



HIGHLIGHTS



PaCe Framework lunch and learn sparks new collaboration around college and career readiness



LTC employees and students get fire extinguisher training from fire department.



Eva Richardson excited to take the helm of the softball team.

MEET LTC'S STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Three Lincoln Trail College students are stepping into leadership roles on campus this year as part of the Student Ambassador program, a service-oriented team that represents the college during tours, events and outreach efforts. Emily Miller, Landry Price and Bella Nottger each bring unique strengths, backgrounds and future goals to their roles, and all share a commitment to helping others feel connected at LTC.

Student Ambassadors play a key role in shaping first impressions of the college, serving as guides for prospective students and families while supporting major campus events throughout the year.

"Student Ambassadors are often the first people new students meet," said Carrie Halbert, IECC Director of Student Engagement, who oversees the program. "Their enthusiasm, professionalism and genuine care help visitors see what makes LTC special. Emily, Landry and Bella each represent those values in their own way."

Emily Miller, a 2025 graduate of Robinson High School, came



UPCOMING JANUARY EVENTS

- 1 **CAMPUS CLOSED - New Year's Day**
- 2 **CAMPUS CLOSED - Winter Break**
- 5 **Campus Reopens**
- 6 **Health & Wellness Coach Virtual Information Session**
5:30 pm., Zoom
- 7 **Faculty/Staff Workshop**
- 12 **Spring Semester Classes Begin**
- 19 **CAMPUS CLOSED - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**
- 21 **Virtual Nursing Information Session**
6 p.m., Zoom
- 29 **Spring Musical Auditions**
6 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 30 **Spring Musical Auditions**
6 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 31 **Scout Day at LTC**

stayed active in high school athletics, musicals, FFA, National Honor Society and 4-H, and even served as his school's mascot. At LTC, he is pursuing an Associate in Science and Arts with plans to become a teacher.

Price said LTC's atmosphere drew him in immediately.

"I chose LTC because it's small, supportive and community-driven," he said. "It feels like the perfect step between high school and a four-year college."

Halbert said Price's energy and authenticity make him a standout member of the team.

"Landry has a natural ability to connect with others. He brings a level of comfort and confidence that helps prospective students see themselves here."

Bella Nottger, a 2024 graduate of Springs Valley High School in Indiana, was involved in volleyball, basketball, track and field, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, National Honor Society, Student Council and FCCLA. She also volunteered through 4-H and FBL while working at Aporn Strings Diner. Nottger is pursuing an Associate in Science and Arts.

"God presented me with a wonderful opportunity to continue my academic and athletic career," Nottger said. "I've fallen in love with LTC's community and culture, and this has truly been the best experience."

Halbert said Nottger's warmth and sincerity make a strong impact on visitors.

"Bella has a gift for making people feel welcome. Her positivity brightens every interaction."

Halbert added that the Student Ambassador program is designed to build leadership, communication and service — skills that benefit students long after graduation.

"Our ambassadors lead by example," she said. "They're developing confidence, professionalism and a sense of responsibility that will serve them in college, in their careers and in their communities."

to LTC after being involved in Yearbook, Color Guard, Interact Club, Beta Club, Key Club and Library Forum. She also volunteered throughout the community and works at Backporch Smokehouse. Miller is pursuing an Associate in Arts and Sciences and hopes to become an elementary education teacher with a certification in special education.

"I chose LTC because it's so student-oriented," Miller said. "Everyone here wants to help you succeed, and that support has made this the best decision ever for me." Halbert said Miller's positive attitude makes her an excellent fit for the role.

"Emily has a heart for helping others. She's kind, patient and welcoming — exactly the type of ambassador students and families feel comfortable approaching."

Landry Price, a 2025 graduate of Martinsville Jr./Sr. High School,



Emily Miller



Landry Price



Bella Nottger

EVENT SPARKS NEW COLLABORATION AROUND COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

Lincoln Trail College brought local educators and community leaders together this week for a lunch and learn focused on the Illinois PaCE Framework, a statewide guide meant to help students prepare for life after high school.

The event, hosted in partnership with the Crawford County Development Association and the Robinson Chamber of Commerce, introduced the framework to business, industry and school representatives while exploring ways the community can support college and career readiness efforts. Organizers expected about 50 attendees, but nearly 80 people RSVP'd, a response Lincoln Trail College President and Vice Chancellor of Institutional Outreach Tona Ambrose described as an encouraging sign of regional interest.



The Illinois PaCE — Postsecondary and Career Expectations — Framework outlines what students should know and be able to do at different grade levels to prepare for college, career training or employment. It includes benchmarks in areas such as career exploration, postsecondary planning and financial literacy.

Ambrose said the framework provides a clear roadmap for students and families, and she believes colleges play an important role in making the expectations meaningful.

"When LTC partners with our area school leaders to bring this framework to life, students receive earlier exposure to postsecondary options and collaborative and intentional preparation for successful transitions after high school," she said.

LTC staff already work with regional schools through campus visits, career speakers, advising sessions and dual credit opportunities. Ambrose said aligning those efforts with PaCE milestones helps ensure that students receive consistent information and have access to real experiences that support their plans after graduation.

"We want to help ensure that students in our area are not just meeting PaCE benchmarks on paper," she said, "but that they are gaining real life experiences, hands-on college and career learning opportunities, and the confidence they need to succeed after graduation."

Connecting PaCE to LTC's Mission

Ambrose said the PaCE Framework fits neatly within the mission of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. The IECC mission emphasizes delivering exceptional education and strengthening communities. PaCE supports that work, she said, by encouraging early preparation, informed decision-making and smooth transitions from middle and high school to college or the workforce.

"It aligns with IECC's Strategic Engagement Plan priorities to strengthen K-12 partnerships, improve access, guide students through pathways and positively impact communities," Ambrose said.

The framework also allows educators, colleges and employers to work from a common set of expectations, which Ambrose believes is key for long-term success.

Role of Community Partners

A major focus of the lunch and learn was the role local organizations can play in supporting students as they move through the PaCE benchmarks. Ambrose said community engagement is not only helpful but essential.



"Students who graduate with confidence and who are prepared for their next chapter of life strengthen our communities," she said. "They enter the workforce with the skills, credentials and knowledge local employers need."

Ambrose said organizations like the Crawford County Development Association and our local chambers of commerce help connect schools and students with real opportunities. Those partnerships can lead to internships, job shadowing, workplace tours and other experiences that help students understand what careers look like in practice.

Community leaders also help schools find volunteers for mock interviews, career fairs and workshops on professional skills. Scholarships, FAFSA completion efforts and parent engagement events are other areas where partners can contribute support.

Ambrose said these connections encourage students to think broadly about their futures and understand how skills learned in school apply to local careers.

"They bring creativity, problem-solving and a sense of responsibility that strengthens civic engagement," she said.

Building Momentum

The idea for the lunch and learn grew out of ongoing conversations between school leaders, LTC staff and local partners who wanted to make sure business and industry understood the PaCE initiative. Organizers hoped the event would spark ideas for collaboration across Crawford County.

"The RSVPs alone showed that our community partners were vested and willing to engage in this work," Ambrose said. "We are stronger together, and we want to provide opportunities for the community to help support the great work that the schools are already doing."

Ambrose said the long-term impact will come from building a network of people and organizations who understand why the framework matters and are ready to support students as needed.

LTC plans to continue serving as a central hub for future PaCE-related efforts, including workshops, advising initiatives, dual credit expansion and college and career events.

Expanding Across the District

While Crawford County schools have been working together for more than a year, Ambrose said the goal has always been to extend the model across the IECC district. Schools from Olney, Fairfield and Newton have already participated in meetings, and earlier this year, Frontier Community College hosted a PaCE luncheon followed by an additional meeting with representatives from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

Next steps include forming countywide teams that bring together schools, IECC staff and community partners, as well as hosting regional training sessions supported by IECC and ISAC.

Ambrose said those efforts reflect a shared commitment to helping students make informed choices about their futures.

"We look forward to continuing this work in partnership with our schools and our communities," she said.

PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING CLOSET SERVES AS NEW WAY TO HELP STUDENTS



Lincoln Trail College is expanding support for students preparing to enter the workforce with the opening of its Professional Clothing Closet, a free resource offering work-appropriate attire for job interviews, internships, and new employment.

The closet grew out of a project developed last year through the Leadership Crawford County program. With financial backing from the Lincoln Trail College Foundation and support from several community partners, the idea moved from planning to implementation over the past year. The space opened quietly midway through the fall semester and has since become a steady stop for students seeking professional clothing they may not otherwise have access to.

The Professional Clothing Closet is open to current LTC students as well as local high school students. All items are available at no cost, and students may select the clothing they need without appointments. Hours will vary by semester, but this fall the closet has operated on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon to 2 p.m.

Clothing donations have come from community members, local businesses, and LTC employees. Items include shirts, pants, skirts, suits, shoes, and accessories in a range of sizes. Students may choose multiple pieces to build outfits that meet workplace expectations in areas such as healthcare, business, manufacturing, and customer service.

Tona Ambrose, president of Lincoln Trail College, said the project reflects ongoing collaboration between the college and the wider community.

"The Professional Clothing Closet is a practical way to remove barriers for students," Ambrose said. "When community partners, the Leadership Crawford County program, and our Foundation came together to make this happen, it showed what is possible when we focus on student needs."

Because the closet is run with the help of work-study students and volunteers, hours may shift each semester.

Ambrose said the initiative aligns with LTC's broader efforts to support students beyond the classroom.



"Preparing for a job interview or the first week of work can be stressful," she said. "Having access to appropriate clothing gives students one less thing to worry about."

Students who want to use the Professional Clothing Closet can visit at the posted times or reach out to the Student Services Office for more information.

LTC STRENGTHENS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS THROUGH REGULAR TRAINING, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Lincoln Trail College is taking steady steps to strengthen campus safety through regular planning, training, and collaboration with community partners.

A committee of faculty and staff meets monthly to review safety procedures and ensure the college is prepared for a range of emergencies. The group is open to anyone on campus who wants to take part, and members focus on practical readiness — from reviewing building maps to locating fire extinguishers, alarms, Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), and emergency supplies.

“Our goal is to create a culture of awareness,” said LTC President Tona Ambrose. “Preparedness isn’t something that happens once. It’s a process that grows over time as more people engage with it.”

This fall, the committee held a tabletop exercise on how to respond to an armed intruder. The scenario-based discussion helped faculty and staff walk through decision-making steps and identify areas where communication or response plans could improve.

The college also took part in the Great American ShakeOut, a nationwide earthquake drill held each October. The exercise encouraged students and employees across campus to practice the “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” procedure. Ambrose said participation in the ShakeOut helps reinforce simple actions that can reduce injury during a real event.

In another hands-on session, the Robinson Fire Department visited campus to provide fire extinguisher training. Faculty, staff, and students had the chance to learn how to operate an extinguisher and understand when it is safe to use one.

“Working with our local emergency responders is vital,” Ambrose said. “They know our campus, and we learn from their experience. These partnerships make our community stronger.”

Chris Forde, Program Director of Marketing and Communications for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, also serves on the committee. Forde is a certified ALICE instructor and has more than two decades of experience in emergency services, including roles with Crawford County Emergency Management, the coroner's office, law enforcement oversight, and the county's 911 board.

Forde said tabletop exercises and skills training help people build confidence before an emergency occurs.

"Most emergencies unfold quickly, and the first actions people take often matter most," Forde said. "When faculty, staff, and students have already walked through a scenario or practiced a skill, they are better prepared to make safe choices."

Forde added that planning is ongoing and that the committee continues to look for training opportunities and ways to increase awareness across campus.

Ambrose said the college's approach is rooted in consistency.

"Safety is not a one-time project," she said. "It's a shared responsibility. The more we practice, the more prepared we are to protect one another."

The committee will continue to meet throughout the academic year. Anyone interested in emergency planning or campus safety is encouraged to attend.

"Preparedness improves when more voices are involved," Forde said. "It's about making sure everyone knows what to do, where to go, and how to help in the moments that matter."



Robinson Fire Department Firefighters explain the labels on a fire extinguisher to students.



Amber Malone is guided by a firefighter from the Robinson Fire Department while battling a fire with a fire extinguisher.



Student Paula Mero receives instructions from a Robinson Fire Department firefighter as she learns how to properly use a fire extinguisher.

CUMBERLAND WINS TIP-OFF AT THE TRAIL SCHOLASTIC BOWL

The buzzers were back at Lincoln Trail College as 12 high school teams competed in the Tip Off at the Trail Scholastic Bowl tournament on November 15. The event marked the return of a long-standing LTC tradition, bringing together students from across southeastern Illinois for a day of fast-paced academic competition.

Cumberland High School took top honors, earning first place in the tournament. Marshall High School finished second, followed by Robinson High School in third and Edwards County High School in fourth.

"The level of competition was outstanding," said LTC faculty member Austin Alexander, one of the event organizers. "We saw students demonstrate incredible knowledge across a wide range of subjects, and it was exciting to see the enthusiasm they brought to each match."

The Tip Off at the Trail featured Scholastic Bowl teams from Newton, Palestine, Marshall, Effingham, Edwards County, Oblong, Fairfield, Robinson, Lawrenceville, Flora, Cumberland, and Clay City. In addition to competing, students had the opportunity to learn more about Lincoln Trail College and tour the campus.

Elaine Hasty, LTC faculty member and co-organizer, said the event was about more than just competition. "This tournament helps students see the value of academic teamwork," she said. "We're proud to help foster that spirit of learning and curiosity."

The All-Tournament Team was recognized for individual excellence during pool play:

Tucker Waldrop, Lawrenceville (18 toss-ups answered)
Camden James, Cumberland (16)
Derek Doedtman, Effingham (15)
Jad Shoot, Cumberland (13)
Miles Lycan, Marshall (11)
Corbin Williams, Lawrenceville (10)
Rylan James, Cumberland (9)
Bo McFarland, Marshall (9)
Kahlin Michl, Newton (9)
Jedd Wellen, Fairfield (8)
Eli Koertge, Edwards County (8)

Alexander and Hasty say they plan to continue building on the success of this year's Tip Off at the Trail, making it an annual tradition once again at Lincoln Trail College.



Cumberland High School holds up the championship trophy.



Edwards County gets a pep talk from its coach prior to their first match in pool play.



Members of the All-Tournament Team pose for a photo.



JANUARY ATHLETIC EVENTS

Baseball

30	at Jackson State Community College (DH)	12:00
31	at Jackson State Community College (DH)	12:00

Men's Basketball

7	at Olney Central College	7:00
10	Wabash Valley College	3:00
14	at Kaskaskia College	7:30
17	at Shawnee Community College	3:00
21	Southwestern Illinois College	7:00
24	John A. Logan College	3:00
31	at Lake Land College	3:00

Women's Basketball

7	at Olney Central College	5:00
10	Wabash Valley College	1:00
17	at Shawnee Community College	1:00
21	Southwestern Illinois College	5:00
24	John A. Logan College	1:00
28	at Rend Lake College	5:00

RICHARDSON EXCITED TO COACH SOFTBALL

Lincoln Trail College has named Eva Richardson as head softball coach and special projects director. Richardson, a former collegiate All-American and assistant coach for the Statesmen, steps into the leadership role with enthusiasm and a vision to elevate the program.



"I'm through the roof excited," said Richardson. "At 22-years-old, to have the opportunity to be a head coach is incredible. I'm extremely grateful and ready to prove myself. I can't wait to get started."

Richardson joined the Lady Statesmen in 2025 as an assistant coach, where she quickly connected with the team and established a strong foundation for her new role. "I was able to form a lot of connections with the girls," she said. "That mutual respect we built in the fall will help us grow and create memories to last a lifetime."

A graduate of Casey-Westfield High School, Richardson was a two-time NJCAA All-American at Lake Land College before transferring to Weber State University in Utah, where she caught for two seasons. At Weber State, she helped lead the Wildcats to a Big Sky Conference championship and an NCAA Regional appearance

in Oregon. She earned her bachelor's degree in Sport Management from Weber State.

As she begins her tenure leading the program, Richardson said her primary goals are to prepare student-athletes for success at the next level and to build a winning culture at Lincoln Trail College. "Junior college softball is about development," she said. "I want to help my players get ready for the next level, whether that's Division I, II, III, or NAIA, and give them opportunities to play at four-year schools if they choose. I also want to bring a winning culture to Lincoln Trail. Winning the region and going to nationals would be an incredible way to start."

The upcoming season carries special meaning as it marks the 50th anniversary of women's softball at Lincoln Trail College. Richardson said she hopes to honor the pioneers who helped establish women's athletics at the college. "I'm a huge advocate for women's sports," she said. "The women who came before us paved the way so that we could have these opportunities. I want to celebrate them this spring because they deserve every bit of credit."

In addition to coaching, Richardson will take on a special projects role leading an initiative to develop an on-campus softball field. "We're the only sport without a field on campus," she said. "The girls work incredibly hard and deserve their own facility. Building a field will take this program to the next level. It will help with recruiting, bring pride to the team, and strengthen Lincoln Trail College as a whole."

Richardson has already begun planning for the 2026 season, which includes early-morning training sessions, preseason tournaments, and potential trips to Alabama and Florida. She's also working to schedule games against some of the top programs in the nation.

"Being from this area makes this opportunity even more special," Richardson said. "I can't wait to represent Lincoln Trail College in my hometown communities and build excitement for Statesmen softball."

LTC IN PICTURES



Austin Alexander and Elaine Hasty go over the rules for the Tip-Off at the Trail Scholastic Bowl. They also told students why LTC was their Best Decision Ever!



Student Ambassador Emily Miller guides a group of students through The Statesmen Grill on a tour of campus.



Curtis Miller talks to a group of scholastic bowl players about the new Career and Technical Training Center.



Newton Community High School (left) and Robinson High School (right) compete in pool play in the Tip-Off at the Trail Scholastic Bowl.



International students have fun posing for a photo at the IECC Fall Feast at Lincoln Trail College.



Members of LTC's soccer teams pose at the IECC Fall Feast. The event featured a traditional Thanksgiving meal.



More international students pose at the Fall Feast. In addition to the meal, students enjoyed fun, games, and fellowship.



Altogether, about 80 students from around IECC attended the Fall Feast.