

NETWORK



HIGHLIGHTS



Lincoln Trail College kicks off the new year with Orientation and Weeks of Welcome.



LTC Nursing celebrates with 100% of the Class of '25 passing the NCLEX.



Paige Hensley ('22) turned her love of sports into a career.

MARATHON GIVES \$100,000 GRANT FOR LTC TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Lincoln Trail College has received a \$100,000 grant from Marathon Petroleum Corporation to support the construction of LTC's new Technology Center. The state-of-the-art facility will house the college's Process Technology, Broadband Telecom, and Welding programs.

"This generous investment from Marathon Petroleum Corporation is a tremendous boost for Lincoln Trail College and our students," said LTC President Tona Ambrose. "The Technology Center will allow us to expand hands-on learning opportunities in programs that meet the workforce needs of our region. We are especially excited about how this facility will enhance our nationally recognized Process Technology program."

The new Technology Center is designed to give students access to modern labs, simulation equipment, and classrooms that reflect the environments they will encounter in their careers. By focusing on workforce-driven programs,



UPCOMING OCTOBER EVENTS

- 1 **University of Illinois Visit**
10-1, Williams Hall Welcome Wall
- 2 **University of Southern Indiana Visit**
10-1, Williams Hall Welcome Wall
- 5 **Sunday Night Supper**
5-7 p.m., Statesmen Grill
- 10 **Institutional Outreach Divisional Workshop**
- 13 **COLLEGE CLOSED - Columbus Day**
- 16 **Midterm**
- 18 **Scouting USA Merit Badge Day**
- 19 **Sunday Night Supper**
5-7 p.m., Statesmen Grill
- 21 **IECC Board Meeting**
6:15 p.m., Statesmen Grill
- 22 **Eagleton Book Club**
6 p.m., Learning Commons
- 23 **LTC Foundation Meeting**
12 p.m., Lincoln Room

Trick or Treat at the Trail
4-6 p.m., Campus-wide
- 26 **Sunday Night Supper**
5-7 p.m., Statesmen Grill
- 29 **University of Southern Indiana Visit**
10-1, Williams Hall Welcome Wall
- 30 **Ken Ludwig's Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater

the college is preparing students for high-demand jobs in energy, manufacturing, and infrastructure.

"Our Process Technology students are training for careers where safety, precision, and innovation are critical," said LTC Process Technology Instructor Tina Lindley. "The Technology Center will give us the space and equipment to mirror real-world operations and ensure that our graduates are workforce-ready from day one."

The grant comes from the Marathon Community Investment Program, which is committed to collaborating with stakeholders to invest in organizations and initiatives that make a positive, meaningful impact in communities where the company operates.

CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY ON TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Construction has officially begun on Lincoln Trail College's New Technology Center, a nearly 22,000-square-foot facility that will house state-of-the-art learning spaces for Welding, Broadband Telecom, and Process Technology programs.

Work on the building began Aug. 19 and is expected to take approximately a year and a half to complete.

The project represents a major investment in workforce development, providing students with advanced labs and classrooms designed to meet industry needs.

A formal groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Oct. 21 at 4:30 p.m. at the construction site on the Lincoln Trail College campus. Community members, alumni, and industry partners are invited to attend.

"This project reflects Lincoln Trail College's commitment to preparing students for high-demand technical careers," said LTC President Tona Ambrose. "The New Technology Center will ensure our graduates continue to have the knowledge and skills employers are seeking."



LTC KICKS OFF NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

The smell of grilled hot dogs drifted through the Statesmen Grill as Lincoln Trail College students sampled a brand-new menu item — a Trail Dog designed by their peers. It wasn't just lunch; it was the taste of a new beginning.

That Trail Dog, created during New Student Orientation, was the winning entry in a team-building challenge where students worked together to craft recipes that reflected campus creativity and spirit. For many, it was a lighthearted way to break the ice, make friends, and start the year with a sense of belonging.

About 140 students attended orientation this fall, where they toured campus, learned about academic and student support resources, and listened to advice from current students during a lively panel discussion. The day closed with a meal and the Trail Dog competition — small moments that helped ease the nerves of starting college.



Rena Gower talks with a group of students during New Student Orientation.



Cassandra Goldman talks with students about ISAB at Club Rush

"The goal was to make students feel at home right away," said Rena Gower, Director of the Learning Commons. "We wanted them to leave knowing that support is here for them, whether they're looking for tutoring, technology help, or just a welcoming space to study."

The welcome didn't stop after orientation. For the first time, Lincoln Trail College rolled out a 10-day series of activities called Weeks of Welcome. The new initiative, led by Dean of Students Cassandra Goldman, blended fun events with opportunities to learn about campus life and academic success.

Students played games, attended workshops, and connected with faculty and staff across campus. Some events were lighthearted social gatherings, while others focused on helping students discover resources that could carry them through their first semester.

Goldman said the idea behind Weeks of Welcome was simple: to give students an extended runway to settle in. By spreading events across the first two weeks, the college was able to keep energy high while reinforcing the message that every student belongs at LTC.

Goldman says the approach ties directly into the guided pathways model, which focuses on giving students clear direction, intentional support, and stronger connections from day one. For new students, that meant starting their college journey not just with a schedule of classes, but with a community around them.



Students enjoy a movie in the Statesmen Grill during Weeks of Welcome

100% OF LTC NURSES PASS NCLEX IN 2025

Lincoln Trail College is celebrating historic success in its nursing program, with 100% of its 2025 graduates passing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The achievement outpaces the national average of 87% and highlights LTC's role in Illinois Eastern Community Colleges' (IECC) highest-ever district-wide pass rate.

For the 2025 cohort, IECC nursing students achieved a 98% NCLEX pass rate across all campuses. Frontier

Community College recorded a 94% pass rate, while Lincoln Trail College, Olney Central College, and Wabash Valley College each posted a perfect 100%.



"Our commitment to a student-centered environment has guided every decision within our nursing program," said Dr. Alani Frederick, IECC Dean of Health Professions. "We continually evaluate our curriculum, teaching methods, and clinical experiences to ensure students have the best chance to obtain their RN license. The results speak for themselves."

Angie Williams, Department Head of Nursing and Nursing Associate Professor at Lincoln Trail College, emphasized the impact of faculty and student collaboration. "A 100% pass rate reflects not only the hard work of our students, but also the dedication of our faculty and clinical partners," Williams said. "Our instructors are committed to providing hands-on, real-world learning experiences that prepare graduates to succeed on the NCLEX and in their first nursing jobs."

Williams added that the results strengthen the connection between LTC and the local healthcare community. "Hospitals and clinics in our area know that an LTC graduate is ready to provide safe, compassionate, and competent care from day one," she said. "That confidence opens doors for our students and ensures our community benefits directly from their training."

Dr. Frederick noted that IECC's approach keeps programs responsive and relevant. "Our nursing faculty meet every semester to make curriculum edits, write classroom activities, discuss clinical experiences, and develop simulations," she said. "This verifies that student education is adjusted in real time to reflect changes seen in practice and in research."

Looking ahead, Williams said LTC intends to build on this momentum. "We are proud of what this year's graduates accomplished, but we're just as excited about the next group of students beginning their journey," she said. "Our mission is to continue offering the supportive, rigorous program that helps our students succeed."

Applications for IECC's Nursing programs will open this fall for a Fall 2026 start.

NEW AGREEMENT CREATES PATHWAY FOR SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY CAREERS

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges has partnered with Vincennes University to create a new option for students interested in Surgical Technology careers.

Under the agreement, students will complete their first year of coursework with IECC, either in-person or online, before applying to Vincennes University's Surgical Technology program to finish their degree.

"This is a historic first for IECC,"

said Dr. Cathy Robb, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. "Our agreement with Vincennes University gives students access to high-quality education locally, while preparing them to finish degree requirements in a field IECC does not currently offer. It's an exciting step that reflects our mission to serve students and communities by expanding healthcare pathways."

The partnership was developed in direct response to a regional workforce shortage. Local hospitals are seeking qualified Surgical Technologists, and with a nationally recognized program nearby at Vincennes University, the collaboration provides a pathway to train and retain professionals in the area.

"Surgical Technology is an in-demand occupation in our region," said Dr. Alani Frederick, Dean of Health Professions. "Surgical Technologists play a vital role in the operating room. They master hundreds of instruments and techniques, directly supporting surgeons and ensuring patient care. For students who enjoy detailed work in a controlled environment, this can be a rewarding career."

During their first year with IECC, students will take foundational courses including Human Anatomy & Physiology, Composition, Psychology, Sociology, Medical Terminology, and Mathematics. These courses can be completed online, in-person, or through a combination of both.

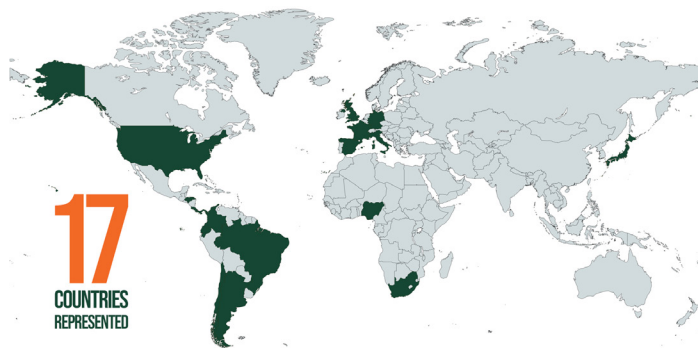
"This flexibility means students anywhere in the IECC district can prepare for the program in the way that best fits their needs," Robb said. "It also allows students to remain connected to their communities while beginning their education."

Upon completion of the IECC coursework, students may apply for admission to Vincennes University's Surgical Technology program, which begins each summer. Graduates will be prepared to enter an essential, high-demand career field with opportunities to serve in hospitals, surgical centers, and specialty clinics.

"These kinds of partnerships benefit both institutions and the students we serve," Robb added. "By working together, we can produce career-ready graduates who are invested in their local communities."



LTC INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS REPRESENT 16 COUNTRIES



MANY JOURNIES
One Trail



8 PRIMARY
LANGUAGES
SPOKEN



Walking across campus at Lincoln Trail College this fall, you'll hear more than the chatter of classmates heading to class—you'll hear a world of voices. From Spanish to Japanese, Portuguese to German, LTC's hallways have become a global meeting place.

This semester, 39 students representing 16 different countries have made LTC their home. Together, they bring with them eight primary languages, a rich mix of cultures, and a spirit of adventure that is reshaping what it means to be a Statesman.

While the numbers alone are impressive, the stories behind them are even more inspiring. For many of these students, coming to LTC meant leaving family and friends thousands of miles away to pursue education, athletics, and new opportunities.

"Every time a new student arrives, it's like adding a new thread to the tapestry of our campus community," said Rachel Greenwood, International Student Liaison. "Each one brings a unique perspective, and together they create something truly special."

Athletics continue to play a big role in attracting students from abroad. Of the 39 international students, 20 are on the men's soccer team, 17 are on the women's soccer team, with others competing in golf and volleyball. On the field, language barriers disappear.

"The game becomes a universal language," Greenwood explained. "It's amazing to watch teammates who grew up on different continents instantly connect through their passion for sport."

The most widely spoken language among LTC's international students is Spanish, with 20 students calling it their first language. They're joined by speakers of Portuguese (6), French (3), Italian (3), Japanese (2), Afrikaans (2), English (2), and German (1).

"It's not unusual to walk past a group of students and hear three or four different languages in the same conversation," Greenwood said with a smile. "It reminds us every day that learning happens far beyond the classroom."

For Greenwood, the best part of her role is seeing students grow more confident as they find their place on campus.

"International students often tell me that LTC feels like a second home because people here genuinely care," she said. "That sense of belonging makes all the difference when you're half a world away from home."

From Brazil to Japan, South Africa to Spain, LTC students are proving that while their journeys started in different corners of the world, they've all found common ground here.

"They come here as athletes, scholars, and dreamers," Greenwood said. "But together, they're Statesmen. And that shared identity is what makes Lincoln Trail so special."

PAIGE HENSLEY: FROM LTC TO THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

When Paige Hensley ('22) arrived at Lincoln Trail College, she wasn't sure exactly what her future would look like. What she did know was that she wanted to keep playing soccer and find a college that was affordable and close enough to home in Columbia, Missouri, but far enough away to push her toward independence. "Lincoln Trail allowed me the chance to have a shot at continuing my athletic dream in a realistic manner because I could afford it," she said. "It was a close-knit community where everyone wanted to grow. We made memories no one could ever imagine, and it was the best decision ever."

That decision set Hensley on a path that has blended athletics, creativity, and opportunity in ways she never anticipated. Today, she's working in collegiate athletics in Kentucky while pursuing her MBA with a concentration in marketing. Along the way, she discovered her passion for using graphic design, marketing, and photography to help athletes shine.



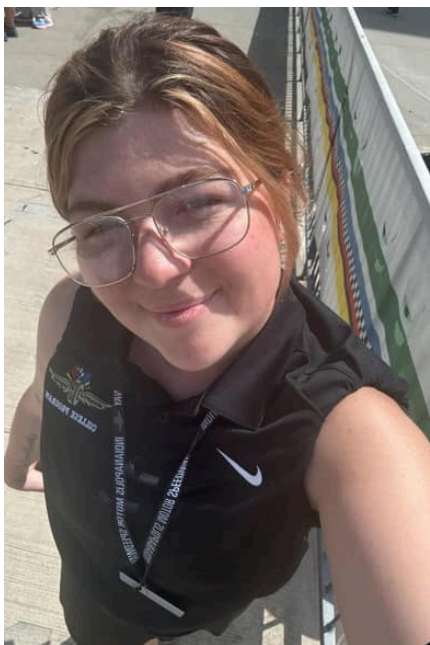
Discovering a Niche in Athletics

Hensley came to LTC with a background in graphic design from high school. She didn't want to major in it at a university, but she wanted to keep building her skills. Working in the LTC Marketing Office turned out to be the perfect fit. "The Marketing Office allowed me to stay on top of the skills I had and use a few that I wouldn't normally use," she said. "After working that year, I knew my place was in athletics. I enjoyed doing all the marketing and design for the athletes."

Her connection to LTC Athletics deepened when she began working directly with teams. Photographing games and creating graphics for players gave her an unexpected sense of fulfillment. "One of the biggest lessons I learned at LTC is that all opportunities are an opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life," she explained. "There were players who didn't have much film, and sometimes my images helped secure them a spot on another team. That was huge to me."

Preparing for the Next Step

Lincoln Trail's small classes and supportive professors also gave Hensley a foundation that prepared her for the challenges of transferring to Eastern Illinois University. "I went through some mentally tough challenges when I first started at EIU," she admitted. "Had I not been so far along because of Lincoln Trail, I think I genuinely would have given up. That C I got my first semester didn't define me like I thought it would."



EIU opened new doors, including a coveted internship at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. “Doing the College Program at IMS was huge for me,” she said. “I had grown up going to NASCAR races, but I never imagined something like this existed. It showed me how much of an army it takes to make these huge events function. I met people every morning like Doug Boles, and it helped me gain so many connections.”

At the same time, she never lost her connection to LTC. She continued to work with LTC Athletics while at EIU, balancing her studies with producing marketing materials and photography for the Statesmen. “I wasn’t really ready to say goodbye to being an athlete,” she said. “So being able to help within sports and help athletes reach their goals was truly one of the best feelings in the world.”

Confidence, Creativity, and Career

Looking back, Hensley says her proudest moments at LTC weren’t about her own achievements, but about the impact she could have on others. Still, she remembers the thrill of seeing her photos shared by players and teams. “I still remember capturing my first frozen ball shot in baseball,” she recalled. “Seeing the teams use that photo as their profile picture was so rewarding. It showed how much they appreciated my work.”

That sense of pride fueled her decision-making as she approached graduation. When faced with an opportunity to join the Disney College Program in Orlando, she surprised even herself by turning it down. “I had already paid my fees and was two weeks away from moving in,” she said. “But I opted out because I kept thinking about the job at Lincoln Trail and how Disney would always be there. When opportunity knocks, you take it and never look back.”

What Comes Next

Today, Hensley is working as an Administrative Assistant at an NAIA institution in Kentucky, supporting its human performance programs while pursuing her MBA. The role may not look exactly like the sports marketing jobs she once imagined, but she sees it as another step in her journey. “I’ve learned that when the right job is supposed to come around, it will,” she said. “I’m still doing everything I love, just in a different manner.”

Her advice to current LTC students is straightforward: don’t doubt yourself. “Don’t second-guess it,” she said. “When opportunity knocks, you take it. If a wrench gets thrown in your plan, it was meant to be.”

For Hensley, that philosophy has carried her from Missouri to LTC, from EIU to Indianapolis, and now to Kentucky. Along the way, she’s proven that you don’t have to be on the field to make a difference in athletics — sometimes the real impact comes from behind the camera, in the design studio, and in the stories told about the athletes who play.



CAST ANNOUNCED FOR BASKERVILLE: A SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERY

Lincoln Trail College Theatre has announced the cast and crew for its fall production of Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*. Directed by Taylor Dahlberg, the show runs October 30, 31, and November 1 at 7 p.m., with a matinee on November 2 at 2 p.m. in the Zwermann Arts Center Theater.

The cast features:

- Rachel Dollahan as Actor 1
- Al Crosley as Actor 2
- Anna Bales as Actress 1
- Ryan Pinkston as Doctor Watson
- Tom Compton as Sherlock Holmes

The run crew includes Anna Osborn, Ashtyn Reid, Anna Paul, Rebecca Trivett, and Grayson Pinkston.

From the multi-award-winning playwright Ken Ludwig comes a fast-paced adventure filled with humor, mystery, and theatrical fun. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson must solve the notorious case of The Hound of the Baskervilles before a family curse dooms its newest heir. With five actors playing more than 40 characters, audiences can expect disguises, accents, and endless laughs as the iconic detective duo untangles a web of deceit.

Tickets are \$15 and will be available beginning October 14 on cur8.com.

For more information, call the Performing Arts Office at 618-544-8657 ext. 1433 or visit iecc.edu/ltc.



LTC LAUNCHES SUNDAY NIGHT SUPPERS



Lincoln Trail College is introducing Sunday Night Suppers, a new weekly tradition designed to bring students together for both food and fellowship. The events will be held each Sunday from 5-7 p.m. in the Statesmen Grill and will offer students the opportunity to share a meal and collaborate on homework and studying in a supportive environment.

The program is open to all LTC students and is supported in part by the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, which is helping provide meals for participants. Local community partners will also have the opportunity to contribute by sponsoring future Sunday Night Suppers, extending the college's mission of connection beyond the classroom.

"Sunday Night Suppers are a way to ensure our students feel cared for and connected while they are pursuing their education," said LTC President Tona Ambrose. "Sharing a meal together builds community, and creating a dedicated space for study and support can make a real difference in student success. We are grateful for the Foundation and our partners who are making this possible."

LAWMAKERS TOUR LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE

State Senator Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet) and State Representative Adam Niemerg (R-Dieterich) visited Lincoln Trail College on August 19, touring the campus and meeting with students, faculty, and administrators to learn more about recent developments and the college's role in the community.

The tour included stops at several high-profile additions to the campus, such as The Barn athletic performance center, Lackey Music Hall, Statesmen Park, and the Crawford County Recreation Center. Each of the projects was made possible through partnerships with local industry, private donors, and the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, underscoring the importance of collaboration in expanding opportunities for students.



College officials also showcased LTC's synchronous lecture halls, which connect students in Robinson with professors across the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges district. The technology is helping to expand educational access for students in rural communities and is especially valuable for high school students taking dual credit classes.



President Tona Ambrose talks to Sen. Rose and Rep. Niemerg about the benefits of synchronous lecture halls as they visit one of the classrooms equipped with the technology.

Following the tour, LTC President Tona Ambrose facilitated a question-and-answer session between the lawmakers and a group of second-year students. Rose and Niemerg also met with faculty members. A central focus of that discussion was the proposed Community College Baccalaureate legislation, which would empower Illinois community colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields if certain conditions are met.

telecom, welding, and process technology. The nearly 22,000-square-foot building is expected to be completed in about a year and a half.

One of the day's highlights came when Rose and Niemerg observed the start of work on LTC's new Technology Center, which will house programs in broadband

The visit also coincided with Lincoln Trail College's New Student Orientation, bringing more than 140 students to campus. Students participated in sessions designed to introduce them to campus resources, connect them with peers, and prepare them for the start of classes.



OCTOBER ATHLETIC EVENTS

Baseball

4	South Arkansas College (at Millington, TN)	10:00
4	Bossier Parish CC (at Millington, TN)	12:45
9	PBR Scout Day	TBA

Golf

6	MWAC Conference Tournament at Champaign, IL	
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Men's Soccer

4	Lewis & Clark Community College	1:00
7	at Southwestern Illinois College	4:00
11	Illinois Central College	1:00
14	at Lewis & Clark Community College	4:00
18	at Illinois Central College	5:00
22	at Iowa Western Community College	7:00

Softball

3	at College Play Day (Conway, AR)	TBA
4	at College Play Day (Conway, AR)	TBA

Volleyball

1	Lake Land College	6:30
6	at John A. Logan College	6:30
8	Frontier Community College	6:30
13	at Kaskaskia College	6:30
15	Wabash Valley College	6:30
20	Rend Lake College	6:30
22	at Danville Area Community College	6:00
25	at Vincennes University	11:00
27	Shawnee Community College	6:00
29	at Southwestern Illinois College	6:30

Women's Soccer

1	at Wabash Valley College	6:00
4	Lewis & Clark Community College	3:00
7	at Southwestern Illinois College	2:00
11	Illinois Central College	3:00
14	at Lewis & Clark Community College	2:00
18	at Illinois Central College	3:00

WOMEN'S SOCCER RETURNS TO LTC



After a one-year hiatus, women's soccer is back at Lincoln Trail College—and it's back in a big way. Thanks to seed money provided by the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, the Statesmen are fielding a full roster of 24 players for the 2025 season, representing 11 countries from around the globe.

Head Coach Jesus Gonzalez said the support from the Foundation was instrumental in reviving the program.

"The Foundation gave us the jump start we needed," Gonzalez said. "That funding allowed us to get out and recruit, not just locally but internationally."

The roster reflects a true international flavor, with student-athletes from the United States, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Germany, South Africa, Italy, Colombia, and Honduras. Gonzalez said that mix will create an environment where players learn from one another both on and off the field.

"Soccer is a global game, and our team is living proof of that," he said. "I think our fans will enjoy watching not only the skill on the field but also the cultural connections these student-athletes bring to our campus."

For Athletic Director Jenny Saad, this season represents resilience and a fresh start.

"It's so exciting to see a full, energetic team ready to compete.," Saad said. "This is about giving student-athletes an opportunity and showing that Lincoln Trail College is committed to building something strong for the future."

LTC President Tona Ambrose said the return of women's soccer demonstrates the college's commitment to students and the community.

"This program is about building experiences and futures," Ambrose said. "The support from our Foundation and the dedication of our coaching staff made this possible. Now, these student-athletes will not only represent Lincoln Trail College but also enrich our campus with their talents and perspectives."

LTC IN PICTURES



LTC faculty and staff pause for a group photo during their fall workshop.



Volleyball alumni brought the energy as they reunited with the Lady Statesmen for this year's Alumni Game.



Rachel Greenwood introduces herself during faculty and staff introductions at New Student Orientation.



Amie Mayhall guides her group through campus as part of Orientation activities.



Students head to class with smiles on the first day of the semester.



Connor York welcomes students and leads class on the first day of the fall semester.



Campus got brighter with a new "Best Decision Ever!" wall graphic in Williams Hall. Installed by T-Graphics, the display provides a perfect photo backdrop for students.



Students participated in Self-Care 101 during Weeks of Welcome. The session offered tips on staying healthy, happy, and focused throughout the semester.