

NETWORK



NOVEMBER 2024



HIGHLIGHTS



LTC opens its new athletic performance center, *The Barn*.



Alumnus *Caleb Kamplain* returns in role with TRIO.



LTC puts a focus on campus safety with a variety of drills and training.

INTELLIGENT.COM RANKS LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE AMONG BEST IN U.S.

Intelligent.com, a widely recognized source for higher education rankings and research, has included Lincoln Trail College in its annual assessment, awarding it The Best Community Colleges for 2025.

In their rankings of the Top 50 Community Colleges in the United States, LTC was ranked 40th.

“Being ranked by Intelligent.com as one of the top Community Colleges in the United States is extremely exciting, a significant accomplishment, and it is evidence that Lincoln Trail College is comprised of a group of highly qualified faculty and staff who are all committed to fulfilling the IECC mission which is to deliver exceptional education and services to improve the lives of our students and to strengthen our communities,” said LTC President Tona Ambrose.

Unlike conventional rankings, Intelligent.com employs a rigorous, data-driven methodology designed to provide students with the most accurate and meaningful evaluations. Each community college is assessed on a proprietary scale of



UPCOMING DECEMBER EVENTS

- 5 Lincoln Trail College Foundation Christmas Dinner
- 6 Last Day of Fall Semester Classes
- 9-12 Final Exams
- 13 Last Day of Fall Semester
- 19-1/1 COLLEGE CLOSED - Winter Break

0 to 100, with scores derived from four key factors: academic quality, graduation rates, cost and return on investment (ROI), and student resources. This distinctive approach ensures that institutions with strong academic rigor, affordable programs, and exceptional student support rank higher, helping prospective students make the most informed decisions.

The evaluation process is enhanced by leveraging comprehensive data from trusted sources such as U.S. News & World Report, the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These sources are cross-checked with

internal reviews and aggregated rankings to ensure the most accurate and up-to-date results.

Lincoln Trail College received an Intelligent Score of 76.06 and was one of only two downstate Illinois colleges to make the list. Olney Central College was ranked 50th.

"This ranking demonstrates that LTC is not only meeting our academic goals but also exceeding the expectations and needs of our students," said Ambrose. "The recognition speaks to the dedication of our faculty and staff, whose commitment to high standards and student success is obvious and it reflects that LTC offers a rigorous and supportive academic environment where all students can thrive. Ranking 40th in the nation says that we are a college that puts students first, we care about certificate and degree completion, and we are dedicated to making our rigorous academic and program offerings accessible to all students."

Ambrose says that LTC offers real value to students. "LTC is committed to both quality and affordability, and our offerings are designed to prepare students for the workforce directly through Career and Technical Education programs and also provide strong foundational coursework for those planning to transfer to a four-year university. By keeping tuition affordable and ensuring that students are well-prepared for their next steps, LTC offers an excellent return on investment. Graduates leave with the skills and knowledge that lead to success while minimizing costs and maximizing potential for career and/or academic advancement."

Ambrose believes that one of the ways that LTC extends quality to students is through the individual attention students receive from both faculty and staff. She says that the ranking is a reflection of the College's ongoing dedication to helping every student reach their goals and build better futures.

"This recognition, coupled with the undeniable care and dedication of our faculty and staff, ensures that Lincoln Trail College is an excellent choice for prospective students and speaks volumes to the quality of education that students can expect here. This ranking also inspires us to continue to build on our rigorous course offerings, relevant student support, and to continue to provide meaningful opportunities for students both in and out of the classroom."



LTC UNVEILS NEW ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE CENTER, THE BARN



Lincoln Trail College is proud to announce the opening of The Barn, a state-of-the-art athletic performance center designed to enhance the training and development of its student-athletes. Located on the LTC campus, The Barn features a comprehensive weight room, modern cardiovascular equipment, and an indoor training facility for baseball and softball that can also be adapted for indoor soccer practice. This multifunctional approach ensures that student-athletes from various sports can benefit from top-notch training environments year-round.



The Athletic Performance Center has been nicknamed The Barn because it reflects the commitment of Lincoln Trail College to create a place where hard work, dedication, and community come together. Just as a traditional barn has long been a symbol of growth, resilience, and teamwork in rural communities, The Barn represents a space where LTC's student-athletes can build their strength, refine their skills, and grow as individuals. The name honors the college's roots in the community, paying tribute to the spirit of collaboration and support that drives LTC athletics.

The Barn includes three locker rooms, a dedicated private space for an athletic trainer, and a concessions stand that will serve outdoor athletic events. Additionally, the upper portion of the building offers ample storage space for equipment and supplies. Weight training and cardiovascular equipment in The Barn was donated by Crawford Memorial Hospital.

"The Barn represents a significant investment in our athletic programs and our students' success," said Tona Ambrose, president of Lincoln Trail College. "We are committed to providing our student-athletes with the resources they need to excel both on and off the field. This facility will serve as a cornerstone of our athletics program and will help us foster a winning culture."

Jenny Saad, athletic director at LTC, emphasized the importance of The Barn in enhancing the student-athlete experience. "With The Barn, we have created a versatile training environment that will support our athletes in their pursuit of excellence. Whether it's strength training, skill development, or rehabilitation, our athletes will have access to top-notch facilities and services that can adapt to their diverse needs. We are thrilled to see how this facility will contribute to the growth of our athletic programs and the personal development of our student-athletes."



The Barn is an exciting upgrade to the Ragon-Parker Fitness Center, which was located in downtown Robinson but closed by the City of Robinson. This new facility is now conveniently located on campus, making it easier for our student-athletes and coaches to access training and support. "Having our athletic facilities on campus is essential for our student-athletes and coaches," said Ambrose. "We want to provide our athletes with everything they need to succeed in one location, making training and practices more convenient and effective."



The Barn ties into Statesmen Park, which is LTC's vision for a comprehensive athletics facility on campus. Statesmen Park features two soccer fields, the College's baseball facility (Parker Field), and now The Barn.

STUDENT SENATE CONDUCTING FOOD DRIVE IN NOVEMBER

The Lincoln Trail College Student Senate is organizing a month-long food drive in November, collecting non-perishable food items to support the LTCares Food Pantry and local food pantries. Drop-off barrels for food donations are located in Williams Hall, while monetary donations are welcome at the Student Services Office.

This food drive not only helps address food insecurity on campus but also supports the broader Robinson community. The drive includes a friendly competition among the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges to see which college can gather the most donations, fostering camaraderie and a shared mission to make a positive impact.



LTC Student Senate co-advisor Phil Thorsen emphasized the importance of coming together to support those in need. “Donating to the food drive is a simple yet powerful way to make a difference,” Thorsen said. “Each donation, whether big or small, helps ensure that those facing food insecurity have access to essential resources.”

Co-advisor Angel Kerner echoed this sentiment, highlighting how the food drive brings the campus and community together. “Our campus and community rally behind causes like this,” Kerner said. “It’s inspiring to see people join forces to help those who need it most, showing the power of collective compassion and generosity.”

The LTCares Food Pantry at LTC is an important resource for students facing food insecurity, and this initiative will also extend aid to other local pantries, supporting the broader community.

KAMPLAIN JOINS LTC AS TRIO ACADEMIC ADVISOR



Lincoln Trail College is excited to welcome Caleb Kamplain as the new Academic Advisor for its TRIO Student Support Services program. Kamplain, a former LTC student himself, brings a deep passion for higher education and a commitment to empowering students to overcome academic and personal barriers.

As an advisor, Kamplain’s focus will be on recruiting and guiding students through the TRIO SSS program, providing personalized academic support, and working closely with faculty and staff to address obstacles that can impact student success. “The TRIO SSS program can help students with a 0.0 GPA or a 4.0 GPA and everything in between,” Kamplain said. “My goal is to be a resource for students and to offer support, no matter where they are on their journey.”

Kamplain’s educational path reflects his commitment to lifelong learning and student empowerment. After earning his associate degree from LTC, he pursued a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Southern Indiana and completed a Master of Arts in Community Psychology at National Louis University in 2024. He is now working toward a Ph.D. in the same field. His background includes roles as a graduate research assistant and as a substitute special education paraprofessional, experiences he says have strengthened his approach to advising. “I understand some of the challenges students face because I’ve navigated them myself,” Kamplain shared. “My own journey has taught me the value of collaboration, open-mindedness, and a passion for learning.”

Kamplain expressed enthusiasm about returning to LTC in a professional role. “My time as a student at Lincoln Trail College was transformative,” he said. “Higher education gave me a blend of freedom and structure I hadn’t experienced before. It took time for me to find my home in psychology and the social sciences, and that journey is a big reason why I’m excited to support students here today.”

In his free time, Kamplain enjoys reading, traveling to academic conferences, and engaging in creative pastimes such as playing video games and listening to music. He’s looking forward to giving back to the LTC community and helping students achieve their full potential.

LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE PREPARES FOR FALL CONCERTS



The Arts at Lincoln Trail College is excited to present two upcoming fall concerts featuring ensembles comprised of both students and community members. The concerts will be held in the Zwermann Arts Center Theater, with free admission for all attendees.

The Fall Choral Concert, *Here We Come A-Caroling*, will be held on November 22 at 7 p.m. Directed by Yvonne Newlin, the choral ensemble will bring holiday cheer with a selection of traditional carols and festive songs. "Our ensemble has been working hard to capture the spirit of the season," said Newlin. "This concert is a wonderful way to bring the community together and share in the joy of holiday music."



On November 26 at 7 p.m., the Fall Instrumental Concert, *A Musical Mosaic: Bridging the Classics and the Contemporary*, will showcase a blend of classical and modern compositions under the direction of Jena Combs. "Our program celebrates a range of musical styles, offering something

for every listener," Combs said. "It's a unique experience to hear timeless classics alongside contemporary works, brought to life by a talented group of students and community musicians."

Both performances will be held in the Zwermann Arts Center Theater on the Lincoln Trail College campus. The college welcomes the community to enjoy these special musical evenings celebrating both tradition and innovation.



LTC, IECC LAUNCH VIRTUAL CAMPUS TOURS

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges have launched virtual campus tours, giving prospective students a closer look at each campus's classrooms, labs, and common areas from anywhere in the world. The project, led by IECC Director of Marketing and Public Information Chris Forde, aims to provide a detailed, immersive experience to help students visualize life at Lincoln Trail College and its sister institutions.



A screenshot of the Process Technology lab in Lincoln Trail College's virtual tour. Various interactive icons are placed throughout the room, giving virtual visitors a chance to learn about the program by visiting the program page on the website and watching videos about Process Technology.

To build the virtual tours, Forde visited each campus to capture 360-degree photos of essential spaces. With coding assistance from Cameron Ireland, these panoramic images have been integrated into each college's website, allowing prospective students to explore college facilities from their own devices.

While IECC encourages students to visit campus in person, Forde says the virtual tours are a valuable option for those who can't make the trip, especially international students and athletes. "We believe that visiting in person is the best way to experience the energy and community on our campuses," said Forde. "But we understand that not everyone has that opportunity. For students across the world, and those who might be balancing travel with athletic commitments, these virtual tours offer the next best thing."

Forde says the Marketing Department worked with Enrollment Management to get campus tour scripts so that the virtual tours could capture the same information students visiting campus would receive.

"We were also able to add additional information within each 360-degree image," says Forde. "We can embed information, website links, videos, and photos within the images. That gives prospective students a chance to watch videos about programs and hear from instructors and students."

By building the tours in-house, Forde says the Marketing Department was able to save IECC a considerable amount of money. "We've had companies pitch us similar tours, and they cost \$15-20,000 per campus. They also didn't offer the flexibility of updating tours without additional costs. We can update our tours anytime, and there's no additional cost to updating the tours."

The virtual tours provide potential students and their families a comprehensive view of each college, allowing them to better understand IECC's facilities and resources. By bringing these tours online, IECC hopes to make its campuses accessible to a broader audience and highlight its commitment to student convenience and engagement.



LTC PUTS A FOCUS ON CAMPUS SAFETY



Lincoln Trail College is prioritizing safety with ongoing emergency preparedness activities and training. In October, the college took part in the Great American Shakeout, a nationwide earthquake drill. LTC students, faculty, and staff practiced “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” on October 17 at 10:17 a.m., reinforcing their knowledge of earthquake safety procedures.

LTC will continue its safety efforts in November with a campus-wide fire drill scheduled for November 15 at 11:15 a.m. These drills are part of the college’s commitment to providing a safe and responsive environment for all members of the campus community.

“We’re consistently focused on emergency readiness here at Lincoln Trail,” said Chris Forde, LTC’s Coordinator of Marketing and Public Information. “Our goal is to ensure that everyone on campus knows what to do and feels prepared in the event of an emergency.”

In addition to drills, Lincoln Trail College holds monthly safety meetings to assess and improve campus safety protocols. The college also works closely with local emergency responders to enhance preparedness and strengthen relationships for effective crisis response.

“Building and maintaining strong relationships with local emergency services is key to our emergency response plan,” Forde said. “Our connections with agencies in Crawford County ensure that we’re prepared to respond quickly and collaboratively in any situation.”

The campus safety meetings have included representatives from law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency dispatchers. They have shared their knowledge with LTC’s safety team. The Robinson Fire Department even gave the team a training session on how to properly use fire extinguishers.

Beyond his role with LTC, Forde brings extensive experience to his position, serving as the chairman of the Crawford County 911 Emergency Telephone System Board (ETSB), which oversees the county’s 911 system. Forde has also been a Police Commissioner for the City of Robinson and is a certified ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) instructor, enabling him to bring a depth of safety knowledge to the college.

“Our commitment to safety is ongoing,” Forde added. “Through training, regular safety meetings, and coordination with local agencies, we’re doing everything we can to protect our campus community. I applaud President Tona Ambrose for making campus safety a priority.”



DECEMBER ATHLETIC EVENTS

Men's Basketball

4	at Jefferson College	7:00
11	at Olney Central College	7:00
14	Vincennes University	3:00

Women's Basketball

4	at Jefferson College	5:00
7	at Lewis & Clark Community College	1:00
11	at Olney Central College	5:00
14	Vincennes University	1:00
16	at Kaskaskia College	5:00

VANDEHATERT COMMITS TO DBU



Aiden VanDeHatert, a left-handed pitcher at Lincoln Trail College, has officially committed to continue his baseball career at Dallas Baptist University after his upcoming graduation in May. VanDeHatert's impressive growth and dedication on and off the field have earned him this opportunity to compete at the next level. During his time at Lincoln Trail, VanDeHatert has shown substantial development under the guidance of LTC Head Coach Collin Maynard. Coach Maynard highlighted VanDeHatert's growth, saying, "Aiden has seen substantial growth during his time at LTC. Up to this point, he has gained nearly 5 MPH on his fastball since first stepping on campus, and I expect even more to come this year. He has also worked diligently to develop his secondary pitches to keep hitters off balance."

Coach Maynard also praised VanDeHatert's readiness for the challenges ahead. "I believe Aiden's time at Lincoln Trail has prepared him well for the challenges he will face at Dallas Baptist University. He has learned to face adversity head-on, and I know that Aiden will never back down from a challenge." Looking toward VanDeHatert's future at DBU, Coach Maynard expressed his confidence in his former player's potential to make an immediate impact. "I envision that Aiden will have a chance to step into an immediate impact role at Dallas Baptist University. I believe that he has the ability to make an impact in their program, and I know his work ethic will continue just as it was here."

Beyond his on-field abilities, VanDeHatert's leadership has also been a key asset to Lincoln Trail's program. "Aiden's presence and leadership leave a large impact with our team. He is always pushing his teammates to work hard and get the most out of themselves. He is also one of the loudest guys in the dugout and is always the first one to help pick up a teammate."

For VanDeHatert, the decision to commit to DBU was driven by the school's strong baseball culture and coaching staff. "What influenced me the most to commit to Dallas Baptist was the culture and coaching staff. Dallas Baptist has built a culture of success that I am excited to be a part of and continue to help them win. They also have an experienced coaching staff that I trust to put me in great positions to succeed and develop into the player that I can become."

VanDeHatert also credits his experience at Lincoln Trail for preparing him for the next level. "Playing at Lincoln Trail has prepared me for the next level with the coaching I have received and the competition we play. Our pitching coach, Coach Wells, has been able to help me develop as a player and on the mental side of pitching. This has helped me grow as a player and person. We also play great competition throughout the year in the GRAC, preparing me for what is coming next."

LTC IN PICTURES



Local residents check out LTC's VRTEX 360 welding simulator at the Heath Harvest Festival in Robinson.



Lincoln Trail College Student Senate members were among the students, faculty, and staff representing LTC at Fall Follies in Oblong.



Dracula checks in on Lucy while John Harker and Dr. Seward look on in LTC's production of Dracula.



Dracula visits Lucy in the night in LTC's production of Dracula.



The cast and crew of Lincoln Trail College's production of Dracula.



One of Angela Compton's students creates chalk art to make the campus more festive for Trick or Treat at the Trail.



Community members line up at the start of Trick or Treat at the Trail. An estimated 3,000 community members came to this year's event.



Members of LTC's baseball team hand out candy at Trick or Treat at the Trail.