

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
July 28, 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, July 28, 2026. Board Chair Paul Gorski called the meeting to order at 5:16 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. Crystal Soltow
Dr. Jenna Goldsmith	Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia
Mr. John Nelson (arrived 5:19 p.m.)	Ms. Sarah Ortiz Espinoza, Student Trustee

The following trustee was absent at roll call: John Nelson

Also in Attendance: Dr. Howard Spearman, President; Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development; 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)

There were no communications or petitions.

Recognition of Visitors

Dr. Spearman announced former Rock Valley College (RVC) General Educational Development (GED) instructor and published author, Mr. William Watts, who was present at the meeting.

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General Presentations

1. Session at a Glance – Dr. Litesa Wallace from LITE Strategies and Mr. Isaiah Shelton presented a lobbying update from the last legislative cycle. RVC has been very intentional with their presence at the Illinois State Capitol in the last several months. RVC preserved over \$27 million of state capital funding appropriations towards college projects, such as the Classroom II (CLII) Building project and science lab improvements. Dr. Spearman appeared at the state capitol many times this past spring to meet with key decision makers. He was part of the appropriations hearings for the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) Grant and the community college Baccalaureate, which is still open for the veto session. Dr. Wallace will continue to speak with leaders on behalf of RVC, and she asks that the RVC Board of Trustees sets their priorities for the 2027 Legislative Session by November 2026.

Trustee John Nelson arrived at 5:19 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Cudia, to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2026, Committee of the Whole (CotW) meeting and the June 23, 2026, Regular Board of Trustees meeting. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Action Items

1. BR8410 – Claims Sheet (Check Register – June 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 June 1, 2026, to June 30, 2026. The total is \$7,482,577.90.

A motion was made by Student Trustee Espinoza, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to approve BR8410. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

2a. BR8411-A – 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 A – FY2027 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8411-A. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

2b. BR8411-B – 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 B – FY2027 Purchases.

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Simpson, to approve Board Report 8411-B. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

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2c. BR8411-C – Purchase Report C – 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 C – FY2026 Amendments.

A motion was made by Trustee Cudia, seconded by Student Trustee Espinoza, to approve Board Report 8411-C. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

3. BR8412 – 2026-2027 Dual and Articulated Credit Memorandum of Understanding Between Rockford Public Schools District #205 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 and Rockford Public Schools District #205, beginning August 1, 2026, and expiring June 30, 2027. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Student Trustee Espinoza, to approve BR8412. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

5. BR8414 – Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois-Chicago and The Board of Trustees of Rock Valley College

The Board Report reads, in part: By securing a clear pipeline into a doctoral program, Rock Valley College enhances its science pathways, provides a high-value recruitment tool, and establishes a collaborative agreement with the University of Illinois-Chicago College of Pharmacy to support student retention and completion at both institutions. It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Rock Valley College Board of Trustees and the University of Illinois-Chicago Board of Trustees.

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Trojan, to approve BR8414. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Other Business

Unfinished business:

A. Trustee Trojan requested more information on the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Engineering partnership and whether we can expand the programs to include more than mechanical engineering. Dr. Spearman commented that his leadership team is still working on the engineering data and will share it with the trustees at a future meeting. Currently, Rockford Public Schools (RPS) does not have a dual credit engineering program that feeds into RVC. Right now, RVC is developing a senior semester option for high school districts to take part in.

B. Trustee Nelson brought up the idea of employing an internal auditor that reports directly to the RVC Board of Trustees. He has provided a detailed plan to Board Chair Gorski. Board Chair Gorski plans on discussing the possibility of hiring an internal auditor at the August 11, 2026 CotW meeting.

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At this time, Dr. Amanda Smith commented that Board Chair Paul Gorski skipped over the vote on BR8413, the 2026-2027 Running Start Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Rockford Public Schools District #205.

Action Items Continued

4. BR8413 – 2026-2027 Running Start Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) Rockford Public Schools District #205

The Board Report reads in part: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approves the Running Start Intergovernmental Agreement with Rockford Public Schools District #205, effective on the date both parties have approved and executed the Agreement, for classes beginning Summer 2026 and automatically expiring on June 30, 2027. **Attorney Reviewed.**

A motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Trustee Soltow, to approve BR8413. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Other Business Continued

New business:

There was no new business.

Updates/Reports

1. President's Update- Dr. Spearman:

- participated in the American Association of Community Colleges Presidents Summer Institute in Asheville, North Carolina, which consisted of 50 presidents throughout the US. The three-day retreat took the presidents on a personal formation journey through the Wisdom for Good Retreat facilitated by Dr. Tony Klemmer. During the retreat, presidents were reminded of the importance of being morally good and their authentic selves.
- attended the Meet and Greet for the new Superintendent of Rockford Public Schools, Dr. Larry Huff, hosted by the Rockford Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Huff looks forward to continuing our partnership and increasing reading, math and graduation rates.
- scheduled a meeting with Mr. Zack Oakley, the executive director of the Rockford International Airport. The purpose of the meeting is to develop a rapport and discuss future partnership opportunities.
- hosted a Rockford Promise press conference in the Educational Resource Center (ERC) lobby. The purpose of the press conference was to share our partnership agreement with Rockford Promise and Rockford University. Rockford Promise has students attending RVC on full-ride scholarships based on last dollar, meaning if their financial aid doesn't cover the tuition, then Rockford Promise will cover the cost. Rockford University and Northern Illinois University (NIU) are covering the remaining years of tuition once RVC students are done with the first two years funded by the Rockford Promise scholarships.

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- commented that the Chief Operation Officer (COO) search is underway. RVC will be hosting on-campus interviews for two candidates on Thursday, July 30. Open Campus Forums will take place from 11:00-11:50 a.m. in the Atrium and from 3:00-3:50 p.m. in the Performing Arts Room (PAR). Trustees are welcome to attend the forums. There will also be a virtual option through Microsoft Teams. Please contact Ann Kerwitz for further information.
- invited the RVC Trustees for a Downtown West Campus tour on Wednesday, August 12 at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. Contact Ann Kerwitz to reserve a time slot. The ribbon cutting is still scheduled for Friday, August 14 at 10:00 a.m.

2. Leadership Team Update

- Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Patrick Peyer congratulated RVC baseball player Mason Lei who was drafted by the Boston Red Sox. TRiO Upward Bound students completed their six-week summer program, which included college visits, a leadership conference, tours of the RVC Advanced Technology Center (ATC) and the Aviation Career Education Center (ACEC). Dr. Peyer's department also celebrated the Student Affairs Division Awards.
- Vice President of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development Dr. Hansen Stewart shared that the Summer Manufacturing and Readiness Technology (SMART) camp is finishing this week. The culmination celebration will be Friday, July 31, at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. If trustees plan to attend, contact Ann Kerwitz. On another note, Early College Running Start data will be addressed during the September or October board meetings.
- Vice President of Operations Mr. Rick Jenks spoke about the work that continues at the Downtown West campus. The staff will be moving in on Monday, August 3. As for the CLII building elevator, the Bailey Edwards team is reviewing the request and getting approval from the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) before proceeding with the project. Under the direction of the Board, the college has contacted OPN Architects, RVC's architect of record, regarding the ACEC expansion. OPN Architects are finalizing the cost on the preliminary assessment.
- Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Amanda Smith reported that the Tutoring and Writing Centers have been awarded certification as a Level 1 & 2 certified tutor training program by the internationally recognized College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA).
- Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communication Ms. Heather Snider gave the FY2027 enrollment update. Summer II ends next week. Enrollment is currently 8% behind last year, 11% ahead of

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budget, and 7% ahead of the stretch goal. The fall semester begins August 15. As of today, fall enrollment is 3% behind last year, 95% to budget, and 91% to the stretch goal. As a whole, FY27 enrollment is 4% behind last year, 97% to budget, and 93% to the stretch goal. Ms. Snider confirmed that an engineering report will be given at the August Committee of the Whole (CotW) meeting to address trustees' inquiry about additional 2 + 2 engineering agreements. Ms. Heather Snider finished her presentation with a shout-out to Chris O'Neil in Information Technology (IT) as a result of her help with the SaaS migration.

- Vice President Ms. Ellen Olson notified trustees that the FY2026 audit will commence on August 10, 2026, and will take about two weeks to complete. Auditors will be requesting information during this period, with formal reports issued after the audit.

3. Student Trustee Update: Student Trustee Sarah Ortiz Espinoza reported on the interview with Mohammed Al Sadeq Zubaidi regarding Model United Nations club and Student Government Association.

4. RVC Liaison Report: Trustee Bob Trojan provided an update on Best Chance Scholarships, which resulted in 326 scholarships being awarded. The Last Chance period, which gives students another opportunity to apply for scholarships, will open on July 29 and run until August 13.

5. ICCTA Report: no report

6. Trustee Comments

- Trustee Nelson mentioned his medallion for years of service that he received for participating in Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA) education and professional development.
- Trustee Trojan talked about R2OC robotics competition that was held at the RVC campus.
- Trustee Cudia attended the robotics event and praised the RVC Police Department for providing safe and positive events on campus.

7. Personnel Report (BR8415) - 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 August 11, 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 August 25, 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 6:21 p.m., Student Trustee Espinoza made a motion, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn to closed session to discuss: 1) 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), in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act. At this time, Board Chair Gorski asked that Trustee Bob Trojan act as secretary pro-tempore, in place of Trustee Jenna Goldsmith, for the remainder of the meeting.

Reconvene Open Session

At 6:40 p.m., Trustee Trojan made a motion, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the closed session and return to open session. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote. No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

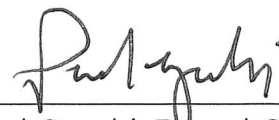
Adjourn

At 6:40 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Trojan, seconded by Trustee Nelson, to adjourn the Regular meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by Carly A. Diciolla.



Dr. Jenna Goldsmith, Secretary



Paul Gorski, Board Chair



Robert "Bob" Trojan, Secretary Pro-Tempore

