

OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE KNIGHTLINE



MARCH 2026

CALENDAR

MARCH

10-13 — Spring Break

17 — Summer & Fall
Registration Begins

20-22 — OCC Theater presents
*Joseph and The Amazing
Technicolor Dreamcoat*,
7 p.m.

23 — OCC Theater presents
*Joseph and The Amazing
Technicolor Dreamcoat*,
2 p.m.

24 — FAFSA Night, Room
205, 3-6 p.m.

25 — CTE Showcase

26-28 — OCC Theater presents
*Joseph and The Amazing
Technicolor Dreamcoat*,
7 p.m.

29 — OCC Theater presents
*Joseph and The Amazing
Technicolor Dreamcoat*,
2 p.m.

College Visits

Tables will be located in
the hallway outside Student
Services.

March 18 — University of
Illinois Springfield Represent-
ative Rebecca Johnson, 11
a.m.-1 p.m.

March 18 — University
of Southern Indiana Rep-
resentative Pandora Wells,
10 a.m.-1 p.m.



OCC Cosmetology Director Nancy Stremme works with students in the program's studio. The extensive hands-on training students receive is one reason the 2025 graduating class achieved a 100-percent pass rate on the Illinois Licensed Cosmetologist Exam.

Cosmetology 2025 graduates achieve 100% pass rate on state licensing exam

Olney Central College is proud to announce that 100 percent of its 2025 Cosmetology graduates passed the Illinois Licensed Cosmetologist Exam — marking the fourth consecutive year the program has achieved a perfect completion rate.

"The instructional quality in our Cosmetology program is second to none," said OCC Dean of Instruction Amy Tarr. "Our students leave with a well-rounded, foundational education about all things with hair, skin and nails. They enter the workforce with the knowledge required to build a beautiful career not only because of the quality of instruction, but also because of the rigor and attention to detail that goes into every day."

For those guiding students, the impact of that instruction is clear. OCC Cosmetology Director Nancy Stremme said students' success stems from the intensive combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience.

"It's about taking what they learn in the classroom and applying it in real-world scenarios," Stremme added. "We continually introduce and reinforce lessons and techniques to ensure our students excel. That hands-on experience on the studio floor makes all the difference."

Stremme also ensures students are well-prepared for the rigorous state licensing exam, which can cover any facet of the business, from hair cutting to artificial nails and even sanitation.

"I couldn't be more ecstatic," Stremme said of her students' high achievements. "It's incredibly rewarding to watch these students progress through the program, see how far they've come and witness their success. In many jobs, you go to work, finish your day, and the only reward is a paycheck. Here, I get to help students prepare for a fulfilling and successful career."

OCC Cosmetology students are finding success working within the beauty industry. Stremme said 2025 graduates are employed in area salons or are starting their own businesses. One recent graduate is pursuing a Cosmetology Teacher Certificate at OCC.

Stremme says the beauty industry provides numerous career avenues in a profession that is always in demand.

"I feel like many people think they can't go to college because they don't have the time, or because financially, they don't think it's feasible," she said. "Our program takes less than a year to get through, and our tuition is very affordable, especially when compared to privately-owned beauty schools. Our students are completing their training, getting their licenses and going to work."

Tarr said the Cosmetology program's continued success reflects the strength of career-focused degrees and certificate programs across OCC and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges.

"When you see how many years in a row we have hit a 100-percent pass rate, you know we are doing something right not only at OCC Cosmetology, but at IECC," she said. "We are moving forward together at IECC, and the movement is monumental, and something everyone wants to be a part of."



The OCC Cosmetology Program is celebrating the fourth consecutive year students have achieved a perfect completion rate.

Lady Knight basketball players recognized

Olney Central College is proud to celebrate four of its Lady Knight basketball players who were recently recognized for their outstanding performance during the 2025–26 season.

Freshmen Lanie Lipps, Melaina Zedalis, Jamia Jones and Kaitlyn Swift received post-season honors voted on by the GRAC and regional coaches. Lipps, Zedalis and Jones were selected to both the All-GRAC and All-Region 24 teams, an impressive feat considering coaches vote for the top 15 players in the region and conference. The Lady Knights were one of only two teams to have multiple players recognized at this level, with only the Southwestern Illinois Blue Storm surpassing them in selections.

In addition, Swift was named the 2025–26 recipient of the Sportsmanship Award. This honor highlights her dedication to the Lady Knights program and her exemplary teamwork and leadership throughout the season.

The Lady Knights continue to set a high standard both on and off the court, representing Olney Central College with pride and excellence.

OCC invites alumni and community to participate in First Day of Giving

Olney Central College will host its first Day of Giving on March 31, inviting alumni, businesses and community members to support student success through its partnership with the Olney Central College Foundation.

Since its founding in 1971, the OCC Foundation has provided scholarships and financial support for campus initiatives, including new technology, equipment and facility improvements. The 24-hour giving event is designed to strengthen connections between OCC and the communities it serves while expanding support for future projects.

"We are really fortunate to have the Olney Central College Foundation to support all the different activities around campus," said OCC President Chris Simpson. "They are great partners, whether we're looking at things to do in classrooms or working with faculty on providing financial support for innovative practices that they want to bring forward into their classrooms."

Recently, the OCC Foundation played an essential role in the construction of the Health Professions Center, pledging more than \$150,000 over five years to ensure the inclusion of a modern classroom space in the facility. Donations toward the project totaled \$125,660 last year.

In 2026, the OCC Foundation will also support a \$2 million project to renovate four science labs in Dr. Kent L. Wattleworth Hall. The project will transform third-floor physics, chemistry and two biology labs into modern, high-tech learning spaces, with the foundation assisting through the purchase of state-of-the-art lab equipment.

"That project is getting underway this spring and will continue through the summer," Simpson said. "So, not only are we going to be renovating those spaces, but also upgrading much of the equipment and the materials and supplies the faculty are using and the students have access to. A lot of the funding that is happening through the Day of Giving and fundraising that the foundation is doing is going to be supporting that effort."

Donations of any amount help create opportunities for OCC current and future students.

"It's a really difficult time in higher education, particularly in community colleges with funding," Simpson said. "There are a number of shortfalls that we're facing and without having outside support, then I think we would be unable to meet some of the needs of our students and be able to provide them exactly what it is they're looking for with their post-secondary experience."

Because of those challenges, Simpson said fundraising efforts such as Day of Giving, and the foundation's annual Campaign for Excellence are essential. Simpson encourages those thinking about donating to give back.

"I hope they recognize that they are directly impacting the educational experience of a student," he said. "We oftentimes talk about we're making decisions that are in the best interest of our students, but specifically, if you are giving then, know that the money is going to directly impact the students' experience while they're attending Olney Central College."

Simpson also expressed appreciation for the community members and donors who continue to support OCC.

"One of the things that I've noticed, in the time that I've been president, is how generous our community is, and how generous those individuals are," Simpson added. "They support Olney Central College. We wouldn't be able to do it without them."

To be part of OCC's Day of Giving, visit www.iecc.edu/occ-day-giving.



Fast-track training programs to assist Champion workers

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges is stepping up to support employees affected by the recent closure of Champion Laboratories in Albion.

Those efforts include providing short-term, fast-track training programs designed to give displaced workers the skills they need to re-enter the workforce quickly. Most programs can be completed in days, weeks, or by the end of a single semester.

IECC's fast-track programs cover a wide range of industries, giving workers the opportunity to upgrade existing skills or explore new careers.

Industrial & Manufacturing programs include OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 safety certifications, which can be completed in just two days to one week, providing foundational workplace safety knowledge. For hands-on technical skills, employees can pursue SACA Credentials in areas such as PLCs, motor control, pneumatics, hydraulics, or basic AC/DC electrical systems, each completed in three to four weeks. The MSSC Certified Production Technician program also offers modular, skill-specific training in just a few weeks.

Workers looking for equipment certifications can take forklift or aerial lift training, while those entering specialized industries may pursue new miner training, gas utility training or food safety certification.

For those interested in emergency services, EMT/EMR courses are available in a semester-long format, with shorter options depending on scheduling.

Logistics and Healthcare programs help employees transition into in-demand fields. Certified Logistics training can be completed in four to six weeks, while healthcare entry roles like Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) are available in seven weeks, providing fast access to employment in high-need areas.

Basic computer skills are also a focus, with free one-day sessions offered at each IECC campus from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. These classes help participants strengthen essential workplace technology skills. The sessions are scheduled for March 17 in Albion, March 18 at Wabash Valley College in Main Hall 205, March 19 at Frontier Community College in the EP Building Classroom and March 20 at Olney Central College in Wattleworth Hall 206.

Sports Schedule

Softball

March 14 — vs. Rend Lake, noon & 2 p.m. at home
March 15 — vs. Southeastern Illinois, noon & 2 p.m. at home
March 17 — vs. Lincoln Trail, 2 & 4 p.m. at home
March 19 — at Kaskaskia, 2 & 4 p.m.
March 21 — vs. Spoon River, noon & 2 p.m. at home
March 24 — at Southwestern Illinois, 2 & 4 p.m.
March 26 — vs. Shawnee, 2 & 4 p.m. at home
March 29 — at Frontier, noon & 2 p.m.
March 31 — at Lake Land, 2 & 4 p.m.
April 2 — vs. John A. Logan, 2 & 4 p.m., at home
April 3 — at Wabash Valley, noon & 2 p.m.

Baseball

March 14 — at Southwestern Illinois, noon & 3 p.m.
March 17 — vs. John A. Logan, 3 p.m. at home
March 18 — vs. Lewis & Clark, noon & 2:30 p.m. at home
March 19 — vs. Lincoln Trail, 3 p.m. at home
March 21 — at Lincoln Trail, noon & 3 p.m.
March 24 — vs. John A. Logan, 3 p.m. at home
March 25 — vs. Vincennes, 2 p.m. at home
March 27 — at Volunteer State, noon & 3 p.m.
April 2 — at Rend Lake, 3 p.m.
April 3 — vs. Rend Lake, noon & 3 p.m.
April 7 — at Kaskaskia, 3 p.m.
April 8 — at Vincennes, 5 p.m.



FAFSA NIGHT

Get Help Completing Your 2026-2027 FAFSA Application.

Things to Bring

- FSA ID
- 2024 Tax Return

Tuesday, March 24 | 3-6 PM
Dr. Kent L. Wattleworth Hall Room 205

Questions? Call 618.395.7777, ext. 2017



OCC IN PICTURES



On Sophomore Night, Olney Central College recognized Men's Basketball players Daniel Sparks, Landon Sanders, Kaidyn Miller, Braden Walters and Kasym Nash for their dedication and leadership on and off the court.



Olney Central College recognized Elizabeth Bahl, Shelby Seay, Samantha Secrest and Kaitlyn Swift for their leadership and dedication to the Lady Knights Basketball program as they prepare to move on next season. Swift, who also competes with OCC Softball, was traveling with the team and unable to attend.



TRIO Upward Bound hosted an Open House at Olney Central College, showcasing the new STEM Lab in the Learning Commons. Visitors explored interactive stations with Sphero robots, coding challenges, virtual reality headsets, robotics activities and a 3D printer, as well as OCC's growing E-Sports area.



Instructor Chris Mathews talks with students during OCC's SPIN Night on March 5. During the event, future Knights and their families learned about academic programs, financial aid and campus opportunities.



Nathan Legg and Chad Groves represent OCC in the IECC Ping Pong Tournament on March 2.



OCC student-athletes enjoyed Financial Literacy Night, learning about budgeting, credit and banking from Brad Williams, Mike Weiler and Terri Clodfelter of Victory Villages and The First National Bank in Olney. They also enjoyed a taco bar and cash prizes.



OCC hosted the IECC College and Career Fair on March 18. More than 50 employers and universities participated.

The Student Nurses Association at OCC collected hygiene items, which they donated to Richland Nursing & Rehabilitation.

