

The VOYAGER

FEBRUARY 2026



BUILDING CAREER FUTURES

Career-ready skills start here through hands-on education.



PURPOSE BEYOND BASEBALL

Over 100 attend the second annual First Pitch Dinner.



SECOND CHANCE DIPLOMAS

Finishing what life put on hold.



HANDS-ON LEARNING, REAL-WORLD IMPACT

February is Career and Technical Education Month, and Frontier Community College is proud to celebrate the hands-on learning, skilled instruction, and real-world experiences that prepare students for today's most in-demand careers. Throughout the month, Frontier is spotlighting its career and technical education programs, the dedicated faculty who guide students every step of the way, and the students who are gaining the skills, confidence, and experience needed to succeed in the workforce. At Frontier, Career and Technical Education goes beyond the classroom—it's about building futures, strengthening communities, and connecting education directly to opportunity.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, commonly known as Perkins V, is designed to strengthen both the academic and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students enrolled in CTE programs. The legislation supports rigorous standards, aligns education with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers, and fosters strong connections between secondary education, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. Perkins V also emphasizes state and local flexibility, research-based best practices, professional

development for CTE educators, and partnerships with business, industry, and workforce organizations to help keep the United States competitive.

A key focus of Perkins V is ensuring equitable access and success for “special populations” students—those pursuing CTE degrees or certificates who may face barriers to education. This includes students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, individuals preparing for nontraditional fields, single parents, displaced or out-of-workforce individuals, English learners, homeless students,

youth in or formerly in foster care, and students with parents on active military duty.

Rob Jackman, Program Director of Perkins, says the goal of Perkins funding is to help CTE programs make meaningful leaps forward.

“Perkins is applied throughout the Illinois Eastern Community College District as both a supplement and a force multiplier for CTE programs,” Jackman said. “Our goal is to help programs make large leaps forward through investments in supplies, equipment, and Career and Technical Student Organization events.”

Many students choose CTE fields as their pathway to employment, often securing jobs during their time at Frontier or shortly after graduation. According to Jackman, advisory boards and labor market data play a critical role in ensuring programs remain aligned with workforce needs.

“Advisory boards for all CTE programs, along with labor data, are great indicators of where students are being hired and in what fields,” Jackman said. “The advisory feedback process is key to understanding what graduates are expected to know when they enter their careers and helps us identify

BOTTOM LEFT: Weston Bierman operates the controls of a utility truck during a pole replacement exercise at the pole yard behind the Workforce Development Center.

BOTTOM RIGHT: FCC second-level nursing students recently completed their final OB Simulation Day.





Walker Clevenger gains hands-on experience in the Medical Laboratory Technician lab during class, building real-world skills for a career in healthcare.

teaching and learning at Frontier.

"Over the last several years, we've made several beneficial purchases for FCC programs," Jackman said. "The Medical Lab Technician program received a vein imaging device, Electrical Distribution Systems added new equipment, safety supplies, and poles for the pole yard, and additional devices were purchased to support hands-on instruction."

As technology continues to evolve and classroom learning adapts, Perkins funding remains essential to keeping CTE programs current and relevant.

"Perkins helps ensure our programs stay up to date," Jackman said. "We aim to invest grant funds in experiences and supplies that career-ready students will encounter as soon as they enter the workforce. Through advisory feedback and targeted purchases, we work to stay at the forefront of trends and challenges our students will face in their future careers."

Throughout the month of February, the community is encouraged to follow Frontier Community College on social media for CTE-related stories, program highlights, faculty features, and student spotlights celebrating Career and Technical Education in action.

areas where they may need additional support."

For current high school students, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges partners with local schools through PACE, a planning and decision-making model designed to ensure continuity, preparedness, and clear escalation when challenges arise. PACE stands for Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency, and helps students transition smoothly into postsecondary education and training.

Another major advantage of Perkins funding is its impact on instructional quality. Jackman notes that recent investments in tools and technology have significantly enhanced



FIRST PITCH, BRIGHT FUTURE

A crowd of more than 100 supporters filled the multi-purpose room at Fairfield First Christian Church on Friday, January 23, for the second annual First Pitch Dinner, sponsored by FNB Community Bank. The evening offered the community an opportunity to connect with Bobcats Baseball Coach Matt McCue, his players, and the direction of the program.

Doors opened at 6 p.m., with members of the baseball team serving as waiters and assisting throughout the evening. Big Boy Barbeque of Fairfield catered the meal, creating a welcoming, family-style atmosphere.

Following dinner, each player took the stage to introduce

himself, sharing his hometown and position. Several players who have already committed to four-year institutions also announced where they will continue their academic and athletic careers after this season.

Coach McCue then presented a slideshow recap of last year's 19-30 campaign. Despite being one of the youngest teams in the region and battling numerous injuries, the Bobcats finished strong, closing the season on a five-game conference winning streak — including a victory over Lake Land College. McCue noted that the Lakers did not lose another game until the World Series semifinals, making that late-season win even more significant.

One standout from last season was Byler Reither, now at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. Reither set three single-season records, striking out 101 batters in 82 innings with a 2.63 ERA, ranking in the top five nationally in strikeouts. He was also named all-region — the first player under McCue to earn that honor.

But beyond wins and statistics, McCue emphasized something even more important: academics.

Not only are they athletes — they are students first. Bobcat baseball players balance classes, practices, games, travel, and campus life while representing Frontier at a high level both on the field and in

the classroom. Under McCue's leadership, the program's academic performance has steadily climbed since his arrival in fall 2022.

"One of my favorite things to talk about is our team GPA," McCue said. "My first year here, we finished with a 3.38. In 2023-24, it went up to 3.56, which ranked ninth nationally out of 525 junior college athletic programs. To finish top 10 out of more than 500 schools was incredible. Last year, it climbed again to 3.61 and ranked 15th nationally, even though GPAs were up across the country. This past fall, our team GPA reached 3.73. Every single player standing behind

me has at least a 3.00. There isn't a single F. There isn't a single D. There are only five total C's."

McCue said those results come from clear expectations established during the recruiting process.

"We take a standard approach — we simply have expectations," he said. "When we recruit players, we're upfront about what this program is about. I talk to them and their parents about life after baseball and opening doors — especially academic scholarship opportunities at four-year schools. One of the greatest pleasures I have as

a coach is getting calls from four-year programs about our players. And one of the first questions they ask is, 'How are his grades?'"

McCue monitors grades weekly and maintains consistent GPA standards. Players who meet expectations are trusted to stay on track. If they fall short, it is addressed constructively.

He also credited Frontier's faculty for playing a major role in the program's academic success.

"Frontier is one of the best schools I've ever worked at in terms of relationships between student-athletes and faculty,"

BOTTOM LEFT: Ian Olivier-Beaulieu serves as waitstaff, taking orders and checking on guests at their tables.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Joe Nevitt shares a bit about himself with the crowd at the First Pitch Dinner as his teammates look on.



MARCH 2026 EVENTS

3	Baseball vs Three Rivers College	1 P.M.
3	Softball @ East Central College - DH	1 P.M.
5	Baseball vs Lake Land	2 P.M.
6	Spring Midterm	
9	Casimir Pulaski Day Observed - No Classes	
10 - 15	Spring Break	
7	Baseball @ Lake Land - DH	12 P.M.
10	Baseball @ Wabash Valley	3 P.M.
12	Baseball @ Shawnee	3 P.M.
12	Softball vs John A. Logan - DH	2 P.M.
14	Baseball vs Shawnee - DH	12 P.M.
14	Softball @ Spoon River - DH	12 P.M.
17	Baseball vs Wabash Valley	3 P.M.
17	Softball @ Wabash Valley - DH	2 P.M.
17	Spring Registration Begins	
17	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ WVC	6:15 P.M.
19	Baseball vs SIC	3 P.M.
19	Softball vs SWIC - DH	2 P.M.
21	Baseball @ SIC - DH	12 P.M.
21	Softball @ SIC - DH	12 P.M.
22	Softball @ Kaskaskia - DH	12 P.M.
24	Baseball @ Wabash Valley	3 P.M.
24	Softball vs Shawnee - DH	2 P.M.
26	Baseball @ John A. Logan	3 P.M.
26	Softball @ Rend Lake College - DH	2 P.M.
28	Baseball vs John A. Logan - DH	12 P.M.
29	Softball vs Olney Central - DH	12 P.M.
31	Baseball vs Parkland	2 P.M.
31	Softball vs Lincoln Trail - DH	2 P.M.

APRIL 2026 EVENTS

2	Baseball @ SWIC	3:30 P.M.
2	Softball vs Lake Land - DH	2 P.M.
3	Spring Holiday - Campuses Closed	
3	Baseball vs SWIC - DH	12 P.M.
3	Softball vs Kaskaskia - DH	12 P.M.
7	Baseball vs Lincoln Trail	3 P.M.
7	Softball @ John A. Logan - DH	2 P.M.
9	Baseball vs Olney Central	TBA
9	Softball vs Spoon River - DH	2 P.M.
11	Baseball @ Olney Central - DH	12 P.M.
11	Softball vs Wabash Valley - DH	12 P.M.
14	Baseball @ Lincoln Trail	3 P.M.
14	Softball @ SWIC - DH	2 P.M.
16	Baseball vs Rend Lake College	3 P.M.
16	Softball vs SIC - DH	2 P.M.
18	Baseball @ Rend Lake College - DH	12 P.M.
18	Softball @ Shawnee - DH	12 P.M.
21	IECC Board of Trustees @ FCC	6:15 P.M.
21	Baseball vs Lincoln Trail	3 P.M.
21	Softball vs Rend Lake College - DH	2 P.M.
23	Baseball @ Kaskaskia	3 P.M.
23	Softball @ Olney Central - DH	2 P.M.
24	Last Day to Withdraw from Spring Courses	
25	Baseball vs Kaskaskia - DH	12 P.M.
25	Softball vs Lincoln Trail - DH	12 P.M.
28	Baseball vs Vincennes	4 P.M.
28	Softball vs Lake Land - DH	2 P.M.
29	Baseball @ Vincennes	4 P.M.
30	Baseball vs Vincennes	4 P.M.

McCue said. "I've been at places where there's constant tension. That's not the case here. I can't say enough about our faculty. From a coaching perspective — and as a faculty member myself — this is by far the best group I've had the pleasure to work with. Our guys were genuinely excited to hear that some faculty members were coming out to support them tonight."

Several former players have advanced to NCAA Division I, II, III, and NAIA programs. McCue announced that multiple current players have already signed to continue their careers: Seth Harris (Western Illinois University), Gael Salinas (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), Baile Collins (Central Michigan University), Landon Davis (Eastern Kentucky University), and Sean McConachie (Eastern Illinois University).

The evening also highlighted continued improvements to FNB Field. During the offseason, the program added a new batting cage and yellow fence toppers. The most significant upgrade was a major infield renovation. The project included two dump trucks of field dirt, 48 tons of college-grade infield mix, and two pallets of top-dressing conditioner. The surface was professionally laser-graded and leveled — a nearly \$15,000 investment completed in August.

Built in 2016, FNB Field continues to evolve. McCue shared short-term goals such as installing a customized backstop with graphics and adding padding and netting in front of the dugouts for improved safety and appearance. Long-term goals include reconfiguring the seating area behind home plate to accommodate chairbacks and constructing a raised party deck along the first-base line near the Bobcats' dugout.

Following the slideshow, two cheesecakes prepared by Big Boy BBQ were auctioned off with Illinois Eastern Community College Board Chairman Gary Carter serving as the auctioneer. Together, the cheesecakes brought in more than \$700, with one selling for an impressive \$500. All proceeds from the auction benefited the Bobcats Baseball team.



Jackson Lamp (left) is pictured at the Adult Education Graduation ceremony in May 2025. After reaching his senior year of high school, Lamp encountered barriers that prevented him from earning enough credits to graduate. Through the AMOC process in FY25, he was able to validate his previous coursework, complete his remaining requirements, and earn his Illinois High School diploma. Today, Jackson is continuing his educational journey at Wabash Valley College, where he is pursuing his associate degree.

CROSSING THE FINISH LINE WITH AMOC

For many adult learners, the journey to a high school diploma is often stalled by life's unpredictable hurdles. Traditional paths like the GED can feel like starting from scratch, overlooking the years of hard work already put into a high school career. At Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, a transformative initiative is changing that narrative.

The Alternative Methods of Credentialing (AMOC) process is proving that education isn't a one-size-fits-all race. By recognizing "Credit for Prior Learning," IECC is helping students cross the finish line using the foundation they've already built.

The AMOC process is a transcript-based route to an Illinois High School Diploma. Unlike traditional equivalency testing, it focuses on evaluating a student's existing high school or post-secondary credits and filling only the specific "gaps" remaining.

Once a student is approved, the IECC Adult Education Team, in conjunction with the Regional Offices of Education (ROE) 12 and 20, performs a deep-dive transcript audit. The goal is to reach the state-mandated 18 total credits.

Subject Area	Requirement
Language Arts	4 Years
Mathematics	3 Years (including Algebra & Geometry)
Social Studies	3 Years (including US History)
Science	2 Years
Electives	1 Year (Art, Music, Vocational, etc.)
Health	1 Semester
Consumer Ed	1 Course
Constitutions	US & Illinois State Requirement

To qualify for this streamlined path, students must meet specific benchmarks:

Age: 18.5 years or older (with specific exceptions for 17-year-olds whose class has already graduated).

Prior Credit: Must have completed at least 13.5 credits (75% of the state requirement) from an accredited high school.

Reading Proficiency: An NRS Level of ASE 5 or higher (CASAS score of 239+ or TABE of 576+).

Residency: Must be an Illinois resident for at least 30 days.

The impact of AMOC within the APC 529 school district has been immediate and profound. By partnering with local high schools, IECC provides an “alternate solution” for students who may have struggled in a traditional setting but are just a few steps away from their goal.

Students fill their specific credit gaps through i-Pathways.org modules

During fiscal year 2025, there were 84 graduates. For fiscal year 2026, there have been 46 completers and counting.

The AMOC process has done more than just hand out diplomas; it has fostered new partnerships between IECC and regional high schools. It removes the “all-or-nothing” pressure of high stakes testing and replaces it with a respectful evaluation of a student’s academic history.

For those who have been out of the classroom for years or were left just shy of graduation, AMOC isn’t just a shortcut, it’s a bridge to a future that once felt out of reach.

IECC BUSINESS & INDUSTRY SETS THE TONE FOR 2026

The Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Business & Industry Department launched 2026 with strong momentum following winter break, hosting and supporting multiple impactful events across the district.

On January 31, the department helped host the PTA Continuing Education Conference at Wabash Valley College. Approximately 40 participants attended the session, which was offered to physical and occupational therapy professionals for continuing education hours. The course, titled Return-to-Sport & Evidence-Based Management of the Overhead Athlete



Kyle Gill of Mattoon shares insights on business district development during the Blueprint for Growth economic development workshop.

Across the Lifespan, provided valuable insight into current best practices for rehabilitation and long-term athlete care.

In addition, IECC Business & Industry hosted an Economic Development workshop titled Blueprint for Growth, drawing 35 attendees from across the region.

Cody Moake presented TIF Fundamentals: A Practical Guide for Economic Development, helping participants better understand tax increment financing (TIF) and how to use it effectively. He covered key topics including eligibility requirements, compliance standards, and strategic project selection.

James Arndt led Strategic Planning 101: A Practical Guide for Local Government Leaders, outlining essential steps from engaging stakeholders to tracking measurable progress.

Kyle Gill presented District Management 101: A Practical Guide for Municipal Officials, exploring the “who, what, and how” of district revitalization — from collaborating with business owners to enhancing curb appeal.

The workshop concluded with a panel discussion featuring local economic development specialists, providing attendees with practical insights and real-world perspectives.

CARING BEYOND THE COMPETITION

They are often the first to arrive and the last to leave—working quietly behind the scenes where preparation meets pressure. Athletic trainers are the steady presence on the sidelines, in training rooms, and on the field, dedicated to keeping athletes healthy, safe, and ready to compete. From injury prevention and rehabilitation to split-second decisions in critical moments, their work is grounded in trust, expertise, and an unwavering commitment to athlete well-being.

Jenna Baldwin, MS, LAT, ATC, serves as a certified athletic trainer for Frontier Community College and is employed by Wabash General Hospital. Originally from Newton, Kansas—located just north of Wichita—Baldwin graduated from Newton High School in 2018. She initially planned to pursue a career in physical therapy, but her path shifted after gaining hands-on experience as a student aide during high school.

“For the longest time, I thought I wanted to be a Physical Therapist. One thing was clear for me, I wanted to help people through rehab and get back to the things that they love to do. I shadowed a PT at a local practice in high school and realized that while I really enjoyed many aspects of it, there was something that was just missing. During my senior year of high school I had the opportunity to be a student aide with the AT, which sparked my passion for the profession.

This was further solidified when I enrolled at Hutchinson Community College as a part of their AT-student aid program. This program played a huge part in me pursuing this profession. I worked closely with all the teams during my time at Hutchinson, including a National Championship win with our football team in 2021. I was shown what Athletic Training really looks like, while game day is fun and I absolutely love the atmosphere, the real work is put in behind the scenes. From there I moved on to Emporia State University and received both my bachelors in Health and Human Performance, and masters of Athletic Training. My masters cohort was small but mighty, which I think attributed to my success in all aspects."

After completing her education, Baldwin connected with the lead athletic trainer at Wabash General Hospital, which led to an interview opportunity. During the process, she shared her passion for junior college athletes and emphasized their vital role within the college athletics ecosystem. As Frontier sought to bring on a full-time athletic trainer, the opportunity proved to be a strong fit for both the college and Baldwin.

At the core of Baldwin's approach is building trust—something she believes develops through consistency, communication, and genuine care. Creating a safe and supportive environment allows student-athletes to feel confident as they navigate both competition and recovery.

"It doesn't just happen overnight, so it's a work in progress. But I believe in the power of simply listening to people and their stories. As well as showing them through small actions that I can be trusted. I am incredibly fortunate that I am full-time at Frontier so I can focus my energy on the athletes here. Which is huge in terms of relationship building. I am a constant, so if something does happen, they know my face and that I am going to care for them to the best of my ability. While it's not easy, I am working to create an environment where they feel comfortable and safe."

Injuries are an unfortunate reality in sports at every level. Baldwin notes that generalized overuse injuries are among the most common issues she sees, often stemming from the physical demands of long seasons. Helping student-athletes manage recovery and remain healthy throughout the year is a major focus of her work.

"This really depends, but generalized overuse injuries are common. Especially with the nature of most sports. A long season, even with the best mechanics, can really take a toll on the body. This can be, at least in part, helped by promoting recovery. Not only utilizing treatment but other lifestyle factors, such as sleep, hydration, and proper nutrition just as important. I love being able to help athletes sort out different recovery methods that may work for them and help them to survive the long season."

Collaboration is another key component of athletic training. Baldwin works closely with coaches and support staff to monitor athlete health, communicate concerns, and develop proactive plans that keep student-athletes safe and game-ready.

"One way is collaborating with coaches to figure out what an injured athlete can participate in during practice. Even if they may not be a full go, they may be able to participate in parts of practice. Another way is communicating well about what I'm thinking, as well as best- and worst-case scenarios for the athlete. I also am at every practice and home game which gives me a front row seat to observe athlete mechanics. This may be able to give insight into injury risk and with intervention from coaches we may be able to address an injury before it occurs. Coaches, support staff, and ATs are all on the same team and want our athletes to be healthy at the end of the day."

Baldwin's personal philosophy centers on intentional care, clear communication, and individualized rehabilitation. She strongly values a team-based approach to athletic healthcare, recognizing that collaboration among athletic trainers, coaches, performance staff, and athletes leads to the best outcomes.

"I feel like through college and seeing how the athletic training world works I really see the value in a team approach to athletic healthcare. We, athletic training, coaching staff, performance staff, athlete, etc are all working towards a common goal. I, especially as a new grad, still have lots of growing to do. So relying on coaching staff to educate me about sport specific movement mechanics, or performance staff about what they are seeing in the weight room, really gives me a lot of insight. I also want to approach each interaction with an athlete with intentionality and giving people the respect they deserve. I never want someone to feel as though I blew them off or don't see the pain they are going through."

When asked what advice she gives student-athletes about taking care of their bodies, Baldwin encourages them to speak up early when something doesn't feel right.

"The minute that something is even minorly bothering you, reach out to your athletic trainer! We went to school to know what to do in these situations. You may save yourself an even worse injury in the future if you correct the issue when you first notice it! I also know that athletes roll their eyes when they hear this, but stretching really does help!"

Baldwin says she is incredibly fortunate to work with such dedicated student-athletes each day and is grateful for the trust they place in her. She values the relationships built during the fall semester and looks forward to continuing to grow those connections throughout the spring sports season.

FCC IN PICTURES



1 Nearly a foot of snow blanketed Frontier Community College on January 24 and 25,

3 Garin Lee walks across the West Hall parking lot on his way to class.

5 Peyton Hamilton examines a model ear in the nursing lab to assess the condition of its interior.

2 Students focus on their assignments while studying in the Learning Commons.

4 Catherine Singleton leads her music class in West Hall.

6 Matt McCue addresses the crowd while speaking about his team at the First Pitch Dinner.