

OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE KNIGHTLINE



FEBRUARY 2025

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

17 — College Closed for Presidents Day

19 — Nursing Information Session, Room 213, 3 p.m.

26 — Fine Arts Day, 12:30-2 p.m.

26 — Nursing Information Session, Room 213, 2 p.m.

28 — Midterm

28 — Deadline to Apply for Graduation

MARCH

1 — OCC Foundation Scholarships Due

14 — OCC Ambassador Applications Due

3 — Pulaski Day, College Open

4-7 — Spring Break, College Open

17 — Natural Woman: A Tribute to Carole King, Southeastern Illinois Concert Association, OCC Theater, 7 p.m.

College Visits

March 12 — University of Southern Indiana Representative Simone Payne will be here from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Olney Central College hosted a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new Applied Technology Center on January 15. The \$3.15 million addition to Dr. Kent L. Wattleworth Hall will house the college's nursing and radiography programs.

OCC holds Groundbreaking for Applied Technology Center

Olney Central College celebrated upcoming construction of the 8,000-square-foot Applied Technology Center with a Groundbreaking Ceremony on January 15.

Funded through the Rebuild Illinois capital program, the \$3.15 million project represents a significant investment in the future of healthcare education and workforce readiness in the region.

Construction will involve a major addition to Dr. Kent L. Wattleworth Hall to house OCC's nursing and radiography programs. The new facility will feature state-of-the-art classrooms, high-tech simulation and skills labs, faculty office space, a student lounge, laundry facilities, and enhanced storage. Notably, radiography students will benefit from having an energized lab on campus for the first time in the program's history.

"Through Rebuild Illinois, we're investing in the infrastructure of community colleges to open doors for students and strengthen local communities," Illinois Governor JB Pritzker stated in a joint announcement with the Illinois Capital Development Board. "The Applied Technology Center at Olney Central College will enhance healthcare education in Southeastern Illinois, equipping students with state-of-the-art tools and hands-on learning to build a stronger, more resilient healthcare workforce for the region,"

Lisa Hennigh, Deputy Director of Construction for the Illinois Capital Development Board, was among the guest speakers during last month's event.

"This is more than just new construction. It's an opportunity for Illinois students who want to pursue careers in nursing and radiography," she said. "These students will receive invaluable hands-on learning experiences with innovative technology. This project will be a launching pad



Above, following the ceremony, guests enjoy a reception in the lobby of the Dr. John D. Stull Performing Arts Center. At left, IECC Dean of Health Professions Dr. Alani Frederick emphasizes the impact the Applied Technology Center will have not only for OCC students, but the community.

for highly-trained professionals ready to enter the healthcare workforce across Illinois and serve their communities with the knowledge they gained at Olney Central College. We are thrilled to begin this journey together and see the lasting impact this facility will have not just on the OCC campus, but also in the broader community and healthcare industry.”

The Applied Technology Center marks the largest classroom addition at OCC in more than a decade and the most extensive renovation to OCC’s main building since its opening in 1974. The project includes revamping existing classrooms 106, 107 and 108 and seamlessly integrating them into the new facility, designed by Graham & Hyde Architects, Inc., and being built by Shores Builders, Inc.

“The Applied Technology Center at Olney Central College represents our commitment to delivering state-of-the-art education through advanced simulation and hands-on learning,” said Dean of Health Professions Dr. Alani Frederick. “Nursing students will be immersed in a realistic hospital environment, allowing them to develop critical clinical judgment in a safe, supervised setting. Radiography students will gain essential experience in our energized lab, where they’ll take X-rays under the guidance of expert faculty to ensure precision. By blending cutting-edge technology with expert instruction, we’re preparing our students to become highly skilled healthcare professionals ready to meet the demands of today’s workforce.”

During the ceremony, Frederick stressed the far-reaching impact the Applied Technology Center will have within the community and the programs it serves.

“As we educate radiologic technologists, we currently graduate around 15 students a year,” she said. “In the next 20 years, the training in our energized lab will allow 300 radiologic technologists to enter into our healthcare facilities. If these 300 technologists image 10 pictures a day, that is 3,000 images a day that will be delivered safely due to this investment. Over the next 20 years, the nursing simulation lab will teach over 1,500 nursing students how to respond to medical emergencies, how to assist in childbirth and how to help families transition loved ones into death with dignity and grace. When those students enter the workforce, those 1,500 nurses — should they care for just 10 patients a week — would help over 15,000 patients a week, 60,000 patients a month and 780,000 patients a year.”

Frederick continued, “When you consider this building can improve over 3,000 images a day and the care of 15,000 patients a week, the cost of the building seems insignificant. The impact this investment will have is nearly incomprehensible. The commitment from the state of Illinois and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges to ensure high-quality education will touch more lives than any of us in the room can imagine.”

Remarks were also given by OCC President Chris Simpson and David Leggans of Graham & Hyde Architects.

In addition to state funding, OCC has received more than \$400,000 in financial support from the community to complete the project. This includes the Olney Central College Foundation's pledge of more than \$150,000 over the next five years along with contributions from Wabash General Hospital, the Johnsie Flock Fildes Foundation, the Richland County Board and the City of Olney. OCC also received a generous gift given in memory of Phyllis Fehrenbacher by her family.

The Applied Technology Center will open in 2026.



Above, OCC Health Professions representatives, including Dr. Alani Frederick and the nursing and radiography faculty, participate in the Groundbreaking Ceremony. At left, work is underway at the site of OCC's new Applied Technology Center.

OCC ensuring white squirrels thrive on campus



Olney Central College is taking measures to ensure the campus' white squirrel population continues to thrive by installing nesting boxes near the Applied Technology Center construction site.

"We had identified through the project a few trees that we knew would have to be taken down," said OCC President Chris Simpson. "We have a lot of white squirrel activity on campus. We wanted to be aware of that and take steps so if there was any disruption to their habitat, we were addressing it. We have never seen activity in the trees that were taken down, but there were nests in trees nearby."

Simpson reached out to white squirrel experts for advice on maintaining a hospitable environment for Olney's most famous residents.

"We contacted retired OCC Instructor Dr. John Stencel, who initiated Olney's annual squirrel count in the 1970s, and Belinda Henton, who has worked for several years to maintain the city's white squirrel population," Simpson explained. "They guided us on what we needed to do."

When Simpson approached OCC Woodworking Instructor Kyle Kuenstler about constructing the custom-built nesting boxes, he was happy to lend his expertise.

"The boxes are very similar to birdhouses," Kuenstler said. "For the squirrels, the most important aspects are the perch and the access hole. They need a sturdy spot to stand on to get in and out safely and the hole must be small enough, so they feel safe, but big enough so they can enter and exit easily."

Kuenstler also designed the front board to be detachable allowing for old nesting materials and debris to be easily removed.

"We want to thank Kyle who embraced the project and donated his time to be able to do this," Simpson added.

Along with the nesting boxes, the college plans to plant additional trees on the east side of Wattleworth Hall.

"There are some other recent projects on campus, which have required us to remove a few trees, and we want to replace those," he said "The minimum goal is to have a one for one replacement, and ideally two for one. We will be seeking grant funds to accomplish this once the Allied Health Project is completed."

Simpson said the plantings would primarily include oaks, hickories and walnuts, which would all benefit the white squirrels.



Kyle Kuenstler is pictured with one of the nesting boxes he built for OCC's white squirrels. The boxes were installed in the tree grove on the east side of Dr. Kent L. Wattleworth Hall.



OCC Celebrates CTE Month

Olney Central College is joining with community colleges across the nation in celebrating Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month this February. CTE programs are essential in preparing students for in-demand careers by offering hands-on training, real-world experience and industry-relevant skills.

OCC provides a variety of CTE programs, including Accounting, Nursing, Cosmetology, Welding, Automotive Service Technology and Industrial Maintenance Technology, among others. These programs equip students with the knowledge and experience needed to succeed in today's workforce. Whether students aim to enter the job market quickly or continue their education, OCC's CTE programs lay the foundation for a strong future.

Curtis Marshall, OCC's Welding Instructor and a graduate of the program, knows firsthand the value of CTE education. After completing his training, Marshall joined the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, building stainless steel tanks and working at power plants across the country. With a decade of industry experience and 12 years of teaching, Marshall is dedicated to helping students build successful careers.

"Going through this program was a great opportunity for me," Marshall shared. "With just one year of education, I was able to build a pension and earn a great living. Those same opportunities are still available today — we have affiliations with multi-million-dollar companies to help students find employment."

The U.S. Department of Education projects that over the next decade, there will be 47 million job openings, with about one-third requiring an associate's degree or certificate — credentials often obtained through CTE programs.

OCC students appreciate the hands-on learning and support they receive from experienced instructors.

"I would encourage people to join the Welding Program because there's so much to learn," said OCC Welding student Joshua Case. "Curtis is a great instructor. He is really energetic and I enjoy that so much of our learning is hands-on."

OCC Cosmetology students also find value in hands-on learning and the personal attention and industry experience provided by their instructors.

"My favorite thing about the Cosmetology Program is how much the teachers care and want you to be better," said Madisyn Etheridge. "They do a great job teaching the basics and helping you learn from those."



OCC makes University HQ's Top 25 List

Olney Central College is once again receiving high marks for its outstanding academics, earning a spot on University HQ's list of the Top 25 Best Associate Degree Programs in Illinois for 2025.

An independent online resource, University HQ is recognized for providing students with comprehensive resources for researching top-ranked colleges and universities, scholarships and career information. This is the second consecutive year OCC has received this honor.

"This ranking demonstrates the continued commitment of our faculty and staff to live out our mission to deliver exceptional education and services to improve the lives of our students," said OCC President Chris Simpson. "The entire OCC community should celebrate this recognition as validation of their commitment."

In its selection, University HQ cited OCC's ongoing dedication to student success.

"Olney Central College provides an impressive range of academic programs, as well as smaller class sizes that allow instructors to offer more individualized attention and assistance for those needing extra support or guidance with coursework. Furthermore, they offer tutoring services and academic advising to ensure their success academically. Olney Central College takes great pride in its faculty members' expertise and commitment to helping students thrive."

The recognition highlights OCC's commitment to delivering high-quality education and preparing students for future success.

University HQ noted, "One of the key outcomes for graduates from Olney Central College is increased earning potential. With a degree or certification from OCC, students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue careers in high-demand fields such as nursing, business, criminal justice, and more."

The organization's rankings are based on data from government sources, which includes key factors such as tuition cost, retention and graduation rates, graduating salary, number of programs offered and other critical statistics.

For the complete list of Top 25 Best Associate Degree Programs in Illinois, visit <https://universityhq.org/best-colleges/illinois>.



OCC hosts IBHE Faculty Advisory Council

Olney Central College hosted the Illinois Board of Higher Education's Faculty Advisory Council for their January meeting. OCC President Chris Simpson welcomed the group, and IECC Chancellor Dr. Ryan Gower served as a guest presenter. The event also featured a presentation from the Coalition for Higher Education in Prison.

The Faculty Advisory Council brings together representatives from community colleges, state universities and private institutions across Illinois.

OCC Speech Instructor Jessica McDonald, a council member, helped organize the event. Others from IECC on the council include Lincoln Trail College Dean of Instruction Cyndi Boyce, who serves as the Community College Caucus Chair, and OCC Instructor Tammie Bohnhoff, who contributes as an alternate representative.





Nursing students practice skills

Anne Hustad's first-level Nursing students recently practiced assessing their classmates' vision and hearing. The exercise enabled students to gain essential skills for their future in healthcare.

MILLIKIN UNIVERSITY

ILLINOIS EASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Transfer Visit Day!

FEBRUARY 27 • 1-5PM



Join us on a trip to Millikin University to learn about:

- » Academic Opportunities
- » Financial Aid and Scholarships
- » Campus Facilities
- » You will also have the opportunity to meet with the Registrar, Transfer Coordinator and current students.



Register now!

Optional: Stay to see the School of Theater & Dance Main Stage production of Clybourne Park at 7:30PM with complementary tickets.

PTK hosting Honors in Action Bluey Preview Event Feb. 25

Join OCC Phi Theta Kappa for the Honors in Action "Bluey" Preview Event from 10 to 11 a.m. on February 25 in Room 203.

There will be giveaways, an education survey, "Bluey" episodes playing, photo opportunities and a meet-and-greet with the characters.

Whether you're a student or staff member, come hang out, have some fun and celebrate this beloved show.

OCC Foundation Scholarships

OCC Foundation Scholarship applications are due on March 1.

Applications are available on the OCC scholarship page at www.iecc.edu/occ/scholarships.

Contact OCC Financial Aid for additional information.

Graduation Applications

Planning to graduate in Spring 2025?

Go to Entrata to complete your application by February 28.

Sports Schedule

Men's Basketball

Feb. 15 — at Southwestern Illinois, 3 p.m.
Feb. 19 — at Wabash Valley, 7 p.m.
Feb. 22 — vs. John A. Logan, 3 p.m. at home
Feb. 26 — vs. Vincennes, 7 p.m. at home
March 1 — at Kaskaskia, 3 p.m.

Women's Basketball

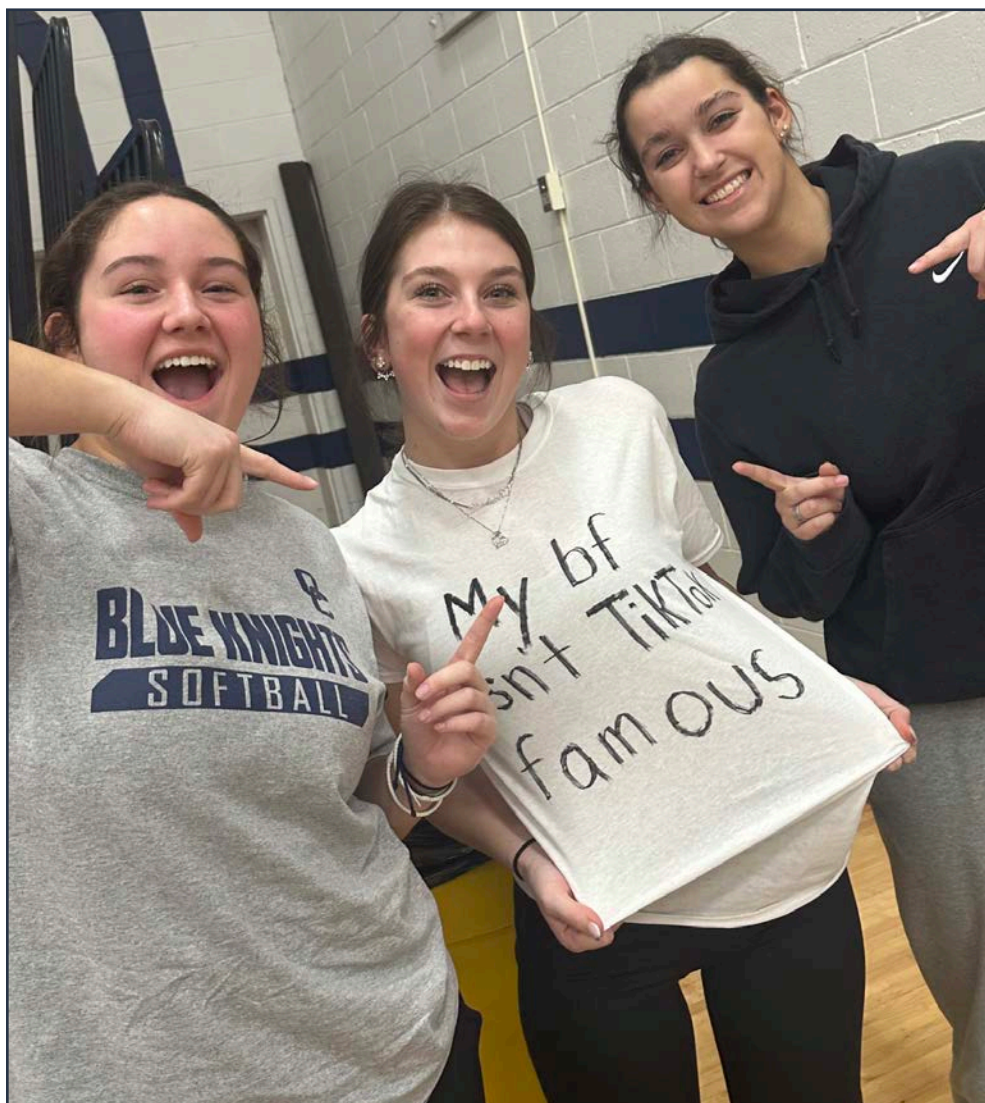
Feb. 15 — at Southwestern Illinois, 1 p.m.
Feb. 19 — at Wabash Valley, 5 p.m.
Feb. 22 — vs. John A. Logan, 1 p.m. at home
Feb. 26 — vs. Vincennes, 5 p.m. at home
March 4 — at Rend Lake, 5 p.m.

Baseball

Feb. 14 — at Northwest Mississippi, 3:30 p.m.
Feb. 19 — at Vincennes, 1 p.m.
Feb. 22 — vs. McHenry County at Mountain Dew Park, TBA
vs. McHenry County at SIU Carbondale, TBA
Feb. 23 — vs. South Suburban College at SIU, 11 a.m. & 1 p.m.
Feb. 25 — at Lewis & Clark, TBA

Softball

Feb. 17 — at Mississippi Delta, noon
Feb. 22 — vs. Blinn at Oxford, Ala., noon & vs. Wallace State at 4 p.m.
Feb. 23 — vs. Indian Hills at JUCO Extravaganza, Oxford, Ala., 10 a.m. & vs. Chattanooga State, noon



Basketball Theme Nights

The IECC Student Advisory Board sponsored Basketball Theme Nights in January and February. OCC student Amieyla Strickland (center) participated in White Lies Night and received an OCC Bookstore gift card.

IECC STUDENT AMBASSADORS

APPLY TODAY!

EMPOWERING LEADERS, BUILDING COMMUNITY

DUE MARCH 14TH
IECC.EDU/SCHOLARSHIPS