* will be released in October and at least seven of the creative writers are RVC alums who have created work in the book.
- Trustee Cudia commented that she is very impressed with the College's TV and online ads and videos, noting they are good refreshers for the positive experiences of RVC students.
- Trustee Soltow commented that she likes RVC's social media updates and complimented the Starlight Theatre shows this season. She added that the Boone County Fair starts next month.
- Board Chair Gorski commented that during ongoing discussions of the Studer Education partnership agreement, it became clear that the communication styles of previous board chairs with fellow trustees and the president have been different. His goal is to be open and transparent without violating the Illinois Open Meetings Act and to have more consistency on how the Board interacts with the president and his cabinet.

5. Student Trustee Report

Student Trustee Isiah Blake provided an update on his recent visit to the SMART Camp program held at the Advanced Technology Center. His report, which included comments from SMART Camp staff, generated discussion on how to expand the camp with additional staffing and possibly provide transportation to students. Blake added that he will attend the New Student Orientation to be held July 24.

6. RVC Foundation Report

Trustee Trojan reported that a celebration will be held July 31 from 1:00-3:00 p.m. on the Foundation lawn to honor Linda Buerger who is retiring from the Foundation after more than 13 years. In addition, the second chance scholarship application period opens soon. To date, \$1.8 million has been pledged for the Downtown West campus. November 7, 2025, has been set for the Annual Scholarship Luncheon.

Board Chair Gorski added that beginning in September, the Personnel Report will be in this list of Updates/Reports.

7. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report

The FOIA report was accepted as presented.

Adjourn to Closed Session

At 6:37 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn to closed session to discuss the following: 1) Litigation has been filed, is pending, or probable per section 2 (c) (11), in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Reconvene Open Session

At 6:50 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

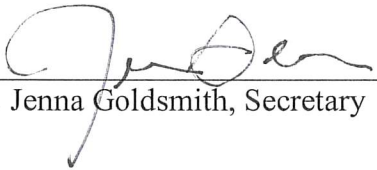
The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on August 12, 2025, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

The next Regular Meeting will be held on August 26, 2025, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) located in the Educational Resources Center (ERC) on the main campus.

Adjournment

At 6:53 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Cudia, 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

