

The VOYAGER



FEBRUARY 2025



RANES' LEADERSHIP IMPACT

Leadership, resilience, and passion defined Ranes' educational journey.



PHLEBOTOMY WEEK

FCC Phlebotomy students learn, practice, and thrive with mentorship.



DIAMONDS TO COURTS

Softball players coach basketball, inspire youth in community.



EMPOWERED FUTURES: CELEBRATING CTE AT FRONTIER

Throughout the month of February, Frontier Community College proudly joins institutions nationwide in celebrating Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month—a time dedicated to recognizing the impact of hands-on, skills-based education in preparing students for in-demand careers.

CTE programs provide students with practical knowledge, industry certifications, and real-world experience in fields such as healthcare, business, information technology, skilled trades, and more. These programs bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring graduates are career-ready and equipped with the skills that today's workforce demands.

Jennifer Harvey, a student in the Medical Lab Technician program, says the reason why she chose to pursue MLT is because it's behind-the-scenes, "Because the lab is such a critical part of the hospital in diagnosing patients. Lab work is where all the diagnosis begins, and

where some hidden diseases are found. There is a wealth of knowledge being shared with us from both of our instructors in Julie Dehart and Cindy Green.”

Electrical Distribution Systems student, Carter Smith, says he loves the EDS program because of the hands-on learning, “One reason why I love this program is because of the hands-on training aspect of it. You’re almost outside every day if the weather is good, and the three-day class schedule is nice in case you have work outside of the college or other obligations.”

Health Informatics Instructor, Jodi Peach, says CTE jobs are in high demand as she receives calls from healthcare employers, “Employers are always calling, asking, do we have students who are ready yet? They are ready for them in the healthcare facility. We do hands-on learning, and the employers know that. So that way they know that when you leave our programs, you are ready to enter the workforce.”

Over the course of February, social media content is being posted on Frontier Community College social media pages. The content features instructors, students, and information about CTE programs. By celebrating CTE Month, Frontier Community College reaffirms its commitment to empowering students with the education and skills necessary for success in high-demand careers, strengthening both individuals and the local economy.

VEINS OF SUCCESS – THE TEAMWORK BEHIND PHLEBOTOMY TRAINING



L to R: Corinne Walker, Shawni King, Health Informatics Instructor Jodi Peach, Skyler Lurz, and Heather Dunlap

Every drop counts, and so do the dedicated professionals who collect them! From February 10-14, Phlebotomists Recognition Week honors the skilled and compassionate individuals who play a crucial role in healthcare.

Phlebotomists are the experts behind every successful blood draw, ensuring patient comfort while collecting samples vital for diagnoses, treatments, and lifesaving procedures. Whether in hospitals, clinics, or laboratories, they are the unsung heroes working with precision, care, and a steady hand.

Frontier Community College offers a Phlebotomy program that provides consistent, hands-on learning over two semesters. Led by Jodi Peach, Health Informatics Instructor, students begin by learning techniques for collecting blood samples and practice by drawing blood from peers and volunteers while also performing blood sugar tests. The curriculum covers test result interpretation, ethical and legal responsibilities, communication, and safety procedures. In the second semester, students complete clinical hours at local hospital labs under the supervision of experienced phlebotomists. This real-world training allows them to apply their skills, provide patient care, and receive one-on-one mentoring.



Corinne Walker, an FCC Phlebotomy student, shares, “The most important thing to learn is how to get into the groove of things—finding your own method while ensuring it’s done the correct way.”

FCC Phlebotomy student Skyler Lurz has learned that not all blood draws are the same. “Some people have easy veins, and some have difficult veins. Sometimes, you may need to do a hand poke or use the forearm to draw blood.”

Peach emphasizes the importance of hands-on learning, stating, “The more students practice drawing blood, the better they become. In the classroom, we all work together using artificial

arms and volunteers, creating a supportive learning environment. Our goal is to make the phlebotomy experience as comfortable as possible for both students and patients.”

She encourages students to gain as much experience as possible, explaining, “We have a course within the certificate program where students work on the job with local phlebotomists. I challenge them to complete at least 250 venipunctures in that class alone. It’s a challenging program with a strong emphasis on hands-on learning and support.”

With constant changes in medical technology and industry standards, Peach works closely with local employers to ensure that classroom instruction aligns with real-world healthcare practices.

“I collaborate with local employers throughout the year, holding meetings to discuss our curriculum and any necessary updates. We work together to ensure our students are prepared for the field. Ultimately, our goal is for students to secure employment in our local healthcare system. At the end of the program, students earn a certificate from Illinois Eastern Community Colleges in Phlebotomy. They are then eligible to take the national certification exam through the American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP) to become a certified Phlebotomy Technician (PBT).”

During their clinical rotations, students are encouraged to network and build connections with local healthcare employers. Peach noted that employers often reach out, eager to hire FCC graduates as soon as they complete their certification.

One thing is clear about the FCC Phlebotomy program—teamwork is key. Peach encourages students to get to know each other and study together.

“I have worked in healthcare, and I know firsthand that the best way to get the job done is through teamwork. I encourage my students to study together, even outside of class time. Many of our former graduates return to the classroom to mentor current students. This program fosters lifelong relationships—we are like a family, always growing and supporting one another. I don’t want any potential student to hesitate. If they have concerns, they will find plenty of support here.”

February is Financial Aid Awareness Month!

From scholarships and grants to loans and FAFSA applications, this month highlights the resources available to make college more affordable. It’s the perfect opportunity to explore funding options, meet deadlines, and take the next step toward educational goals.

Thank you Justn and Brittany for all that you do!



Justn Young
Financial Aid
Specialist



Brittany Longbons
Financial Aid
Representative



A LIFETIME IN LEARNING: THE RODNEY RANES STORY

After 30 years in education, Rodney Ranes, Program Director of Adult Education, will retire effective Saturday, March 1.

Ranes grew up in Louisville, Illinois, in Clay County. His parents were school bus drivers, and his father also worked as a farmer. He was raised alongside three older brothers and a sister. From an early age, his mother emphasized the importance of education, a lesson that led Ranes to become the first in his family to attend college. He credits the Upward Bound program for jumpstarting his career path.

“It all started with a program called Upward Bound,” Ranes shared. “The program helped me quite a bit. Cyndi Berger and Chris Cantwell were instrumental in getting me started, showing me how college works, and helping me find my way from there.”

Ranes began his educational journey at Olney Central College before transferring to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale in the 1990s. Years later, he pursued his master’s degree at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

“I initially planned to go to medical school,” Ranes said. “Even after starting college, I considered earning my bachelor’s degree and entering the field of educational psychology.”

During his college years, both of Ranes’ parents faced illnesses. His mother passed away during his junior year. After graduating, Ranes helped care for his father, who passed away two years after his mother did. Ranes was working at Wal-Mart in Flora and serving as a part-time advisor and tutor for the Upward Bound program at Olney Central College (OCC).

His work with Upward Bound led to a new opportunity through the Educational Talent Search Grant, where he became the assistant director. This role allowed him to continue working in higher education and solidified his passion for the field. After getting married and seeking career advancement, Ranes decided to pursue his master’s degree at Eastern Illinois University.

“Once I got to EIU, I was awarded a graduate assistantship and had the opportunity to meet



Rodney Ranes

some incredible people, including Dr. Robert Augustine. He was one of the best mentors I've ever had. During my time there, I learned so much while working in International Programs and Graduate School. Eventually, I became the Director of Graduate Admissions for EIU, a role I held for several years. It wasn't a straight path, but that's how I found my way into education and stayed in the field for so long."

After he and his wife had twins, Raney began searching for a job in the Olney area or within the Illinois Eastern Community College District. When the Dean of Instruction position at Olney Central College became available, he applied and was hired, serving in the role for a short period.

When former President, Dr. Jackie Davis was diagnosed with leukemia, Raney stepped up to help cover the position. Within a year, former IECC CEO Terry L. Bruce and the Board offered him the interim President role at Olney Central College following Dr. Davis's retirement. Raney accepted the interim position and later became the President of Olney Central College, serving for 12 years.



L to R: Adjunct Instructor Julie Robinson, Samantha Locey, and Raney.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, Raney decided he needed a change and transitioned to the role of Program Director of Adult Education at Frontier Community College. One of the key factors that drew him to Adult Education was its lack of recognition despite its significant impact. The program serves the entire population within the IECC District, particularly individuals who may have had negative past experiences with education. The Adult Education staff works to help these individuals overcome challenges, achieve educational gains, earn a GED, and ultimately pursue college or enter the workforce.

Ranes noted that the grant process for Adult Education is complex due to extensive budgeting and state requirements. However, he found this challenge appealing, leading him to take on the role, where he has served for two and a half years.

One of the most rewarding aspects of Adult Education, Ranès stated, has been graduation ceremonies, which he considers educational victories. “It’s rewarding to see those who graduate because they’ve overcome hurdles,” he said. “It takes a lot of work and sacrifice from both the graduate and their families. It’s also great to see them continue to college or find employment in the community.”



Ranes with former Illinois Secretary of State, Jesse White.

Over the course of Ranès' career, adult education has evolved in multiple ways. There are now more pathways to completion, including alternative credentialing methods, which have seen significant success. Ranès credited Danyelle Ayres, Coordinator of ICAPS and Instruction at Lincoln Trail College, for her contributions in assisting with these processes. Additionally, a decline in high school enrollment across the IECC District has led to adult education enrollment surpassing that of some rural high schools in the region.

When discussing the future of adult education, Ranès highlighted a couple of key areas of focus:

“I think in our district, there will need to be a greater emphasis on teaching English as a second language within adult education. This is driven by the State of Illinois, and we have already seen an increase in enrollment for these programs. There will also be a continued emphasis at the state level on guiding adult education students towards college programs and employment. I believe there should be an ongoing focus on career services, both for adult education and students in general. How do we demonstrate our success in helping students enroll, complete their programs, and secure employment to improve their lives? Telling a better story is integral to both adult education and higher education as a whole.”

Ranes also noted that financial assistance is one area where adult education could improve:

“More scholarships, more opportunities for students to begin college, and more institutional foundation support are needed to help these students. If we can provide the financial resources to get them started in college, we could see an increase in the number of students transitioning from adult education into degree programs. There needs to be additional assistance to fully understand and maximize these benefits.”

For students pursuing a degree in education, Raney offered this advice.

“First of all, you have to put in the time and effort. When I was younger, I took on projects constantly, working like crazy, writing grants—doing everything I could to help the institution. You have to be motivated to move things forward.

Concentrate on the basics first, whether it’s the courses you’re teaching or the services you’re providing. Be good at those things. If you master the fundamentals, the other aspects will fall into place. You have to create strong opportunities in the classroom or whatever role you serve.”

Raney also had advice for educators in the district and beyond.

“Focus on the students’ needs. There will always be pressures from educational requirements, political issues, and budget limitations. But at the end of the day, what matters most is doing what’s best for the students. If they see the value in what you’re doing, they will come.”

When asked about his retirement plans, Raney said he plans to take some time off, travel, and work on home projects, including landscaping his yard. He also hasn’t ruled out the possibility of volunteer work or employment in another industry.

Finally, Raney expressed his gratitude to Chris Cantwell, Dr. Robert Augustine, and Terry L. Bruce for giving him opportunities when they didn’t have to. “They saw something in me, and I appreciate their support,” he said. He also thanks his wife, Erin, for her love and support over the years during Graduate School, a college presidency, and now into retirement.



During the Illinois Eastern Community College Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 21 at Frontier Community College, Brenda Culver, Vice-Chair of the IECC Board of Trustees, celebrated a birthday. Mrs. Culver was elected to the IECC Board of Trustees in 1999 and has been serving consecutive terms since that time. She is a retired school psychologist and is currently the pastor at Barney's Prairie Christian Church. Culver is a resident of Olney.

Upcoming monthly board meetings, along with the minutes of prior meetings can be found online at iecc.edu/fcc. Click on the About/Employment tab on the site.

HOOPS & HOME RUNS – WEBB & VINSON'S LEADERSHIP BEYOND THE FIELD

For most college athletes, the off-season is a time for rest and preparation for the next big game. But for Kyndall Webb and Emmy Vinson, two freshman softball players at Frontier Community College, it's also an opportunity to give back. During the winter months, the duo has traded their gloves and cleats for whistles and clipboards, volunteering as assistant coaches for the junior high girls' basketball team at New Simpson Hill School District #32, home of the Mustangs. With the Bobcats' softball season kicking off in mid-February, Webb and Vinson have found a meaningful way to stay active while making a positive impact by helping young athletes build their skills and confidence.

Located in deep southern Illinois, New Simpson Hill sits near the tiny village of Ozark along Highway 45. Webb is from Goreville, just 10 miles northwest of the school, while Vinson hails from Vienna, 8 miles to the south. Both players were basketball standouts during their high school years, and this coaching opportunity allows them to return to their hometown communities and give back whenever their schedules allow.

"We just missed the game of basketball," Webb said. "After we finish up at FCC, we plan

on taking over at New Simpson Hill, so we wanted to get a head start. Our experience as softball players has helped us show the girls how to work as a team and rely on each other.”

Like all sports, both softball and basketball teach valuable life lessons beyond the classroom—teamwork, resilience in the face of setbacks, communication, leadership, adaptability, and working toward a common goal.



L to R: New Simpson Hill Coach Aerial Ford, Kyndall Webb, Emmy Vinson, and Assistant Coach Beth Palmer at Rend Lake College in Ina, Illinois during Class S State competition.

“Understanding the game from a different point of view has helped me as an athlete and leader,” Vinson added.

New Simpson Hill coach Aerial Ford has known both Webb and Vinson for several years and is thrilled to have them join the junior high girls’ basketball program as volunteer coaches.

“I have had the privilege of knowing Emmy and Kyndall for over eight years,” Ford said. “I coached against both of them when they played basketball at their respective grade schools and watched them continue to grow and compete at the high school level. I got to know Emmy on a more personal level as the assistant softball coach at Vienna High School, where she was our standout pitcher.

“Having the opportunity to bring both of these girls into our program has been such a blessing. They mentioned to my assistant that they were interested in volunteering and someday hoped to run their own program. Having watched these two talented and competitive young women grow up, I felt this was the perfect opportunity to bring fresh experience to our program and help prepare them to take over for me after next season, which will be my last.”

Experience is a great teacher, and for Vinson and Webb, they are making the most of every opportunity—including being part of a team that recently finished third in the Southern Illinois Junior High School Athletic Association (SIJHSAA) Class S state competition.

Both Webb and Vinson said in unison that coaching New Simpson Hill to a third-place

finish and seeing players step up as leaders was a rewarding experience. Their deep understanding of the game, combined with their leadership and communication skills, has had a significant impact on the program.

Coach Ford emphasized their contributions, saying, “Emmy and Kyndall both have a strong



New Simpson Hill won third place in 2025 SIJHSAA Class S State series. Webb and Vinson are in the back row, top right with the team. Photo courtesy: NSH and Aerial Ford.

understanding of the game. Their communication and leadership skills bring a strong and positive impact to our program. I told them from the beginning that I wanted them to feel welcome to give their input and jump right in to offer guidance and advice as they saw fit. Their attention to detail and patience with our athletes is inspiring. I truly believe their contributions have made a huge impact and helped motivate our girls to make a deep run in the state tournament.”

Ford says her basketball team looks up to Webb and Vinson, viewing them as an inspiration and proof that hard work and dedication can lead to playing at the next level after high school.

“Kyndall and Emmy were and still are standout athletes in our community,” Ford said. “Their athletic ability and positive attitudes make them role models, not just for my young athletes but for the entire community.

“My team idolizes Emmy and Kyndall. Both have a genuine desire to give back to our community and make a difference in our programs. They understand the importance of investing in our youth, and their involvement will leave a lasting impact on our school, especially on this team.

“My players have watched these girls devote countless hours to the game, and seeing them succeed at the collegiate level shows them that their own dreams can become a reality

with hard work and dedication. The possibilities for Emmy and Kyndall are endless, and having the chance to watch them begin their coaching journeys as part of our program has been such a blessing.”

Webb is an infielder for the Bobcats, while Vinson is a pitcher who can also play infield. For more information on the Frontier Community College Bobcats softball team, visit fccbobcats.com. You can also follow FCC Bobcats Softball on Facebook and Instagram.

GAME CHANGER - HOW BOBCAT NATION IS REVOLUTIONIZING FRONTIER ATHLETICS

When local business owner Claire Vaughan launched Bobcat Nation live streaming on February 4, 2023, she had a bold vision: to connect Frontier Community College athletics with fans, families, and alumni—no matter where they were. What started as a vision quickly became a reality, bringing the excitement of Bobcat games to screens far and wide. Since then, Bobcat Nation has evolved into more than just a platform—it’s a movement that unites the community and showcases Frontier’s athletic spirit to the world.

Under Claire’s leadership, the channel has grown to an impressive audience of over 1,300 subscribers and more than 45,000 total views. With this momentum, Bobcat Nation is poised to reach new heights and expand its influence even further.

“I was voted Most School Spirited by my classmates in 2005 at Fairfield Community High School,” Claire shared. “I’ve never been athletic or the most competitive person, but I’ve always had school and town spirit. I love Fairfield.”

Before launching Bobcat Nation, Claire introduced the Mule Nation YouTube channel through her business, Raylen James Marketing (RJ Marketing), just before the high school fall sports season in 2022. The channel quickly gained traction. Today, it has amassed over 1,900 subscribers and more than 187,000 views. Months later, Bobcat Nation was born.

“There seemed to be a gap between our community and Frontier Community College,” Claire explained. “We’re so fortunate to have FCC in our area. It provides opportunities for recent high school graduates and adults alike to get an education. I went to a community college myself, and I highly recommend it. When athletics were added, I noticed how other community colleges in the Illinois Eastern Community College district had strong support for their sports programs. I wanted that same sense of pride for Frontier.”

Since its launch, Bobcat Nation has connected student-athletes with their families and friends who are unable to attend games in person. For those who can make the trip to Fairfield, it means more than just watching a game—it’s an opportunity to invest in the local economy by spending money in the community.

“We have students coming from all over the world to spend two years of their lives here in Fairfield. It’s a great opportunity for tourism. They’re spending money in our local economy, which benefits everyone – it’s a win-win for us. For students whose families live all over the world, whether it’s an hour away, three hours away, or on the other side of the globe, Bobcat Nation allows them to tune in and watch their kids and teammates play. It shines a positive light on Fairfield and Frontier Community College, showcasing what our community has to offer and making these moments possible.”



Bobcat Nation founder, Claire Vaughan.

While Vaughan has been instrumental in the success of Bobcat Nation, she credits Coach Matt McCue and Assistant Coach Luke Benfield of the Bobcats Baseball team for kickstarting the initiative.

“Coach McCue came into my office with a great idea to live stream Bobcat athletics. Although I had considered it before, I wouldn’t have started so soon without the push from him and Luke,” Claire said. “They encouraged me to get things rolling that spring. With my marketing background, I helped spread the word about Bobcat Athletics and Frontier Community College. My goal is to get the community more involved with our school and athletics program.”

Following the initial meeting with Coach McCue, a subsequent meeting was held with key members of the administration, including former Athletic Director Nixie Hnetkovsky, Bobcats Softball Coach Jeremy Ellis, McCue, and President Dr. Jay Edgren. All attendees expressed their support and enthusiasm for the initiative, expediting the process to make it a reality. Vaughan credits Dr. Edgren and the coaching staff for their encouragement and support, stating it wouldn’t have been possible without them. Since its launch, the platform has received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Before the launch, with the 2023 spring sports season approaching, \$7,000 worth of equipment had to be purchased. Additional expenses included paying talent and crew, and securing sponsorships from local businesses, organizations, and community members.

These sponsorships help cover the costs.

“The athletes and parents love it,” Vaughan shared. “Many athletes have told me they watch the games later, after they’re archived, to critique their performance and hear what the commentators said about them. The response has been incredible. The community support has been amazing, and it’s definitely growing. We’re gaining fans both locally and abroad.”

Some baseball and softball games take place in the middle of the workday, making it difficult for faculty and staff to attend in person at FNB Field or Southwest Park. However, many employees at the college tune in to the broadcasts to hear their students’ names being called. In the fall, when volleyball season is in full swing during the evenings, faculty, staff, and students regularly watch. Bobcat Nation has become an integral part of FCC culture.



Bobcats Baseball Coach Matt McCue joins Mark Turner and Alec Vaughan on Bobcat Nation.

Producing each broadcast requires a dedicated crew to announce, engineer the live stream, and film the action. The announcers provide positive and engaging commentary for the home games on Bobcat Nation. Crew members include announcers Mark Turner, Derek Dunn, Ken Otey, Tammy Anderson, and cameramen Alec Vaughan and Grady Simpson. While each member brings unique skills, they work together as a cohesive unit.

From day one to the present, the impact it has made on fans has not gone unnoticed. Vaughan says it is rewarding to hear from fans globally, supporting the live stream and interacting with them on the live chat.

“On our first day of live streaming, we had a guy from Australia tune in and watch, and he became a big fan. We asked him what time it was over there. We had another viewer who logged in, thinking it was a quiet live stream. When he heard one of our commentators describe the action, he loved it. One baseball player’s mom from Canada showed up to the press box and gave us a big Canadian goodie bag full of stuff like Lays-flavored ketchup

chips and Canadian candy. The Bobcat Nation community has been amazing, and I'm loving every minute of it."

Live streaming of sporting events has exploded over the past few years, with high schools and colleges implementing their own live streaming curriculum and broadcast teams. Vaughan expects that number to rise.

"Technology is always changing. I see it evolving into coursework. I see it becoming part of the high school and college curriculum because this is the way of the world now. This is something that can benefit students by putting it on their resume."

Fans can subscribe to the Bobcat Nation YouTube channel by going to www.youtube.com/@bobcatnationfairfield or by liking them on social media on Facebook, and following them on Instagram at [bobcatnationfairfield](https://www.instagram.com/bobcatnationfairfield). For more information on Bobcat Nation and/or to be a sponsor of the live streams, contact Claire Vaughan at Raylen James Marketing at 618-315-3611 or email claire@raylenjames.com.

FCC Calendar of Events

March 2025

- 1 - Baseball hosts Rock Valley College - 12 & 2:30
- 3 - No Classes - Casimir Pulaski Day Observed
- 4 - 9 - No Classes - Spring Break
- 4 - Softball at East Central College - 1 & 3
- 5 - Baseball hosts Kankakee Community College - 2
- 7 & 8 - Baseball hosts McHenry County College - 12 & 3
- 9 - Softball hosts Spoon River College - 12 & 2
- 11 - Baseball hosts Rend Lake College - 3
- 11 - Softball hosts Wabash Valley College - 2 & 4
- 13 - Baseball hosts Olney Central College - 12
- 15 - Baseball at Olney Central College - 12 & 3
- 15 - Softball hosts Southwestern Illinois College - 12 & 2
- 16 - Softball hosts Southeastern Illinois College - 12 & 2
- 18 - IECC Board Meeting at Olney Central College - 6:15 p.m.
- 18 - Baseball at Rend Lake College - 3
- 19 - Softball at Shawnee Community College - 2 & 4
- 20 - Baseball hosts Rend Lake College - 2
- 22 - Baseball at Wabash Valley College - 12 & 2:30
- 22 - Softball hosts Rend Lake College - 12 & 2
- 23 - Softball at Olney Central College - 12 & 2
- 25 - Baseball hosts Rend Lake College - 3
- 26 - Softball hosts Lincoln Trail College - 2 & 4
- 27 - Baseball hosts Lincoln Trail College - 12
- 29 - Baseball at Lincoln Trail College - 12 & 3
- 29 - Softball at Lake Land College - 12 & 2
- 30 - Softball hosts Kaskaskia College - 12 & 2

Times are listed in P.M., unless otherwise noted. This schedule is tentative and can change. Changes in baseball and softball schedules can be found on fccbobcats.com.



TURNING UP THE VOLUME: A LIFE IN BROADCASTING AND BEYOND

I was born in Olney, Illinois, on the Fourth of July in 1989, but I've spent most of my life in Fairfield. From an early age, I stayed active by playing video games and sports. Growing up, I dreamed of becoming a NASCAR driver like the legendary Jeff Gordon. However, when I discovered that being a racecar driver required a lot of math, that dream came to a screeching halt. During my junior year at Fairfield Community High School, I caught the "radio bug" while listening to Woody & Murvis on 104.9 WFIW in the mornings. During my high school years, I experienced a life-changing growth spurt, shooting up eight inches during my freshman and sophomore years -- from 5'7" to 6'3". I'm currently 6'4" and can confidently report what the weather is like up here.

After graduating from FCHS in 2007, I enrolled at Frontier Community College that fall. In October, I voiced my first radio ad for FCC and the Illinois Eastern Community College district, officially starting my broadcasting journey. The following spring, I began taking radio and TV courses at Wabash Valley College, eventually earning my associate degree in Radio/TV Broadcasting in 2010 and becoming

the first in my family to graduate from college. While at WVC, I became a DJ for 89.1 The Bash and announced WVC games, further fueling my passion for broadcasting.

In 2009, while still at WVC, I was hired by WFIW/WOKZ in Fairfield to announce local sports. By the summer of 2010, I had taken on the role of evening DJ while continuing to cover sports for the station. I held that position until August 2012. In 2016, I returned to WFIW, specializing in operations and programming for all three stations: WFIW-FM, WOKZ, and WFIW-AM. My responsibilities included hosting shows, broadcasting local sports, managing sales, producing audio, and administering the radio station's website and social media platforms.

Seeking to further my education, I enrolled at Eastern Illinois University to pursue a bachelor's degree in mass communications. At EIU, I worked as a DJ for Hit-Mix 88.9 WEIU and gained experience announcing and filming sports for the OVC Digital Network. I graduated in 2014 and was honored as the Hit-Mix Senior of the Year, an award voted on exclusively by my peers in the radio department.



Derek Dunn



Derek and Mr. Bones in FCC Science Lab.

In January 2022, I joined Frontier Community College as an Educational Technology Specialist, assisting instructors in filming and editing video content without disrupting the learning environment. I also supported marketing efforts for special projects. In November 2024, I assumed the role of Coordinator of Marketing & Public Information at FCC.

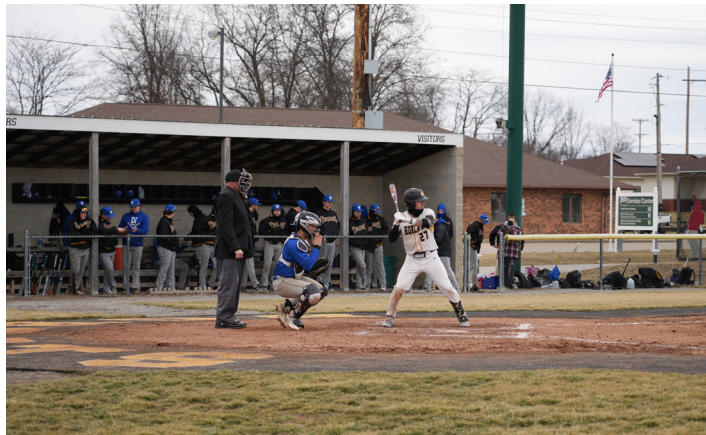
Outside of work, I announce sports for Mule Nation and Bobcat Nation on YouTube, covering Fairfield Community High School and Frontier Community College athletics. I also serve as a co-pastor at Mill Shoals Baptist Church, having received my ministry license in the summer of 2024. In my free time, I enjoy traveling, playing pickleball, freelance audio and video production, hanging out with friends and family, and exploring local eateries.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to the mentors and supporters who have guided me along the way. I wouldn't be where I am today without their encouragement and the skills they helped me develop. My journey at FCC has taught me two key life lessons: first, failure

only happens when you stop trying, and second, in the field of education, learning is a lifelong process—there's always something new to discover each day.



FCC IN PICTURES



1 Vanessa and Courtney are jotting down notes in Graphic Arts & Design class.

2 Dillon James awaits the next pitch from North Iowa Area CC Trojans in Bobcats Home Opener at FNB Field.

3 Linda Monge helps a student with coursework following class.

4 Rodney Maxey helps Storm in the Auto Lab.

5 Students jot down notes in Nixie's Science class.

6 Nursing Instructor, Juliana James, teaches students about the respiratory system.