

VOYAGER

The



JUNE 2026



CAPS, GOWNS, FUTURES

Honoring the journey, celebrating the future.



HONORING FUTURE NURSES

FCC nursing students honored at annual pinning ceremony.



MLT CLASS HONORED

Pinning ceremony celebrates FCC's future lab professionals.



FCC CELEBRATES CLASS OF 2026 AT 48TH COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

In the National Football League, the season ends with the Super Bowl. In education, graduation serves as the Super Bowl of the school year. It is the culminating celebration, the final milestone before one chapter closes and another begins.

Frontier Community College held its 48th Annual Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 15, at Fairfield Community High School's east gymnasium. More than 500 people attended the ceremony, where 126 graduates were recognized.

The ceremony began promptly at 7 p.m. with the processional performed by the Fairfield Community High School Ensemble under the direction of Mr. Joshua Livesay. Frontier Community College President Dr. Sharmila Kakac welcomed graduates, families, friends, faculty, and staff to the evening's celebration.

"It's always the most exciting day of the entire year," Dr. Kakac said. "As I said in my address, that's the day when everything we meant to do as a college comes together. Watching those



Jeff Vaughan (left), David Savage (center), and Peyton Owen (right), hand out programs in the east gym lobby. Vaughan and Savage are members of the Frontier Community College Foundation, while Owen is a student at FCC.

students walk across the stage and receive their diploma or certificate, whether they are moving on or joining the workforce, is a culmination of so many things for them. Likewise, we've guided these students through that journey. It's a full-circle moment for us on graduation, so it's absolutely the most exciting day."

The Class of 2026 represented a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and academic pathways. According to data collected, the youngest graduate was 17, while the oldest was 60. The average age of graduates was 22.7. Nearly 30% of the graduating class, 29.4%, were first-generation students. The most popular degree type among graduates was the Associate in Science and Arts, while the top departments represented were

nursing, business management, and skilled trades.

During the ceremony, Dr. Kakac presented the 2026 President's Award to Emmalynn Vinson of Vienna, Illinois. Jonathan Paul of Fairfield and Aubrey Churchill of Cisne were recognized as runners-up for the honor.

Presented annually to a member of the graduating class, the President's Award honors a student who exemplifies outstanding campus and community involvement, academic excellence, strong character, and a dedication to service.

Vinson was recognized for her leadership, academic success, campus involvement, and service to others. She served as president of Phi Theta Kappa, was active in several student organizations, and was a team captain for the Bobcats softball team. She also gave back to her community through youth softball lessons and volunteer coaching, helping lead New Simpson Hill Junior High girls basketball to a third-place state finish in 2025 and coaching a Johnson County Softball League team to a division title in 2025.

In her speech, Vinson reflected on graduation as both a milestone and proof of hard work, sacrifice, dedication, and perseverance. She thanked her family members, coaches, roommates, friends, faculty, classmates, and Frontier Community College for their support throughout her journey. She also emphasized that no one graduates alone and that every graduate has a support system behind them.

Vinson closed her speech by encouraging graduates to keep moving forward, lead with kindness, serve others, continue learning, and remember they are capable of more than they can imagine.

Vinson plans to attend Greenville University in Greenville, Illinois, where she will continue her academic and athletic career. Her goal is to become a teacher.

Dr. Kakac also recognized students who received program and club awards during the academic year. Miller Simpson was also recognized during the ceremony as he prepares to attend the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Dr. Alani Frederick, Dean of Health Professions, presented the candidates for degrees and certificates, and IECC Board Chairman Gary Carter conferred the degrees and certificates.

Following the conferring of degrees, Dr. Kakac delivered the charge to the class, encouraging graduates as they begin the next chapter of their lives. The ceremony concluded with the recessional performed by Mr. Livesay and the FCHS Ensemble.



Emmalynn Vinson delivers her speech during Frontier Community College's commencement ceremony. An active and involved student both on and off campus, Vinson was named this year's President's Award recipient.

For Dr. Kakac, the ceremony marked her first commencement as President of Frontier Community College. She assumed the role on July 1, 2025, following the retirement of former President Dr. Jay Edgren. At FCC's 2025 commencement ceremony, Dr. Kakac served as a dean. While her role was different this year, she said the excitement of the evening made it memorable.

"Anytime you're doing something for the first time, you feel a little stressed," Dr. Kakac said. "But it's good stress because you want to make sure everything goes off without a hitch and that everything goes as planned. It was really fun. I think I've started a new tradition of taking a selfie from the stage with the students in the background. That was fun to do."

She said the highlight of the evening was watching students cross the stage and celebrate their accomplishments.

"Once we got through everybody talking, conferring the degrees, students walking across the stage, handing out the diplomas, shaking their hands, and seeing the smiles on their faces, it was a great experience," Dr. Kakac said. "We have a great team here who pulls it all together, and none of this would have happened if we didn't have everybody pulling their weight."

Blessed Blooms was also on hand selling flower bouquets for graduates and families, with all bouquets selling out. Golf cart rides were provided for those needing transportation to the high school, and members of the FCC Foundation assisted with handing out programs before the ceremony in the east gym lobby.

Dr. Kakac said she was pleased with the work of the graduation committee and everyone who helped make the evening successful, from major preparations to the smallest details.

"It takes everybody," Dr. Kakac said. "We had people who were not only thinking of the big-picture items, but also the small details. It all comes together because you have to think about getting the diplomas, printing the programs, making sure the stage is set up correctly, where



Olivia Smith hugs Illinois Eastern Community College Board Chairman Gary Carter after receiving her diploma on stage.

the students are going to gather to get lined up, and who is going to hand out the cards. It's such a team effort. We have a fantastic team."

She also noted the additions made to this year's ceremony.

"We had additional things that we did this year, such as Blessed Blooms selling flower bouquets," Dr. Kakac said. "We also recognized award winners because these students have worked hard to get there, and to recognize them in front of their peers and parents was a great touch."

Frontier Community College congratulates the Class of 2026 on this important milestone and celebrates their hard work, dedication, and accomplishments. Next year's 49th

Annual Commencement Ceremony is set for Friday, May 14, 2027.



From left, Zoe Murbarger, Kaitlyn Howe, Jonathan Paul, Taylor Postin, Brittney Wiggins, and Casey Atteberry listen as nursing faculty speak during the Pinning Ceremony.

FCC CELEBRATES FUTURE NURSES AT PINNING CEREMONY



Jacquelyn Flechs is pinned in front of attendees during the Nursing Pinning Ceremony.

Frontier Community College's Nursing Program held its annual Nursing Pinning Ceremony on Friday, May 15, at 4 p.m. at the Cider Barn Tree & Ice Skating Venue south of Fairfield.

Family, friends, faculty, staff, and community members gathered for the outdoor ceremony to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduating nursing class. Special guests in attendance included longtime FCC supporter Jerry Cox and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Board Chairman Gary Carter.

FCC nursing faculty and staff in attendance included Dean of Health Professions Dr. Alani Frederick, DNP, RN; Department Head of Nursing and Instructor Dr. Tracy Hicks, DNP, RN; Nursing Instructors Brittany Rose, MSN, RN, and Brianna Trowbridge, MSN, RN; Nursing Program Advisor Julie Bullard, B.B.A.; and College and Career Center Specialist Jordie Higgason, M.Ed.

Dr. Hicks opened the ceremony with welcoming remarks. Trowbridge, who serves as the Student Nurse Association advisor, introduced the Student Nurse Association. SNA President Taylor Postin then addressed the audience and reflected on the organization's activities and accomplishments throughout the academic year.

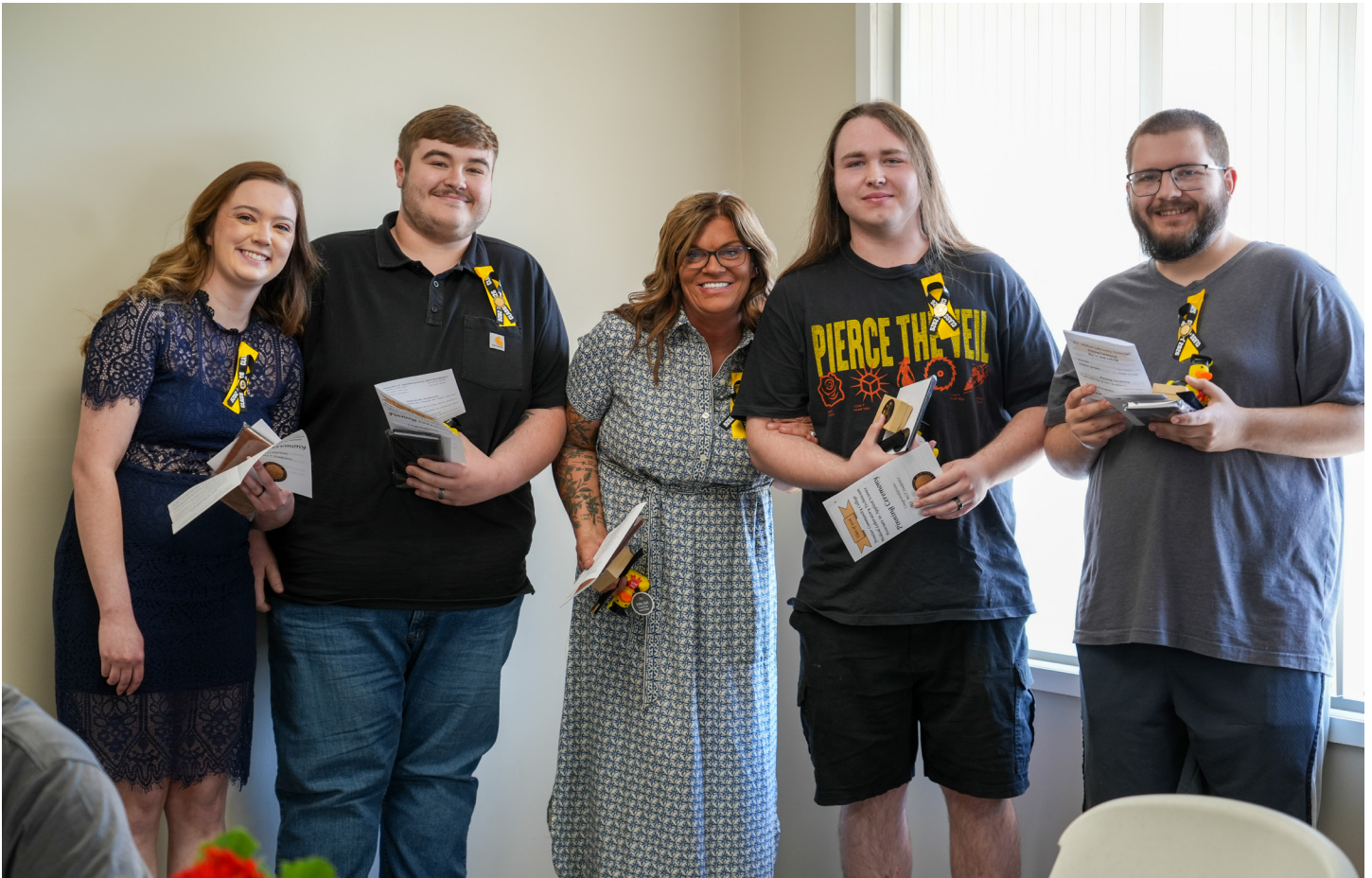
The keynote address was delivered by nursing instructor Brittany Rose. During the ceremony, Rose also introduced Alpha Delta Nu, the national honor society for associate degree nursing students sponsored by the Organization for Associate Degree Nursing. The honor society recognizes academic excellence while promoting leadership, community outreach, and the pursuit of advanced nursing education.

Graduates recognized during the ceremony included Casey Atteberry, Curtlyn Coale, Jacquelyn Flechs, Kaitlyn Howe, Brittany Johnson, Zoe Murbarger, Jonathan Paul, Taylor Postin, and Brittany Wiggins.

One of the ceremony's most meaningful traditions was the Passing of the Lamp Ceremony. Trowbridge explained the significance of the lamp, which symbolizes the transition from student nurse to professional nurse. The tradition also represents the passing of knowledge, compassion, and dedication to selfless patient care from one generation of nurses to the next.

Casey Atteberry, LPN, led the Florence Nightingale Pledge, a recitation traditionally shared by graduating nursing students to symbolize their commitment to ethical practice, compassionate care, and the nursing profession.

Jonathan Paul, LPN, concluded the ceremony with the benediction.



FCC MLT PINNING CEREMONY CELEBRATES FIVE GRADUATES

From left to right: Kristen Wall, Spencer Headlee, Jennifer Harvey, Walker Clevenger, and Trenton Michl gather for a group photo before reciting the Oath of the Profession during the MLT Pinning Ceremony.

Frontier Community College's Medical Laboratory Technician Program held its pinning ceremony on Friday, May 15, at 3 p.m. in Bob Boyles Hall. Family, friends, faculty, and community members gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the program's graduates.

Medical Laboratory Technician Technical Instructor Julie Dehart welcomed guests and opened the ceremony. Walker Clevenger served as the student speaker, sharing how he discovered the MLT program and reflecting on the knowledge, skills, and experiences he gained during his two years in the program.

MLT Program Director Cherish Cirunay introduced the 2026 MLT graduates: Walker Clevenger, Jennifer Harvey, Spencer Headlee, Trenton Michl, and Kristen Wall.

Health Sciences Adjunct Instructor Cindy Green led the pinning portion of the ceremony, during which family members had the opportunity to pin their graduates.

Following the pinning, all five graduates recited the Oath of the Profession in unison. The oath serves as a solemn professional pledge, reflecting each practitioner's commitment to patient welfare, accuracy, and absolute confidentiality.

Cirunay provided closing remarks before a slideshow was shown in honor of the graduates. The ceremony concluded with a reception for graduates and guests.



Bria Beals works on a group assignment during an Intro to Education class last fall. Beals was one of 57 students named to the Chancellor's Academic Honors List for the spring semester.

FRONTIER COMMUNITY COLLEGE ANNOUNCES 2026 SPRING ACADEMIC HONORS

Frontier Community College has announced its academic honor lists for the Spring 2026 Semester, recognizing 97 students for their academic excellence.

JULY 2026

4	Independence Day - Campus Closed	
6	Summer Midterm	
8	Walk-In Wednesday @ Student Services	9-3
15	Walk-In Wednesday @ Student Services	9-3
21	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ WVC	6:15
22	Walk-In Wednesday @ Student Services	9-3
24	Last Day to Withdraw From Summer Courses	
29	Walk-In Wednesday @ Student Services	9-3

AUGUST 2026

3-4	Final Exams for Summer Classes	
12	IECC Faculty & Staff Workshop - Campuses Closed	
13	Faculty Workshop	
17	New Student Orientation	
17	Fall Registration, Testing	
18	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ FCC	6:15
19	First Day of Fall Classes	

SEPTEMBER 2026

7	Labor Day - Campuses Closed	
15	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ LTC	6:15
17	Constitution Observance Day - Classes in Session	

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges recognizes students through three honor lists: the Chancellor's Academic Honors List, the President's Academic Honors List, and the Dean's Academic Honors List.

To qualify for any of the honor lists, students must be enrolled full time, which is defined as 12 credit hours or more, and must be taking college-level courses.

Students named to the Chancellor's Academic Honors List earned a grade point average of 3.90 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Students named to the President's Academic Honors List earned a GPA between 3.75 and 3.89, while students named to the Dean's Academic Honors List earned a GPA between 3.50 and 3.74.

For the Spring 2026 Semester, 57 students were named to the Chancellor's Academic Honors List, 17 students were named to the President's Academic Honors List, and 23 students were named to the Dean's Academic Honors List.

The following students earned Spring 2026 academic honors:

Chancellor's Academic Honors List

Elliana Ames, Bria Beals, Weston Bierman, Amanda Burkett, Lauren Burzynski, Aubrey Churchill, Walker Clevenger, Heather Court-Dearden, Landon Davis, Cameron Dawes, Jackson Ethridge, Kaelin Farr, Josh French, Alaira Friese, Mayes Gosser, Gavyn Harrell, Jennifer Harvey, Spencer Headlee, Jenna Hinkle, Harper Holeman, Colin Jones, Shannon Julian, Tanner Keith, Grace Knuckles, Ava Kreiter, Ella Krupp, Braden Landis, Kasey Lowe, Evan Martinez, Sean McConachie, Sarah McCorkle, Trenton Michl, Cale Milner, Max Moore, Rayden Moore, Mason Newland, Jason Nguyen, Isaac Nietzsche, Peyton Owen, Ryan Perry, Garrett Ray, Rayonna Ridley, Riley Roark, Cooper Robertson, David Schrum, Arlissa Sharber, Miller Simpson, Olivia Smith, Peyton Smith, Camdyn Tappendorf, Annika Van Heemst, Landon Vest, Kristen Wall, Carson White, Dillon White, Hannah Wilke, and Blayne Windland.

President's Academic Honors List

Caleb Boff, Olivia Brummer, Nolan Causey, Faith Collier, John Condon, Giuseppe DiMaggio, Wyatt Halter, Seth Harris, Kylee Hughes, Garin Lee, Braxton Mathews, Alexis Miller, Joseph Nevitt, Shalom Okoroafor, Ethan Robbins, Emmalynn Vinson, and Kyndall Webb.

Dean's Academic Honors List

Rylyn Anderson, Lily Barbre, Tessa Brennan, Dax Bridwell, Aaron Buffington, Roan Durmus, Jaxon Funneman, Quenten Hallam, Rylee Hendricks, Dillon James, Hessi Johnson, Chase Loesch, Trent Lowery, Troy Mann, Aaron Meade, Mason Morehead, Cameron Napier, Kelsea Newman, Sawyer Patterson, Garrett Schmidt, Audrey Serles, Jackson Warner, and Addison Winter.



BOBCATS SOFTBALL, BASEBALL PLAYERS EARN POSTSEASON HONORS

Frontier Community College Athletics has announced postseason honors for members of the Bobcats softball and baseball teams, with several student-athletes earning recognition from NJCAA Region 24 and the Great Rivers Athletic Conference.

FCC Athletic Director and Head Softball Coach, Jeremy Ellis, announced that three members of the Bobcats Softball team earned postseason honors. Lexi Miller was named Second Team All-Region 24 as a pitcher, while Peyton Smith was named Second Team All-Region 24 as an outfielder. In the Great Rivers Athletic Conference, Smith and Harper Holeman earned First Team



Lexi Miller delivers a pitch from the circle against St. Charles Community College on Feb. 25, 2026. Miller was named Second Team All-Region 24 as a pitcher and earned Second Team All-GRAC honors.

honors, while Miller was named Second Team.

Miller, a left-handed pitcher from Lafayette, Indiana, recently completed her sophomore season for the Bobcats. In the circle, she finished 12-13 overall with 29 appearances, including 25 starts and 14 complete games. She pitched 140.1 innings, allowing 165 hits, 121 runs, 73 earned runs and just three home runs while recording 132 strikeouts.

Miller will continue her academic and athletic career at Kentucky Wesleyan College in Owensboro, Kentucky. Former FCC Bobcats Softball players Abby and Riley Cunningham also recently completed their junior seasons with the KWC Panthers.

Smith, a freshman outfielder from Johnston City, Illinois, led the Bobcats with a .341 batting average and started all 55 games she played. She finished the season with 182 at-bats, 42 runs, 62 hits, four doubles, two triples, one home run, 16 RBIs and 73 total bases. Smith posted a .401 slugging percentage and led the team with a .378 on-base percentage. She also showcased her speed by leading the Bobcats with 37 stolen bases. Defensively, Smith finished with a .961 fielding percentage.

Holeman, a freshman infielder from Princeton, Kentucky, also had a strong season for the Bobcats. She played in and started 56 games, finishing with a .276 batting average in 174 at-bats. Holeman recorded 38 runs, 48 hits, 17 doubles, 14 home runs, 39 RBIs and a team-leading 107 total bases. Her 14 home runs and .615 slugging percentage also led the team. She added a .344 on-base percentage, 14 stolen bases and an .894 fielding percentage.

Holeman was also named NJCAA Region 24 Player of the Week following an outstanding performance at the plate during the week of March 16-22. During that stretch, she led the Bobcats' offense with a .360 batting average while adding two doubles, six home runs, 14 RBIs, eight runs scored and one stolen base. Holeman became just the second player in Bobcats Softball history to earn NJCAA Region 24 Player of the Week honors, joining Samantha Finn, who received the recognition in 2017.

Frontier Community College Head Baseball Coach Matt McCue also announced postseason accolades for members of the Bobcats Baseball team.

Jonny Lee and Gael Salinas were named to the All-Great Rivers Athletic Conference team, while Salinas also earned All-Region 24 honors. Justin Early received the All-Region Gold Glove Award at first base.

Lee, a freshman pitcher from Romeoville, Illinois, finished the season with a 3.47 ERA and a 5-0 record. He made 14 appearances, including three starts, and recorded one save. In 49.1 innings



Jonny Lee

Gael Salinas

Justin Early

pitched, Lee allowed 34 hits, 22 runs and 19 earned runs while walking 27 batters and striking out 60.

Salinas, a redshirt sophomore from Rogers, Arkansas, had a stellar campaign for the Bobcats. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley commit led the team with a .388 batting average. He played in 53 games and started 11, totaling 187 at-bats, 64 runs, 71 hits, 18 doubles, one triple, nine home runs and 65 RBIs.

Salinas led the team in doubles, RBIs and total bases with 118. He also finished with a .631 slugging percentage and a .506 on-base percentage. He drew 35 walks, was hit by a pitch 19 times and struck out only 14 times.

Early, a sophomore from Floyds Knobs, Indiana, earned recognition for his strong defensive season at first base. He played in 36 games and finished with 225 total chances, 202 putouts, 18 assists and five errors for a .978 fielding percentage. He also helped turn 18 double plays.

Offensively, Early finished the season with a .321 batting average. In 36 games, including eight starts, he recorded 131 at-bats, 24 runs, 42 hits, seven doubles, two home runs, 31 RBIs and 55 total bases. He also posted a .420 slugging percentage and a .352 on-base percentage.



Gael Salinas avoids an inside pitch during a game against McKendree University on February 25, 2026.

FCC IN PICTURES



1 Emmalynn Vinson receives the prestigious President's Award from Frontier Community College President Dr. Sharmila Kakac.

2 Zoe Murbarger and Jonathan Paul smile before being pinned during the Nursing Pinning Ceremony.

3 MLT Program Director Cherish Cirunay speaks to attendees during the MLT Pinning Ceremony in Bob Boyles Hall.

4 A bird's-eye view shows the newly installed roof on the Jerry Cox Athletic Center.

5 Lori Noe helps a child during Origami I as part of Frontier Community College's Ignite Curiosity Summer Camps.

6 Spring blooms add color and charm to campus as the season continues.