

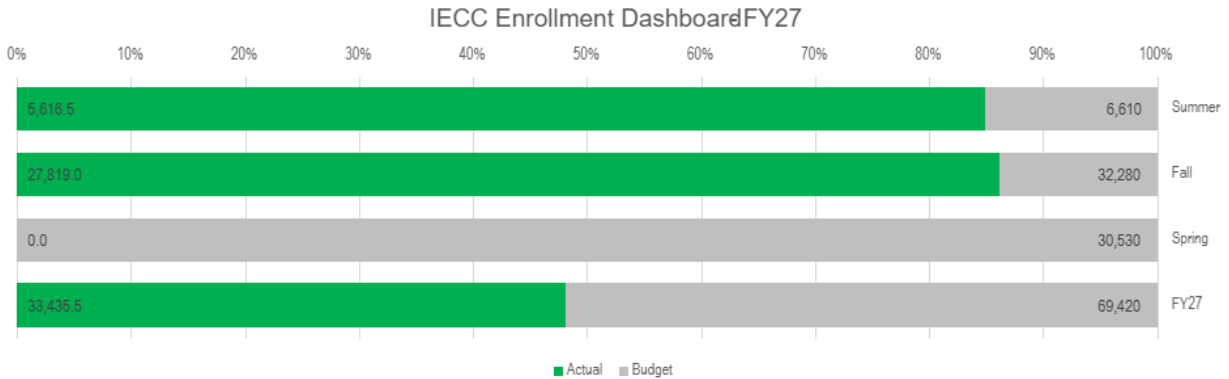


ILLINOIS EASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

September 14 - October 14, 2026



Note: Spring actuals are not yet available. The FY27 total compares enrollment recorded to date with the full-year budget and should not be interpreted as a year-end enrollment projection.

Enrollment and Institutional Performance

The FY27 Enrollment Dashboard provides an important starting point for understanding our current institutional performance. As of October 13, **summer enrollment totaled 5,616.5 credit hours, approximately 15.0% below budget**, while fall enrollment totaled 27,819 credit hours, approximately 13.8% below budget. At the comparable point in the fall term, **credit hours are down 7.23% from the previous year.**

These results underscore the importance of evaluating the assumptions underlying our budget, assessing existing enrollment strategies, understanding the factors contributing to these trends, and identifying coordinated improvements across recruitment, academic programming, student support, and financial planning.

Enrollment performance is not simply an admissions or recruitment issue. It is an institutional responsibility requiring coordinated attention across our colleges and administrative divisions.

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Chancellor's Perspective: From Listening to Action

During my first two months as Chancellor, I have continued meeting with faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, and community stakeholders to better understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing Illinois Eastern Community Colleges.

These conversations have reinforced my appreciation for the dedication of our employees, the distinctive identities of our four colleges, and the important role IECC plays in the communities we serve. They have also highlighted opportunities to strengthen communication, improve districtwide coordination, clarify institutional responsibilities, and more consistently connect our work to measurable outcomes.

An important theme emerging from these discussions is **the relationship between our colleges and the District**. Our four colleges serve communities with distinct needs, histories, and expectations. Preserving their distinctive strengths while functioning effectively as a coordinated institution will be essential to our future success.

As we move beyond the initial listening and assessment phase, my attention is increasingly focused on translating what we are learning into thoughtful institutional action. The emphasis is not on change for its own sake, but on establishing clearer expectations, improving how decisions are developed and communicated, and ensuring that our resources and activities support the mission of IECC.

The next phase of this work will emphasize deliberate, collaborative action informed by reliable evidence and demonstrate that the perspectives shared during these initial conversations are helping shape institutional priorities.

Organizational Leadership, Governance, and Planning

Several ongoing initiatives are intended to strengthen institutional coordination, accountability, and decision-making.

Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC). At our October meeting, SEPC began a foundational discussion about institutional governance and the role of stakeholder participation in decision-making. Through several practical scenarios, members explored distinctions between participation and decision authority, the importance of involving appropriate stakeholders, and the need to align governance processes with the significance of the decisions being considered.

The discussion demonstrated an emerging understanding of several important governance principles, while also identifying opportunities for further development. Among these are clarifying SEPC's distinctive role relative to divisional and other institutional governance structures, distinguishing advisory responsibilities from

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approval authority, and strengthening expectations for accountability, implementation, and assessment.

The broader objective is to establish governance processes through which recommendations are thoughtfully developed, appropriate perspectives are considered, responsibilities and decision authority are clear, and decisions lead to meaningful action.

Strategic and Operational Planning. Recent operational planning discussions have reinforced the need to distinguish strategic priorities from ongoing departmental activities. An effective planning process should identify a manageable number of institutional priorities, establish clear responsibilities, connect resources to those priorities, and use measurable indicators to evaluate progress.

Our continuing assessment will focus on how IECC's strategic goals, operational initiatives, performance measures, and resource allocation are connected.

Faculty Engagement and Shared Governance. I have also continued conversations with representatives of the IECC Education Association regarding communication, trust, and opportunities for meaningful faculty participation in institutional decision-making.

Collective bargaining and shared governance serve different purposes, but both benefit from constructive relationships, clearly understood responsibilities, and consistent communication. Faculty expertise and meaningful participation should inform appropriate academic and institutional decisions.

Institutional Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Work is underway to evaluate a more coordinated approach to emergency preparedness across the District. The emerging framework distinguishes districtwide policy and operating standards from the operational responsibilities of campus and District Office emergency management teams.

Our objective is to strengthen preparedness, clarify accountability, and promote consistency without creating unnecessary administrative complexity.

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Statewide Developments and the President's Council

On October 8-9, I participated in the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents Retreat. The sessions addressed several developments that could have significant implications for Illinois community colleges, including statewide attainment goals, legislative priorities, federal regulatory changes, employee health insurance, data governance, and artificial intelligence.

Statewide Attainment Goals and Credentials of Value. Illinois is developing a new statewide postsecondary attainment goal and a framework for defining credentials of value. Recommendations from the Governor's attainment working group are expected by December 1, 2026.

Preliminary workforce modeling suggests that approximately 64% of Illinois' working-age population may need a postsecondary credential by 2040 to meet projected labor-market demands. This is a modeled workforce requirement, not an adopted statewide goal.

For IECC, this work reinforces the importance of understanding regional employment needs, evaluating program outcomes, and ensuring that students have access to educational pathways that lead to meaningful opportunities. As the framework develops, we will need to consider how its definitions and measures relate to IECC's academic programs, workforce credentials, and student outcomes.

Legislative and Regulatory Developments. Statewide discussions included proposed community college baccalaureate authority, dual credit policy, workforce funding, and other legislative priorities.

Of relevance to IECC are proposals affecting dual credit requirements and funding, given our relationships with area high schools. Potential federal changes involving grant administration, continuation funding, and regulatory compliance also warrant monitoring. These remain developing policy matters rather than established changes to institutional requirements.

Data Governance and Artificial Intelligence. One of the more compelling retreat themes concerned the relationship between institutional data, technology, and decision-making.

Presentations emphasized the importance of consistent institutional data, clear accountability for information, privacy safeguards, and the ability to translate data into actionable insights.

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Demonstrations also illustrated emerging applications of artificial intelligence for analyzing administrative workflows, identifying opportunities to reduce repetitive tasks, and connecting academic programs to employer-identified skills.

For IECC, the opportunity is not simply to adopt new technology, but to evaluate how data and AI might improve student success, operational effectiveness, and decision-making while protecting institutional information.

Employee Health Insurance and Long-Term Cost Management. A separate session examined the increasing cost and complexity of employee health insurance across Illinois community colleges.

The discussion emphasized the value of a multiyear benefits strategy informed by claims data, employee engagement, and careful evaluation of funding alternatives. This perspective is particularly relevant as IECC considers both its current renewal, addressed separately on this month's Board agenda, and longer-term benefit costs.

Academic Innovation, Student Success, and Workforce Alignment

Dual Credit and Educational Partnerships. Dual credit remains a key component of IECC's educational mission and its relationships with area high schools.

Recent discussions have included the organizational alignment of dual credit responsibilities, a proposed homeschool dual credit pilot, and opportunities to strengthen coordination with secondary education partners.

As these proposals are evaluated, attention must be given to instructional quality, student readiness, institutional capacity, and successful transitions into postsecondary education. Statewide developments in dual credit policy will also inform this work.

Flexible Learning and Workforce Education. One example of our emerging approach to workforce education involves the potential development of an IECC Professional Transportation Academy. In September, I met with representatives from Academic Affairs and other administrative areas to begin exploring how we might reestablish commercial driver training while designing a broader educational model responsive to today's student and employer needs.

Rather than simply recreating our former Truck Driving Program, the Team is considering an academy approach that could incorporate CDL training, additional transportation-related credentials, flexible instructional pathways, and opportunities for students to earn stackable credentials. Potential instructional models include modular coursework, overlapping cohorts, and competency-based education.

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The Team's next steps include evaluating regional workforce demand, regulatory and accreditation requirements, financial aid, staffing, existing equipment, employer partnerships, and financial sustainability. No instructional or operational model has been selected. Our initial goal is to develop an informed concept for discussion at the December Board retreat.

This effort illustrates a broader approach to workforce programming: beginning with student and employer needs rather than an existing course structure, then developing an educational and operating model that is accessible, responsive, and sustainable.

Financial Sustainability and Institutional Stewardship

IECC faces the same fundamental challenge confronting many public higher education institutions: maintaining educational quality and access while managing rising costs, changing enrollment patterns, and constrained resources.

The enrollment trends presented at the beginning of this report reinforce the importance of aligning our budget assumptions, recurring expenditures, capital priorities, and programmatic investments with realistic institutional resources.

Several items on this month's Board agenda reflect that responsibility.

The bond financing framework addresses capital needs in the context of existing debt obligations and property tax considerations. The annual athletics report provides an opportunity to examine participation, enrollment, institutional investment, and student outcomes. The employee health insurance renewal highlights both immediate financial obligations and longer-term cost management considerations.

Although these matters involve different institutional functions, they reinforce a common expectation: **major decisions should be supported by reliable data, transparent assumptions, clear objectives, and an understanding of their long-term consequences.** This discipline will be essential as we work toward sustainable operating budgets.

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Looking Ahead

Over the coming months, several priorities will continue to guide my work with our leadership team:

- Advancing institutional governance and operational planning processes that clarify responsibilities, strengthen participation, and connect priorities to measurable outcomes.
- Assessing academic programming, workforce partnerships, and opportunities to improve enrollment and student success.
- Strengthening the use of institutional data and financial analysis to support informed, sustainable decisions.
- Maintaining constructive communication with employees, faculty representatives, college leadership, and community partners.

Over the next several months, I anticipate working with our leadership team to identify a manageable number of institutional priorities, clarify responsibilities for advancing them, and establish meaningful measures of progress.

My first months at IECC have reinforced both the strengths of our institution and the opportunities before us. I appreciate the willingness of employees, trustees, and community partners to engage in thoughtful discussions about our future. Our responsibility now is to translate that engagement into clear priorities, consistent follow-through, and measurable institutional improvement.

Dr. Tim Taylor, Chancellor
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges.