

# Rock Valley College

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

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING 5:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, 2026

### Call to Order

The Rock Valley College (RVC) Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting convened on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, in the Performing Arts Room (PAR, Room 0214) in the Educational Resource Center (ERC). The meeting was called to order at 5:18 p.m. by Board Chair Paul Gorski. Due to the absence of Board Secretary, Dr. Goldsmith, Board Chair Gorski appointed Trustee Kristen Simpson as Secretary Pro-Tempore.

### Roll Call

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

Mr. Paul Gorski	Ms. Gloria Cardenas Cudia
Mr. John Nelson	Ms. Kristen Simpson
Ms. Crystal Soltow	Mr. Isiah Blake, Student Trustee

The following Trustees were absent from the roll call: Dr. Jenna Goldsmith and Mr. Robert 'Bob' Trojan.

Also present: Dr. Howard J. Spearman, President; Dr. Keith Barnes, Vice President of Cultural Excellence and Belonging; Dr. Patrick Peyer, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. Terrica Huntley, Vice President of Human Resources; Ms. Heather Snider, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Communications; Dr. Hansen Stewart, Vice President of Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development; Mr. Rick Jenks, Vice President of Operations; Ms. Ellen Olson, Vice President of Finance; Dr. Amanda Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Ms. Ann Kerwitz, Assistant to the President; Ms. Carly Diciolla (f/k/a Huotari), Assistant to the President; Ms. Tracy Luethje, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Operations, Attorney Matthew Gardner, Robbins Schwartz.

### Board Member Attendance by Means Other than Physical Presence

Trustee John Nelson made a motion, seconded by Student Trustee Isiah Blake, to allow Trustee Robert 'Bob' Trojan and Trustee Jenna Goldsmith to participate in the meeting via teleconference. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote. Trustees Trojan and Goldsmith entered the meeting via telephone.

### Communications and Petitions

Citizen John Stassi raised concerns regarding RVC's policy on the distribution of materials and verbal expression, citing a 2001 policy that requires administrative approval for such activities.

The Board noted that a rigorous review of all College policies is currently underway and referred the matter to the administration for inclusion in that review.

### Recognition of Visitors

Dr. Spearman recognized two Student Government Association members: Mr. Leo Jang and Ms. Sarah Espinoza.

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## Review of Minutes

There were no comments on the minutes from the February 10, 2026, Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting.

## General Presentation

There were no general presentations.

## Teaching, Learning & Communications Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Goldsmith

### 1. 14<sup>th</sup> Day Census and Student Profile

Ms. Heather Snider, vice president of institutional effectiveness and communications, provided an update on the 14<sup>th</sup> Day Census and Student Profile. Vice President Snider stated that spring enrollment has shown substantial growth in both headcount and credit hours over the last five years. Headcount is growing faster than credit hours, indicating a rise in part-time students, largely driven by dual-credit high school programs. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Snider provided an update on the Student Profile report. The report provides a snapshot of the student body for the current spring semester, focusing on enrollment trends, demographics, and academic pathways. The total enrollment is 6,345 students who are currently enrolled in credit-bearing programs. The average age is 22; when high school dual-enrollment students are excluded, the average rises to 24, reflecting a significant adult learner population. The majority of the student body is female, and most students are enrolled part-time. Minority enrollment is on the rise, driven primarily by a consistent five-year increase in Hispanic students. "First-time" student numbers are low this term, as most new learners typically begin in the fall. Most students are declared in Liberal Arts and Sciences rather than Career Technical Education (CTE). The report distinguishes between declared majors (which favor Liberal Arts) and credit hours sold (where CTE shows higher engagement). Discussion ensued.

### 2. Return on Investment Academic Program Support

Ms. Snider provided an update on RVC's return on investment and academic program support.

- **Aviation:** Enrollment has grown substantially over 11 years, aided by the new airport facility. A temporary "dip" occurred during COVID due to FAA-mandated face-to-face requirements.
- **Welding:** Showing substantial growth due to high community demand and dual-credit offerings for high schoolers.
- **Mechatronics:** Also seeing strong growth, though a slight decline in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 as tuition waivers expired.
- **Associate of Engineering Science (AES) Program:** Enrollment in engineering courses remains stable. This suggests students are choosing the more flexible Associate of Science (AS) degree to transfer to institutions other than NIU. Trustees expressed disappointment in the downward trend. The College will look into better ways to track students on an engineering path who are not declared in the specific AES major.
- **Health Sciences (Nursing, Dental, Respiratory):** Enrollment in these programs remains flat/stable because they are capped. Growth is limited by clinical site availability (partnerships with outside organizations) and strict faculty-to-student ratios (e.g., 5:1 or 6:1 in dental hygiene). Nursing saw a temporary dip due to a skipped cohort during COVID, but has since rebounded.

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- **Fire Science:** Enrollment has bounced back following changes to State Fire Marshal certification standards and FEMA grant opportunities.
- **Downtown Campus:** Trustees requested specific "measurables" (like automotive training stats) for the upcoming Downtown campus to track the return on the \$58 million investment.

## Finance Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Cardenas Cudia

### 1. Purchase Reports

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

#### **Purchase Report A – FY2026 Amendments**

##### A. Car Rental Services – (Participant Travel – Athletics)

1.	<b>Van Galder Bus Company</b>	<b>Janesville, WI</b>	<b>\$ 50,000.00*(1)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

##### B. HVAC Upgrades – (Site Improvements – PHS HVAC Upgrade)

2.	<b>Johnson Controls Building Solutions</b>	<b>Rockford, IL</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00*(2)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

#### **Purchase Report B – FY2026 Purchases**

##### A. Downtown West Technology – (IT Capital Equipment – Downtown West)

1.	<b>Government Goods, Inc.</b>	<b>Brooklyn, NY</b>	<b>\$ 517,264.06*(1)</b>
	Government Goods, Inc.	Brooklyn, NY	\$ 519,308.94
	Entre Computer Solutions	Machesney Park, IL	\$ 538,436.22
	Southern Computer Warehouse	Merietta, GA	\$ 613,292.40
	Tech Advanced Computers	Pensacola, FL	\$ 626,852.00
	Milliard Tek, LLC	Clarksburg, MD	\$ 646,873.40
	Howard Technology Solutions	Laurel, MS	\$ 738,293.00

##### B. Downtown West Landscaping – (Site Improv – Professional Serv – Downtown West Project)

2.	<b>Semper Fi Land, Inc.</b>	<b>Yorkville, IL</b>	<b>\$ 320,054.00*(2)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

##### C. Downtown West Furniture – (Capital Instr Equipment/Furniture – Downtown West Project)

3.	<b>Atmosphere Commercial Interiors</b>	<b>Rockford, IL</b>	<b>\$ 607,805.34*(3)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

##### D. Stage Equipment – (Capital Rock Valley College Foundation Grant – Theatre Program)

4.	<b>Creative Conners</b>	<b>Cranston, RI</b>	<b>\$ 43,025.00*(4)</b>
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##### E. Used Aircraft – (Capital Instructional Equipment – Aviation)

5.	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>\$ 91,000.00*(5)</b>
			<b>Not to Exceed</b>

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Discussion ensued on items A, B, C, and E.

## 2. Cash and Investment Report

Ms. Olson presented the Cash and Investment Report through February 28, 2026. Total operating cash is \$17,322,635. Total operating cash and investments are \$99,747,903. The operating cash and investments have changed by <\$3,881,031> since January 31, 2026. Total capital funds are \$67,381,557. Since January 31, 2026, the change in capital funds has been \$1,905,456. Ms. Olson stated that the total operating cash and investment funds were 92.84% of the FY2026 operating budget.

### Operations Discussion: Board Liaison Trustee Trojan

#### 1. Board Policy Manual Update: Article 3: Human Resources / First Reading

Dr. Terrica Huntley, vice president of human resources, presented the first reading of the Board Policy Update: Article 3, Human Resources. The review aims to ensure that College policies support the institution's mission and strategic goals, particularly those related to professional development and cultural excellence. The policy review follows a structured workflow to maintain legal and operational relevance. The policies are initially vetted by legal counsel (Robbins Schwartz) and then refined by the Office of the President and Human Resources (HR) in collaboration with campus leadership. Proposed changes undergo two readings at Board of Trustees meetings (scheduled for March and April), where feedback is solicited. Once approved, HR works with Marketing and Communications to update the College website and inform the campus community.

The administration reviewed or created 48 procedures to clarify institutional expectations. Notable updates include:

- **Structural Adjustments:** Three policies (Sex-based Misconduct, Violence and Disruptive Behavior, and Service Animals) were moved to Article 2 Operations because they apply to the entire campus community.
- **Deletions:** The Corporal Punishment policy is recommended for deletion as it is an outdated concept for higher education. The Problem Resolution Policy for Educational Support Personnel (ESP) is also slated for removal because collective bargaining agreements now cover these protections.
- **Legal & Statutory Updates:** Service hour requirements for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) were updated from 1,250 to 1,000 hours to comply with the FMLA and the Public Community College Act.
- **Background Checks:** Updated to align with the Illinois Human Rights Act, requiring interactive assessments before making final employment decisions based on conviction records.
- **Equal Opportunity:** Added specific protections for pregnant employees and anti-retaliation provisions.
- **Operational Clarifications:** New language for remote work emphasizes the College's right to revoke remote work at any time due to performance or operational needs.
- **Personnel Reports:** The Board now acknowledges personnel reports rather than voting to approve them, per a 2025 amendment.
- **Compensation:** The "merit-based" rewarding of performance was removed to reflect current practices where rewards are dictated by collective bargaining or board-approved salary programs.

Following the completion of the Article 3 review, the College will begin the same process for Article 4 (Students) to keep the manual current.

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Trustee Nelson's primary objection was based on a fundamental distinction in institutional leadership. He argued that the current documents blur the lines between Governance (the Board's role) and Management (the Administration's role). Trustee Nelson contends that the draft includes "discipline" and "mandates" that are too granular. In his view, the Board should state the policy, but the Administration should determine the disciplinary procedures and daily workflows. There was a debate over this term; Trustee Nelson suggested that instead of using "congruity," the board should state that reports must align with historical data and current practices to avoid "gobbledygook." A core of his frustration stems from the fact that the legal team and administration drafted these without a trustee present on the committee, leading to a document that reflects an "administrative" philosophy rather than a "governance" one. Board Chair Gorski requested that Trustee Nelson provide specific written examples of where he believes the policy crosses into "operations" for the rest of the board and counsel to consider. Board Chair Gorski will provide the presentation video previously emailed to trustees on a USB drive to Trustee Nelson, given Trustee Nelson's difficulty accessing digital files.

## **2. Rock Valley College and Rock Valley College Foundation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Ms. Olson stated that the revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Rock Valley College and the Rock Valley College Foundation reflects the ongoing partnership in which the Rock Valley College Foundation manages funds to support the College's educational mission. At the same time, the College provides the necessary administrative and personnel support. Key updates to the MOU include adding staffing support. The revised agreement documents a \$100,000 increase to the Foundation, which was approved on January 27, 2026, with Board Report #8348. These funds are specifically allocated to help fund an additional employee, the Coordinator of Fund Development and Engagement. While the MOU was renewed without changes in February 2025, this version officially records the College's increased financial commitment to the Foundation's operational needs. Discussion ensued.

## **3. Brightly / Capital Predictor Software**

Mr. Jenks, vice president of operations, provided details, implementation, and benefits of the Brightly software system for facility and asset management. Brightly is a comprehensive computer program used by the Facilities, Plant, Operations, and Maintenance department to track building materials, equipment, and sub-components. The system is designed to track work orders, monitor tickets against assets to identify problematic equipment, and determine if early replacement is necessary. Brightly's inventory management will provide automatic notifications for ordering common parts, and the asset lifecycle tracking stores critical data for each component, including installation dates, projected end-of-life, enhancement history (e.g., roof overlays), and replacement costs. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Forecasting uses "Predictor" software and AI to project future expenses and model funding scenarios up to 100 years into the future. Mr. Jenks discussed the numbers from December 2025 through the current period and stated that the College has seen a positive shift in asset health, with an increase in Service State 1 (optimal) and a decrease in Service State 4 (poor). While the system is currently operational, RVC plans to add several more categories to the tracking database, including server equipment and academic equipment, cedar roofs, and furniture from the Downtown campus and Classroom II Building (CLII). Vice President Jenks stated that the data entry for Brightly is currently paused while the team focuses on completing the Downtown West campus.

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The Trustees expressed strong support for the system, offering additional staffing or resources to ensure the data entry is finished. They emphasized that the software is only as good as the data put into it, and they want to see it used to its "maximum capacity."

## 4. Downtown West Update

Vice President Jenks stated that the project remains on schedule for an August 17, 2026, opening. A major focus recently has been clearing a backlog of Architect's Supplemental Instructions (ASIs: technical documents that clarify how contractors should proceed). The backlogs have been resolved, leaving only two outstanding Requests for Information (RFIs). By ensuring contractors have the right information quickly, the College is avoiding further construction delays. Mr. Jenks explained that a specific point of tension has arisen regarding "submittals" (contractor plans reviewed by the architect). The architect's contract covers two reviews per trade package. For the roofing sheet metal, the project is moving into its fourth revision. The architect is seeking additional compensation (estimated at not to exceed \$3,000 at an hourly rate) to conduct this final review. To keep the project moving without waiting for monthly Board votes, the Board reached a consensus to allow the Finance Liaison and Board Chair to act as a "buffer." They will tentatively approve these small, "not-to-exceed" amounts to prevent work stoppages, with formal votes to follow later for the record. Vice President Jenks is now personally "intercepting" submittals to act as a buffer, rejecting poor-quality submissions before they reach the architect to avoid incurring extra hourly fees. The administration is emphasizing a "come to us first" policy for the architect and construction manager to ensure no work is done without prior authorization. Mr. Jenks explained what change orders have been processed for the Downtown West project. Mr. Jenks stated that to date, \$370,737.98 has been submitted for change orders, leaving a contingency amount of \$1,851,501.02.

## 5. Classroom II Building (CLII) Update

Mr. Jenks said that the funding authorized by the Board has been officially set aside. The College administration has ensured the money is allocated to the correct accounts to meet the Capital Development Board (CDB) requirements to move forward. CDB is currently negotiating the second phase of the contract with the architects. This phase is critical as it covers the bulk of the project's technical lifecycle: design development, construction oversight, and closeout procedures. Mr. Jenks reiterated that because this is a CDB-managed project, RVC acts as the "customer and advisory partner" rather than the lead manager. Vice President Jenks anticipates having a more comprehensive update for the Board next month, provided CDB gives the "green light" on the negotiated architectural terms.

## 6. Change Order Update

Vice President Jenks discussed the following change orders:

- **Bengt Sjostrom Theatre (Starlight) Lighting Phase 2 and 3:** two change orders in the amounts of \$254.00 and \$200.00 were requested for dimmer switches and 12 Chauvet Storm 3 Profile (IP65) fixtures. The project remains on schedule.
- **Health Sciences Center (HSC) Buildout/Elevator:** A credit to eliminate a valve cabinet was given. The running total of change orders is \$2,237,308.00, leaving a contingency of \$161,524.00.

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## 7. Personnel Report

Mr. Jenks discussed the March 2026 Personnel Report. There is a placeholder for the Project Manager and an Economics Faculty member, both of which are full-time positions. An update on those two positions is expected at the Regular Board meeting on March 24, 2026.

## 8. RVC Events Calendar

Mr. Jenks discussed the March 2026 RVC Events Calendar. Some of the events that were mentioned were: The Groundwater Festival, Science Olympiad, CNC, T and E Regional Competition, being held at the Advanced Technology Center (ATC), which will host high school students competing in welding, engineering, and carpentry, Massage Therapy Open House, and the theater program's performance of *Leaving Iowa*.

### New Business/Unfinished Business

#### Unfinished Business

Dr. Spearman addressed two key items under unfinished business. The first is celebrating the men's bowling and men's doubles teams for winning two National Championships. The team will be invited to the March 24, 2026, Regular Board meeting to receive official congratulations in person.

The second item is that RVC has an opportunity to receive a capital grant ranging from \$3,000,000 to \$6,000,000. The College intends to apply for the maximum \$6,000,000. The funds would be used to build out and equip dedicated AI centers at two locations: Downtown West in Rockford and the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) in Belvidere. Because this is a capital grant, it covers construction and durable equipment, not faculty salaries or cloud-based software licensing. Dr. Spearman stated that to submit a competitive application by the April 30, 2026, deadline, the College needs professional architectural designs for both locations immediately. By consensus, the Board authorized the administration to move forward with the application and the necessary preliminary architectural work. While the Board approved the effort, they clarified that the specific "not-to-exceed" costs for the architectural work will be presented to the Board for formal approval in a subsequent meeting. Trustees emphasized that they expect clear, measurable plans for the space usage before authorizing any final construction expenditures.

#### New Business

Board Chair Gorski had new business to present to the Board. The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Leadership Congress is meeting on October 21 through October 24, 2026, in Chicago, Illinois. The administration plans to submit a proposal to present on the institution's Strategic Plan Directions. The proposal requires at least one trustee to co-present alongside College staff. The campus proposal must be submitted by May 15, 2026. Board Chair Gorski has offered Trustee Goldsmith "first dibs" to serve as the co-presenter, and if she declines, the opportunity will be opened to the rest of the Board. Board Chair Gorski stated that the administration will coordinate with the Board regarding attendance and cost in the coming weeks.

Board Chair Gorski changed the agenda and announced the next Regular Board meeting and the next Committee of the Whole meetings before adjourning to Closed Session for this meeting and meetings moving forward.

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## Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

The next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 24, 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, April 14, 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 7:24 p.m., Trustee Nelson made a motion, seconded by Trustee Cardenas Cudia, 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 a unanimous roll call vote.

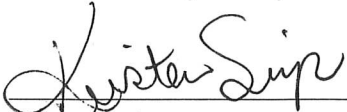
## Reconvene Open Session

At 8:06 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, 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 8:07 p.m., a motion was made by Trustee Nelson, seconded by Student Trustee Blake, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Submitted by: Tracy L. Luethje.



Kristen Simpson, Secretary Pro Tempore



Paul Gorski, Board Chairman