

The VOYAGER



JANUARY 2026



MORE THAN CHICAGO

Cultural diversity class explores big-city life in Chicago.



MAKING AN IMPACT

Laurie Taylor recognized for leadership and industry impact.



EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS

Bobcats shine on fall 2025 honor lists.



OPENING MINDS IN THE WINDY CITY

Linda Monge and her Cultural Diversity class traveled to Chicago, Illinois, for an immersive learning experience focused on the culture and dynamics of a large metropolitan city. The group departed Fairfield early Friday morning, December 5, and returned late Saturday night, December 6.

To make the trip possible, students raised the necessary funds through a series of fall-semester fundraisers. Their efforts were successful, covering the cost of the hotel stay, meals, and all attractions and events attended during the trip. Of the students who participated, only one had previously visited Chicago. Monge added that Frontier Community College was also very supportive of the trip, providing a van and covering all fuel expenses.

In the days leading up to the excursion, Monge and her students closely monitored the weather forecast. With predicted highs of 24 degrees on Friday and 30 degrees on Saturday, Monge advised the group to dress appropriately. As the Windy City lived up to its name, students later admitted they were thankful they had prepared for the frigid temperatures.



Students who attended the Chicago trip are shown here, with Ivy Richardson and RaeAnn Harris in the front row, and Kyndall Webb, Aubrey Churchill, and Peyton Owen in the back row.

The group departed Frontier at 5 a.m. on Friday and arrived in Chicago around 10:30 a.m. They checked in at the Renaissance Hotel near Wacker Drive along the Chicago River. With valet parking available and rooms ready upon arrival, the group was able to store their luggage before heading out to explore the city.

Monge noted that the students' first exposure to cultural diversity occurred immediately upon arriving at the hotel.

"One of the first experiences was as soon as we got into the hotel lobby," Monge said. "There were people of all nationalities—those checking in and those working there. It felt like another world. I wanted them to walk away with a true sense of cultural diversity by being there and seeing it firsthand."

Between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., the students explored lower Michigan Avenue, including a stop at the flagship Macy's, located in the historic building once home to Marshall Field's. From there, they saw the Christkindl Market off State Street from a distance before stopping for lunch. Monge had made advance reservations for ice skating at Millennium Park, located next to the iconic Cloud Gate sculpture, commonly known as "The Bean." While ice skating was open to the public, reservations were required. Monge noted that although skating proved more challenging than expected, the experience of skating beneath towering skyscrapers created a memorable moment for the group.

Following ice skating, the group visited the Museum of Illusions, which featured more than 60 visual and educational exhibits, including holograms, stereograms, optical illusions, and immersive rooms designed to tease the senses and trick the mind. Conveniently located near Millennium Park, the museum was an ideal stop on their walk back toward the hotel.

Chicago's diverse culinary scene was also part of the experience. Known for its famous deep-dish pizza, the group enjoyed dinner at Giordano's, which they walked to from the hotel. For many students, it was their first time trying traditional Chicago-style deep-dish pizza.

After dinner, the group attended a live show at ComedySportz, an interactive comedy venue where two teams compete in improvisational challenges while dressed in playful costumes. With front-row seats, students enjoyed direct interaction with the performers.

Sophomore Kyndall Webb said the comedy show was her favorite part of the trip. "My favorite part of the trip was the ComedySportz show on Friday night," Webb said. "It was really funny, and I loved the environment!"

For the students, the trip also marked their first experience using Uber. The group used rideshare services to travel to and from ComedySportz and later to Ghirardelli's chocolate shop on Michigan Avenue, located just a block from the Renaissance Hotel. There, they enjoyed hot

Top: A popular highlight of the trip, the group enjoyed exploring the Museum of Illusions, including this topsy-turvy room. It was also a favorite stop for the previous Cultural Diversity class visit to Chicago.

Middle: Ivy Richardson, Aubrey Churchill, Kyndall Webb, RaeAnn Harris, and Peyton Owen pose for a group photo at Millennium Park with "The Bean" in the background.

Bottom: A view of Chicago's many skyscrapers from the top of Willis Tower, where The Ledge offered breathtaking scenery.

fudge sundaes before taking photos of the beautifully decorated Christmas trees and festive city décor, bringing Day One of the experience to a memorable close.

Freshman Peyton Owen said the rideshare experience opened his eyes to cultural differences.

"Most of the Uber drivers were Middle Eastern or Hispanic," Owen said. "Being from a small town, you don't see that very often. Each ride was someone from a different culture or background. Their accents were different, and it showed how day-to-day life in the city is different from Fairfield—even though it's only a few hours away."

On Saturday morning, the group left the hotel at 8 a.m. and took an Uber to Lou Mitchell's, a traditional Chicago diner. Monge said the restaurant was packed, and the group enjoyed a hearty breakfast. From there, they walked to Willis Tower and visited the Ledge, where every student stepped out onto the glass ledge overlooking the city.

After leaving Willis Tower, the group took another Uber to the northern end of Michigan Avenue. They walked south, seeing sights such as Water Tower Place, Bloomingdale's, Nike Town, Starbucks Roastery, and the Harry Potter Store. Lunch was held at Eataly, which celebrates Italian food and culture through authentic cuisine and culinary traditions.





The group began their second day with a hearty breakfast at Lou Mitchell's, a bustling Chicago diner.

Following lunch, the group discussed visiting Navy Pier or driving by Wrigley Field. They ultimately chose to see Wrigley Field up close. Before leaving the city, Monge suggested a stop at a neighborhood coffee house, Colectivo. The group departed Chicago around 7 p.m. and arrived back at Frontier at approximately 11 p.m. Saturday night.

Reflecting on the trip, Owen said it was eye-opening to see such cultural diversity so close to home.

"It was very neat," Owen said. "You don't realize how big the city is until you're standing on the ledge at Willis Tower and see it just keep going. We heard Chinese, Japanese, French, and Spanish near the Bean. We experienced authentic foods and saw cultures I never expected to see in the same state I'm from."

Owen added that the biggest lesson he took away from the trip was the importance of keeping an open mind and being accepting of others.

Reflecting on the experience, Monge said the trip was designed to give students a glimpse of life outside Wayne County.

"We saw people from all walks of life, heard different languages, and saw people of all nationalities enjoying the city together," Monge said. "It was a great way to celebrate diversity and reinforce what we've been learning all semester."

Monge added that while living in Wayne County is a great option, she wants students to understand there are many paths available to them.

"I've always said if you want to live in Wayne County, that's awesome," Monge said. "But I also want to show students another way of life, another culture, and another option for their future."

When asked what she would change for future trips, Monge said she would like to extend the visit to two nights and include a major museum, such as the Shedd Aquarium or the Museum of Science and Industry.

"This trip wouldn't have been possible without the support of our community," Monge said. "Our calendar and porkburger fundraisers were successful, and we're grateful to the community, the FCC Foundation, and the Student Advisory Board. When students work toward something themselves, it means so much more. They can truly say, 'We did this.'"

* Photos from the trip were taken by Kyndall Webb and Linda Monge.



Laurie Taylor poses for a photo with Mike Mudd of RiverStone Group, Inc. at the IAAP Conference and Convention in Springfield, Illinois, on December 2-3, 2025.

LAURIE TAYLOR EARNS IAAP LEADERSHIP AWARD

Laurie Taylor was honored with the IAAP (Illinois Association of Aggregate Producers) Industry Leadership Award - Associate Member at the IAAP Conference and Convention, held in Springfield, Illinois, on Tuesday, December 2, and Wednesday, December 3, 2025.

The IAAP Industry Leadership Award recognizes members whose consistent involvement and commitment strengthen not only their own organizations, but the mining community as a whole. Each year, IAAP staff and committee chairpersons review contributions made across the association to identify companies and associate members whose efforts have made a meaningful impact. There is no application process for this award—it is earned through dedication, passion, follow-through, and a continued willingness to step up when it matters most.

IAAP Executive Director Dan Eichholz shared the following about Taylor:

“This year's associate winner exemplifies that spirit of service to the industry. They work behind the scenes, doing the quiet but essential work of keeping our programs strong with professionalism and genuine care.

This individual took part in the 2024 IAAP Emerging Leaders cohort and applied that experience right away. One of their key accomplishments this year was building a proposed Mining Certificate program from the ground up and presenting it to our IAAP Board of Directors—a thoughtful, forward-looking effort aimed at strengthening workforce development and member education.

We believe this Mining Certificate will change the education standards of our industry by elevating employment candidates to be more informed, responsible, and safer new miners. This person leaves a legacy with this great accomplishment. Creation is only the first step- they will also staff the committee for the Education Foundation scholarships, helping to ensure opportunities for students across Illinois.

Their impact extends to our events and training programs as well. They played a key role in helping line up speakers for our annual Safety Conference and several educational seminars our members depend on. They assist member companies in scheduling their Annual MSHA refresher training – and back an institution that ensures quality education on safety.

In recent years, they also expanded IECC's presence at the Associates Expo by securing and hosting a booth, giving members a stronger connection point and helping elevate the visibility of their mission within the association. And true to their character, this person volunteers at numerous IAAP events and activities, always ready to lend a hand wherever it's needed.

The combination of all these contributions – educational support, program development, guidance, innovation, event assistance, and simply showing up – reflects a leader who gives generously of their time and talent."

Taylor said she was surprised, humbled, and honored to receive the award.

"I was completely surprised, humbled, and honored to receive the award. Both personally and professionally, to be recognized by the leading Aggregate Association in Illinois is something I never expected and am extremely thankful for their recognition and support."

Taylor also believes her participation in the IAAP's Emerging Leaders Program helped shape her leadership path within the organization.

"I feel that my participation in the IAAP's Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) opened this door for me. The connections, friendships, and overall knowledge I gained throughout the program really elevated my understanding of the aggregate industry and enabled me to help make a difference in an industry that is not only crucial to Illinois, but worldwide."

Taylor explained that the IAAP Industry Leadership Award honors associate members who show outstanding leadership and make meaningful contributions to the aggregate industry.

"Associate Members participate in IAAP committees, networking, sponsored and industry events. The IAAP developed this award program to recognize members that have demonstrated leadership excellence and made a significant contribution to the welfare of the industry. Leadership can be demonstrated by individuals or member companies engaged in efforts to promote and advance the image and well-being of the industry, company, mine site or business location, and its employees that may not be related to IAAP activities but support the industry in varying capacities."



Frontier Community College President and Vice Chancellor of Business and Industry, Dr. Sharmila Kakac, addresses faculty and staff during a workshop at Bob Boyles Hall on Wednesday, January 7, 2026.

Taylor collaborated with IAAP staff and Dr. Kakac to develop and propose an aggregate industry certificate program for both students and industry professionals. By presenting the program to the IAAP Board to assess workforce needs, the initiative gained strong support, including IAAP scholarships and commitments from companies to promote the program and fund employee enrollment.

"I worked directly with IAAP staff and Dr. Kakac on creating and proposing an aggregate industry-based certificate program that is geared not only towards high school graduates, but also industry personnel who want to improve their skills. I presented the proposed program to their Board of Directors on several different occasions to determine the industry's needs for their employees and future workforce. As a result, the IAAP has

designated scholarships towards this program, and producer and associate member companies have expressed their support for it by committing to promote the program and pay for their employees' enrollment."

Taylor highly recommends that those interested consider participating in the IAAP's Emerging Leaders Program.

"It's a great organization with excellent staff and members. I highly recommend participating in their Emerging Leaders Program. It teaches leadership, but more importantly, it supports and encourages relationships including ways to support the IAAP through their committees and outreach activities. I am looking forward to being a designated mentor for the next group of ELP's coming in."

FCC HONORS 111 STUDENTS FOR FALL 2025 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Frontier Community College has released its academic honor lists for the Fall 2025 semester. Three lists have been established by Illinois Eastern Community Colleges to indicate students who have achieved academic excellence. They are the Chancellor's Honors List, the President's Academic Honors List, and the Dean's Academic Honors List. There were 111 students that received academic honors during the fall 2025 semester.

To qualify for any of the honor lists, a student must be enrolled full-time (12 hours or more) and must be taking college-level classes.

To be named to the Chancellor's Academic Honors List, students must achieve a grade point average of 3.90 or greater on a 4.0 scale; between 3.75 - 3.89 for the President's Academic Honors List; and between 3.50 - 3.74 for the Dean's Academic Honor's List.

The following students have earned Fall 2025 academic honors:

Chancellor's Academic Honors List

Elliana Ames, Ian-Olivier Beaulieu, Weston Bierman, Alexis Black, Olivia Brummer, Ashton Bullard, Amanda Burkett, Aubrey Churchill, Giuseppe DiMaggio, Justin Early, Kaelin Farr, Alaira Friese, Mariana Garcia-Gomez, Mayes Gosser, Quenten Hallam, Wyatt Halter, Erin Harris, Drake Hartline, Jenna Hinkle, Colin Jones, Shea Jones, Shannon Julian, Tanner Keith, Grace Elizabeth Knuckles, Kasey Lowe, Braxton Mathews, Sean McConachie, Sarah McCorkle, Alexis Miller, Cale Milner, Max Moore, Mason Morehead, Jason Nguyen, Isaac Nietzsche, Devon Ouwehand, Peyton Owen, Kathryn Pack, Chloe Papineau, Garrett Ray, Ivy Richardson, Rayonna Ridley, Riley Roark, Cooper Robertson, David Schrum, Audrey Serles, Arlissa Sharber, Alexis Simpson, Miller Simpson, Olivia Smith, Peyton Smith, Lily Spark, Nathan Stivers, Camdyn Tappendorf, Annika Van Heemst, Emmalynn Vinson, Kyndall Webb, Carson White, Dillon White, Miles Whitesell, Hannah Wilke, Blayne Windland.



Giuseppe DiMaggio listens intently to Linda Monge during a lecture. DiMaggio was one of 61 students named to the Chancellor's Academic Honors List for the Fall 2025 semester, with 22 students earning President's List honors and 28 recognized on the Dean's List.

President's Academic Honors List

Jenna Abusharbain, Bria Beals, Caleb Boff, Tessa Brennan, Cameron Dawes, Asa Dunlevey, Jackson Ethridge, Josh French, Seth Harris, Kylee Hughes, Brenna Isle, Grant Keyser, Clay Lambert, Cole Lambert, Braden Landis, Chase Loesch, William Lucas, Joseph Nevitt, Mason Newland, Alicia Stanley, Tinlea Webb, Avery Wolfe

Dean's Academic Honors List

Brock Blazier, Dax Bridwell, Rebecca Bunting, Jordan Carter, Michael Clarida, Bailey Collins, John Condon, Landon Davis, Kayleigh Fodge, Jaxon Funneman, Mae Gruen, RaeAnn Harris, Keaton Harvey, Harper Holeman, Hessi Johnson, Madyson Jonas, Ava Kreiter, Garin Lee, Troy Mann, Evan Martinez, Aaron Meade, Cameron Napier, Sawyer Patterson, Ryan Perry, Jesse Reuss, Colten Starnes, Caitlyn Venable, Jackson Warner

LAUNCHED



NEW LOOK. SAME BOBCAT PRIDE.

The Frontier Community College Bobcats athletics website, fccbobcats.com, has officially leveled up. The home of the Bobcats has a fresh new look, featuring a bold layout designed to be faster, cleaner, and easier to navigate. The redesigned site allows fans, families, and student-athletes to quickly find schedules, rosters, scores, and live-streamed games all in one place. The new site officially launched on Thursday, January 8.

FCC Athletic Director and Head Softball Coach, Jeremy Ellis, says the transition to the new website has been a year-

long effort focused on details and long-term impact.

"We've been working on it for about a year now and really digging into the details. From the beginning, Presto Sports gave us several layout options, all the way down to the smallest details like which images go where. This was an opportunity to update our look and make something better. In today's world, kids pay attention to graphics and visuals. Those details matter to them. It's been a long process, but it's been a really positive change for us."

Ellis says the new website reflects the growth and

momentum happening across Frontier Community College athletics.

"The new site feels current and fits where we're headed," Ellis said. "We have a lot of exciting things going on at Frontier, including a new gym coming soon. This website is another piece of that progress. Kids, parents, and grandparents are online all the time, especially when they want to watch games or follow schedules. Updating the site and giving it a fresh, modern feel is important."

One of the biggest challenges with the previous website was mobile compatibility,

FEBRUARY 2026

6	Baseball @ Wallace State CC DH	8:00
7	Baseball @ Wallace State CC DH	9:00
13	Baseball vs Danville Area CC DH	12 P.M.
14	Baseball vs Danville Area CC DH	12 P.M.
14	Softball @ NE Mississippi CC	4 P.M.
15	Softball @ Dyersburg State CC	12 P.M.
16	Campus Closed - President's Day	
17	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ OCC	6:15 P.M.
19	Softball @ Snead State CC	2 P.M.
20	Baseball @ State Fair CC DH	1 P.M.
20	Softball @ Jones College	10 A.M.
20	Softball @ NE Mississippi CC	4 P.M.
21	Baseball @ State Fair CC DH	1 P.M.
24	Baseball vs McKendree University DH	1 P.M.
25	Softball vs St. Charles CC DH	1 P.M.
26	Baseball @ Millikin JV	3 P.M.
27	Baseball @ Pensacola State College	11 A.M.
28	Baseball @ Pensacola State College	5 P.M.

MARCH 2026

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

* All information is current as of Tuesday, January 13, 2026. Baseball and softball games are weather permitting. Visit Frontier Community College on Facebook and fccbobcats.com for the latest updates and information.

particularly on smartphones and tablets. The new site addresses those issues by offering a fully responsive and user-friendly design.

"That was one of the main reasons I wanted to pursue this," Ellis said. "The FCC Foundation was incredibly supportive in helping make this happen. Everyone spends time on their phones now. With the new site, you can easily navigate it on a phone or tablet, and click or tap to access the Bobcat Nation YouTube channel to watch games. That was one of the biggest reasons for making the jump."

Ellis believes the revamped fccbobcats.com will have an immediate impact on recruiting, communication, and visibility across all athletic programs.

"As athletic director, my goal is for all of our sports to have the best opportunities we can provide," Ellis said. "This affects every program now and into the future. From a coaching perspective, having schedules and rosters easily accessible is huge for recruiting. Kids are on their phones, and that's where we need to be. We hear from student-athletes not just locally, but from all over the world. This site helps make that possible."

Ellis added that the launch of the new site is just the beginning.

"I'm excited that it's finally live," Ellis said. "There are features we didn't have before, such as Athlete of the Week highlights, local business advertising opportunities, and quick links to the college website and virtual tour. Everything is easy to find at the top of the page."

Additional content and features will continue to be added in the coming weeks and months. Fans, families, and community members are encouraged to explore the new Bobcats athletics website at fccbobcats.com.



SPARK SHINES: LILY SPARK NAMED ALL-CONFERENCE

Frontier Community College Bobcats volleyball player Lily Spark has been named to the 2025 Great Rivers Athletic Conference Volleyball All-Conference Team. The 5'9" freshman outside hitter from Christchurch, New Zealand, earned the honor after receiving 47 votes.

Spark put together an outstanding freshman campaign for the Bobcats. According to NJCAA statistics, she ranked 39th in NJCAA Division I with 342 kills and tied for 65th nationally in kills per set at 2.63. Spark appeared in 37 matches and 130 sets, totaling 786 attacks while averaging 6.05 attempts per set. She finished the season with a .295 hitting percentage and played a key role in leading the Bobcats to a 19–19 overall record and a 9–10 mark in Region 24 play.

Karlie Mann of John A. Logan College was named the GRAC Most Valuable Player after receiving 111 points, while teammate Ava Luebbers earned Freshman of the Year honors with 77 votes.

Additional players selected to the Great Rivers Athletic Conference All-Conference Team include Grace Johnson (SWIC, 83), Bella Austin (Lake Land, 76), Allie Becker (Kaskaskia College, 72), Sydney Walker (Lake Land, 68), Ashlynn Hughes (SWIC, 64), Reese Brunken (Lake Land, 56), Leigh Carnes (Lincoln Trail, 48), Landre Hoehne (John A. Logan, 45), Lidia Kelsey (Lincoln Trail, 43), Abby Compton (John A. Logan, 37), and Ayiana Nieves (Wabash Valley College, 29).

FCC IN PICTURES



1 Casey Atteberry listens to Dr. Tracy Hicks during a nursing class in Cox Hall.

2 Jeremy Ellis provides an update on campus athletics during the faculty and staff workshop.

3 Olivia Smith listens to Linda Monge during a math course on the first day of the spring semester.

4 Kaelin Farr listens as Linda Monge welcomes him and his classmates on the first day of the spring semester.

5 Faculty and staff filled Bob Boyles Hall for the workshop held on Wednesday, January 7.

6 Lori Noe addresses attendees with an update on Active Minds during the workshop.