

JULY 2026



GROWTH. VISION. IMPACT.

Kakac's first year brings momentum, collaboration, vision, and opportunity.



TAYLOR RETURNS HOME

Dr. Timothy Taylor expected to become IECC's next Chancellor.



GOLFING FOR EDUCATION

Community swings into action for FCC Foundation.



A YEAR OF LISTENING, LEARNING, AND LEADING

There is an old saying that time flies when you're having fun. For Dr. Sharmila Kakac, her first year as president of Frontier Community College and Vice Chancellor of Business & Industry for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges passed more quickly than she could have imagined.

Kakac began both roles on July 1, 2025. Her memorable first day included visits from former IECC Chancellor Dr. Ryan Gower, Illinois State Senator Terri Bryant and Illinois State Representative David Severin.

Since Kakac assumed her leadership roles, Frontier's campus has experienced several notable developments. These include the construction of the future Jerry Cox Athletic Center and Jerry Cox Court in front of Mason Hall, the celebration of Frontier's 50th anniversary and an increased emphasis on the college's black and yellow colors to promote school spirit and campus life.

As she reflected on her first year, Kakac discussed several of the experiences and milestones that stood out to her.



Dr. Sharmila Kakac speaks to students during New Student Orientation in August 2025, her first NSO event as president of Frontier Community College.

"The first year has been incredibly rewarding and has gone by faster than I ever imagined. I've had the opportunity to meet students, employees, alumni, employers, and community members and building those relationships has been the highlight of my year. My first commencement ceremony as President was especially meaningful because it represented the culmination of our students' hard work and the life-changing impact a community college education can have. Breaking ground on our new gymnasium and helping plan Frontier's 50th anniversary celebrations also stand out because they represent both our proud history and our exciting future."

Among her proudest observations from the past year has been the commitment of Frontier's faculty and staff to placing students first.

"More than anything, I'm proud of the culture of collaboration across our campus. No matter what someone's role is, our faculty and staff consistently put students first. That shared commitment is reflected in everything we accomplish and is one of the things that makes Frontier such a special place."

Serving as both a community college president and a vice chancellor can be rewarding, but the responsibilities also present challenges and opportunities for growth.

"There are always challenges when you take on a new leadership role. In some areas, the learning curve is pretty steep, while in others it comes more naturally. One of the biggest lessons I've learned is the importance of listening before making decisions. The best ideas often come from the people who are closest to the work, our faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Leadership isn't about having all the answers; it's about bringing people together to find the best path forward."

Since becoming president, Kakac has attended numerous campus activities and athletic events, giving her opportunities to interact with students and learn from their experiences.

"In many ways we learn as much from students as they do from us! Our students have reminded me often, if not daily, why community colleges are important. While every student's story is unique, most come to Frontier for the same reason. They're looking for opportunity. They want the chance to build a better future for themselves and their families, whether that's earning a degree, gaining new skills, transferring to a university, or starting a new career. They've also shown me an incredible amount of resilience as they balance work, family, and other responsibilities while pursuing their goals. Their determination has reinforced that our role is about more than delivering an education. It's about creating an environment where students feel supported, valued, and confident that Frontier can help them achieve their goals and aspirations."

Since its establishment in 1976, Frontier has helped countless students develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the workforce. Through the college's career and technical education programs and IECC's Business & Industry division, Frontier continues to respond to the changing needs of regional employers and communities.

"Through our career-and-technical education (CTE) programs and through workforce training that is provided through the B&I division IECC/Frontier plays a vital role in preparing both students and the regional workforce for success. We work closely with employers to understand their needs and develop training that equips individuals with the skills employers are looking for. One of the greatest strengths is our ability to be responsive. Whether a local employer needs customized training, a company is expanding or locating in our district, or a community is experiencing a major layoff, we're ready to partner and provide solutions. From healthcare and manufacturing to transportation and the skilled trades, we're committed to creating educational pathways that lead directly to meaningful careers. By supporting both students and local businesses, we're helping strengthen the economic future of our entire region."

Frontier's success throughout its history can also be attributed to the impact its faculty and staff have made on campus and throughout the community. Kakac praised employees for their dedication to students and their efforts to keep Frontier relevant locally and across the region.

"At the beginning of my first year, I intentionally conducted a "Listen and Learn Tour," meeting with employees across every area of the college to better understand their roles, responsibilities, and perspectives. Those conversations gave me a much deeper appreciation for the work that happens every day behind the scenes. Whether someone works in the classroom, student services, facilities maintenance, administration, or another area, one thing became very clear: every employee genuinely has our students' best interests at heart.

I have been incredibly fortunate to work alongside such a dedicated and talented team. Our faculty and staff care deeply about student success and consistently go above and beyond to help students reach their goals. They've embraced new ideas, supported one another, and worked collaboratively to move the college forward. Any success we've experienced during this first year has truly been a team effort, and I'm grateful for their commitment and passion for our mission."

After completing her first year at the helm, Kakac is looking ahead to another year filled with significant developments. These include the completion of the Jerry Cox Athletic Center, the launch of men's and women's basketball and continued planning for student housing.

Despite the excitement surrounding these additions, Kakac's primary goal remains helping students succeed academically and enjoy a fulfilling college experience.



Dr. Sharmila Kakac addresses graduates and guests during Frontier Community College's 2026 Commencement Ceremony, held in May at Fairfield Community High School.



Dr. Sharmila Kakac shares a smile while visiting with students at Geff Grade School during last year's High Five Friday event.

"Looking ahead, we'll continue working with our Academic Affairs team to expand academic and career and technical education programs that meet the evolving needs of our students and our region. We'll also work closely with our Institutional Outreach team to ensure our dual credit offerings provide meaningful opportunities for high school students and clear pathways to college and careers.

This will be an exciting year for campus life as we move into our new gymnasium, launch men's and women's basketball, and continue planning for student housing. These initiatives represent much more than new facilities or programs...they're investments in creating a vibrant campus experience that attracts students and enriches their college journey.

Above all, my goal is to ensure that students remain front and center as we make these changes and improvements. At the same time, we will continue to be a strong partner for our schools, employers, and communities, fulfilling our mission of providing educational opportunity and supporting the economic vitality of our region."

The fall semester begins Wednesday, August 19. With registration underway, Kakac encourages anyone considering furthering their education to take a closer look at the opportunities available at Frontier.

"I would encourage anyone considering college to take a closer look at Frontier. You'll receive a high-quality education in an environment where you're more than just a number. Our faculty and staff know our students personally and are genuinely invested in helping them succeed, both inside and outside the classroom.

Being part of a close-knit campus also provides opportunities to get involved through clubs, organizations, athletics, leadership opportunities, and campus events. Those experiences help students build confidence, develop leadership and communication skills, and create lasting connections that prepare them for success long after graduation.

Whether you're planning to transfer to a university, enter the workforce, or learn a new skill, Frontier offers an affordable pathway to achieving your goals. We believe every student has tremendous potential, and we're committed to helping each one discover it and achieve it."

 SENIOR CITIZENS DAY EVENT	 SEPTEMBER 25, 2026  8 AM - 12 PM  WEST HALL FRONTIER COMMUNITY COLLEGE 2 FRONTIER DRIVE, FAIRFIELD, IL 62837 	 CALL 618-842-3711 TO REGISTER 	
 REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST 8-8:30 AM	 FINANCIAL PLANNING 9-9:30 AM	 FMH RESOURCES, HEALTHY SNACKS/MEALS & MORE 9:45-11:15 AM	 TOUR & DOOR PRIZES 11:30 AM-12 PM



IECC BOARD OF TRUSTEES SELECTS DR. TIMOTHY L. TAYLOR AS NEXT CHANCELLOR

The Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Board of Trustees is expected to affirm the appointment of Dr. Timothy L. Taylor as the next Chancellor of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges at its June 16, 2026, meeting at Olney Central College. Dr. Taylor, who currently serves as President of Shawnee Community College, would assume the chancellorship on August 15, 2026, pending Board approval.

The selection follows several months of transition planning by the Board of Trustees to ensure a smooth leadership transition following Chancellor Ryan Gower's retirement on June 30.

Dr. Taylor brings more than two decades of community college leadership experience to the position, including service as President of Shawnee Community College and previous leadership roles within Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. Throughout his career, he has been recognized for his commitment to student success, workforce development, institutional effectiveness, strategic planning, and the mission of rural community colleges.

Board Chair Gary Carter said Dr. Taylor's experience, leadership style, and understanding of the region made him the clear choice to lead the institution into its next chapter.

"Tim understands our communities, our mission, and the important role community colleges play in creating opportunity," said Carter. "Over the past several years, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges has undertaken significant work to strengthen and position the institution for the future. The Board believes Tim has the experience, judgment, and leadership skills necessary to build upon that foundation and continue advancing IECC as one institution serving students and communities across all four campuses."

During his tenure at Shawnee Community College, Dr. Taylor led initiatives focused on strengthening institutional effectiveness, improving financial stability, enhancing strategic planning and accountability systems, expanding partnerships with schools and employers, securing investments in facilities and infrastructure, and increasing opportunities for students throughout the region.

Taylor said he is honored by the opportunity to serve Illinois Eastern Community Colleges and excited about the future of the institution.

"I am honored by the confidence the Board of Trustees has placed in me," said Taylor. "Illinois Eastern Community Colleges has a proud history of serving students and communities throughout southeastern Illinois. The institution is well-positioned for the future, and I look forward to working alongside the Board, employees, students, and community partners to build upon the strong foundation already in place. Together, we will continue expanding educational opportunities, strengthening our communities, and ensuring IECC remains responsive to the changing needs of the region we serve."

Board Chair Gary Carter also expressed appreciation for Dr. Gower's decade of leadership at IECC and more than thirty-one years of service to higher education.

"Ryan's tenure as Chancellor has transformed IECC," Carter said. "He led the institution through the COVID-19 pandemic, a successful accreditation reaffirmation, the implementation of Guided Pathways, the creation of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and the construction of seven new facilities across the district. He championed investment in our campuses, our employees, and our students. Most importantly, he led Illinois Eastern's transformation from a multi-college system into a single college operating across four campuses under a unified leadership structure and shared vision. His leadership has positioned IECC well for the future. The Board and I are grateful for Ryan's service and wish him and Tracey every happiness in retirement."

RAIN DOESN'T STOP FCC'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY GOLF SCRAMBLE

Frontier Community College 50th Anniversary Golf Scramble was held Friday, June 26, at the Fairfield Public Golf Course. Despite rain showers during the morning hours, 15 teams participated in the event. Golfers complimented the tournament and thanked Frontier Community College for hosting a well-run scramble. Eight teams teed off at 8 a.m., while seven teams participated in the 1 p.m. round.

The morning teams included Bevis Construction, Inc., Peoples National Bank, Carter Athletic Academy, CSI Insurance Brokers, Kevin Kakac, Gibbs, Fairfield National Bank, and Monge.



Henry Simmers, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at CSI Insurance Brokers, takes aim at the green across Mac Martin Lake during the golf scramble at Fairfield Public Golf Course.

Carter Athletic Academy, consisting of Craig Demerat, Dylan Best, Karson White, and Hagen Howard, finished first during the morning round with a score of 51. Kevin Kakac's team placed second with a 57, while CSI Insurance Brokers finished third with a score of 59.

The afternoon teams included Andrew Miller, Ethan Kakac, Danny Leidecker, Fairfield Memorial Hospital, Jacob Britt, Terry Weedman, and Wabash Communications. The afternoon results were close, with the top three teams finishing within one stroke of each other. Ethan Kakac's team, consisting of Ethan Kakac, Andrew Stewart, Eric Stewart, and Blake Bunting, finished first with a score of 49. Jacob Britt's team placed second with a score of 50, while Wabash Communications finished third with a score of 51.

Individual awards were also presented during the scramble:

Closest to the Pin – Andrew Miller

Longest Drive, Men – Josh Read

Longest Putt – Danny Leidecker

Longest Drive, Women – Mendie Johnson

Multiple area businesses sponsored the scramble. Bevis Construction, Inc. served as the event sponsor. Fairfield Memorial Hospital was the Breakfast Sponsor, Fairfield National Bank was the Golf Cart Sponsor, CSI Insurance Brokers was the \$15,000 Hole-in-One Sponsor, Peoples National Bank was the Lunch Sponsor, Conard Financial Group was the Prize Sponsor, and Pepsi Mid-America provided drinks.

Additional sponsors included Bobcat Crossing, Dean Kieffer, COUNTRY Financial – Alex Atwood, Iconik Studio, One Step Ahead, HME, Smith Electric Services, Vaughan's Tire, Wabash General Hospital, Blueprint Properties, Carter Athletic Academy, COUNTRY Financial – Christina Copeland, Fairfield Save-A-Lot, Lewis Scrap Metal, Kincaid's, Hefley & Associates, Carter Turf & Tractor, Erin Braddock Photography, WNOI, and CSI Insurance Brokers.

All golfing participants received treat bags and straw hats provided by WNOI Radio in Flora.

The scramble served as a fundraiser for the Frontier Community College Foundation. Frontier Community College and the FCC Foundation thank all the businesses that sponsored the event, the teams that participated, and Fairfield Public Golf Course for hosting the scramble.



FCC ALUMNA LEADS WITH CARE

There is a well-known slogan often heard at Frontier Community College: "Start here, go anywhere." For some students, that means taking general education classes before transferring to a four-year college or university. For others, it means focusing on a specific field of study and entering the workforce after graduation. No matter the path, the message applies to students locally and beyond.

For Morgan Bowers, a lifelong Fairfield resident, that path began close to home as she chose to start her nursing journey and career at Frontier Community College.

"I have lived in Fairfield my whole life and attended elementary, junior high, and high school here in Fairfield. I felt the need to represent my hometown and attend FCC."

After graduating from Fairfield Community High School, Bowers enrolled at Frontier Community College, where she earned her Associate in Science and Arts degree, as well as her Licensed Practical Nursing certificate in 2019. She then earned her Associate Degree in Nursing and became a Registered Nurse in 2020.

As she reflects on her time as a student at Frontier, Bowers remembers the support she received from FCC staff and how the college helped her grow personally and professionally.

"There were many staff members at FCC that were so helpful and kind during my time at FCC. I worked at the coffee shop at the Bobcat Den. My supervisor was Andy Hill. He was a pleasure to work for and I had the best experience working there."

AUGUST 2026

3-4	Final Exams - Summer Classes	
12	IECC Faculty & Staff Workshop - Campus Closed	
13	Faculty Workshop & Luncheon	
15	3 VS 3 50th Anniversary Basketball Tourney	
17	New Student Orientation*	8 AM
18	Athlete Orientation*	9 AM
17-18	Fall Registration, Testing	
18	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ OCC	6:15 PM
19	First Day of Fall Classes	
19	First Day Cookout @ Dreith Pavilion*	11 AM
20	Pizza & Prep with Jordie @ BBH*	12 PM
20	PTK Photo Scavenger Hunt*	5:30 PM
21	Art Experience with TRIO*	10 AM & 2 PM
22	Volleyball @ Vincennes	
24	Nacho Bar with One Love @ BBH*	11 AM
24	Pickleball in the Park @ Lakeside Park*	4 PM
24	Volleyball @ John A. Logan College*	
26	B-I-N-G-O @ Pavilion*	12 PM
26	Volleyball @ St. Louis Community College*	
27	Duck Drop, Games, & Popsicles @ Pavilion*	12 PM
28	Art Experience with TRIO*	10 AM & 2 PM
28-29	Volleyball @ Jimmy John's Tournament	
31	Doughnuts with Active Minds*	8 AM
31	Volleyball @ Kaskaskia	

SEPTEMBER 2026

2	Volleyball vs Wabash Valley	
4	Volleyball vs Vincennes	
7	Labor Day - Campuses Closed	
8	Volleyball @ Rend Lake	
10	Volleyball vs Lincoln Trail	
11-12	Volleyball @ Vincennes Blazer Classic	
15	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ LTC	6:15 PM
16	Volleyball vs Shawnee	
17	Constitution Observance Day - Classes in Session	
18	Volleyball @ Lake Land	
21	Volleyball vs Southwestern Illinois	
23	Volleyball vs Southeastern Illinois	
24	Volleyball @ Mineral Area	
25	Senior Citizens Day Event	8:00 AM
28	Volleyball vs John A. Logan	

Volleyball match times will be updated on fccbobsports.com. The schedule has not been finalized as of Tuesday, July 14, 2026.

* - Indicates a Weeks of Welcome event for FCC students, faculty, and staff only.

FCC helped me grow as an individual with real-world experience and a commitment to lifelong learning. They gave me the tools to build a strong foundation in both classroom learning and hands-on clinical experience."

Bowers said her nursing career has included both challenges and rewarding moments.

"The most challenging part of my nursing career was working during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most rewarding aspect is seeing my residents every day and knowing I'm making a difference in their lives."

Since graduating from Frontier Community College, Bowers has continued to grow in her nursing career. On Monday, June 8, Wabash Senior Living & Rehabilitation announced through its Facebook page that Bowers had started her new role as Director of Nursing.

Bowers said she is excited about the opportunity and the impact she can make in her new leadership role.

"Taking the DON position is exciting and rewarding. It comes with responsibility, but it also provides an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on resident care, staff development, and the overall success of our facility. This job is fulfilling to know that my leadership helps support both residents and staff every day."

As Director of Nursing, Bowers oversees several important areas of resident care and staff leadership.

"My main responsibilities as the DON include overseeing the delivery of quality resident care, ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations, and providing leadership and support to the nursing team. I am responsible for staffing, scheduling, staff education, and performance management to ensure residents receive safe and effective care. My leadership style is collaborative and servant based. I believe leading by example, supporting staff, and fostering an environment where everyone is comfortable."

The role of Director of Nursing can be both rewarding and challenging. It requires strong leadership, compassion, and the ability to guide staff while

ensuring residents receive quality care. As Bowers begins this new chapter, she has clear goals in mind for both her nursing team and the residents they serve.

Bowers encourages students interested in nursing or healthcare to stay committed, remain engaged, and take advantage of the strong foundation Frontier Community College can provide.

“My advice to students interested in nursing is to stay committed, work hard, and never stop learning. FCC is a great place to get your foundation for your career started. Being a nurse is the most rewarding job, besides being a mother, in the world.”



CLEVENGER'S PATH TO PURPOSE

On Friday, May 15, Walker Clevenger stood before classmates, instructors, family members, and friends during Frontier Community College's Medical Laboratory Technician Pinning Ceremony at Bob Boyles Hall.

As the recipient of the MLT Student Award, Clevenger reflected on a journey shaped by personal challenges, perseverance, and growth. Like the laboratory work performed behind the scenes in hospitals and clinics, his story began with blood tests and results that changed the course of his life.

At 17, while working at the Fairfield Walmart Supercenter, Clevenger was re-diagnosed with immune thrombocytopenia, also known as ITP. The disorder causes the immune system to destroy platelets, which help the blood clot.

“Your white cells attack them like they are a virus, and that depletes them,” Clevenger said. “When you don't have those, you can have spontaneous bleeding. You can have internal

bleeding. If it is bad, or if you have an injury, something as simple as bumping your head, you can have a brain bleed.”

A normal platelet count is generally between 150,000 and 400,000 platelets per microliter of blood. When Clevenger was re-diagnosed, his count was approximately 5,000 before falling to 2,000.

“Right now, I am around 30,000,” he said. “Once that happened, I had to quit my job because I couldn’t work any sort of physical job. Lifting anything slightly heavy would cause pain down my arm and burst the capillaries in my arm.”

Clevenger missed nearly two months of his senior year of high school in 2022 and traveled to St. Louis weekly or every other week for treatment and monitoring. He even missed the final day of his senior year because he was receiving treatment.

“Once I finished high school, I had plans to go to a university, but I couldn’t travel, I couldn’t work, and I couldn’t sustain a life for myself without my parents,” Clevenger said.

His father encouraged him to explore a career connected to what he had learned through his condition. Clevenger later spoke with Steve Balding, then a microbiologist at Fairfield Memorial Hospital, who encouraged him to consider Frontier Community College’s two-year Medical Laboratory Technician program.

“He said he could help me get hired on,” Clevenger said. “He also said I should enroll in the Medical Laboratory Technician program at Frontier Community College, which is a short two-year program right in town. It was easy for me to get there.”

While attending Frontier, Clevenger balanced classes, clinical experiences, and work at Fairfield Memorial Hospital. Chronic fatigue, one of the primary symptoms of ITP, made that schedule especially difficult.

“I was sleeping for three to four hours a night and coming to clinicals, work, and school,” he said. “The main symptom of ITP is chronic fatigue, so I was super tired.”

Through clinical experiences at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital, Fairfield Memorial Hospital, and Carle Richland Memorial Hospital, Clevenger discovered how his experience as a patient could help him better serve others.

One especially meaningful experience involved an 8-year-old boy with Von Willebrand disease, a bleeding disorder that prevents blood from clotting properly. Because a tourniquet could cause bruising, drawing the child’s blood required additional care.

“Other people didn’t know how to draw his blood because he couldn’t have a tourniquet,” Clevenger said. “So I came in and helped him. Kids can be hard to draw blood from, but we did very well together. That solidified my place in this field, helping other people who are just like me.”

Although medical laboratory professionals often work behind the scenes, their tests provide information that can guide diagnoses, treatments, and life-saving decisions. For Clevenger, the MLT program provided more than a career path. It gave him an opportunity to transform his own health challenges into a way to help others.

FCC IN PICTURES



1 An aerial view shows construction progressing on the Jerry Cox Athletic Center on Wednesday, July 8.

3 Cheryl Harl assists a student during the Whispering Colors Kids Camp on Monday, June 15.

5 Fairfield Memorial Hospital CEO Andy Flemer putts on the green during the golf scramble on Friday, June 26.

2 FCC student ambassador Peyton Owen shows off the new Bobcat mascot on National Mascot Day on Tuesday, June 16.

4 Jacob Maguire assists a student during the LEGO Battlebots Kids Camp on Tuesday, June 16.

6 IECC Board Chairman Gary Carter smiles despite the rainy morning during the golf scramble.