

NOVEMBER 2025



DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

Frontier, IECC, recognized among nation's best.



STYLE. SPIRIT. SUPPORT.

Community unites through fashion to support FCC student-athlete scholarships



MLT REPRESENTS FCC

Strong national showing for Frontier's MLT program.



FRONTIER NAMED AMONG TOP 200 IN NATION BY ASPEN INSTITUTE

Frontier Community College, along with Wabash Valley College, Olney Central College, and Lincoln Trail College of the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC) District, has been recognized among the Top 200 U.S. Community Colleges by the prestigious Aspen Institute College Excellence Program.

This distinction places IECC in the top 20% of nearly 1,000 community colleges nationwide eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence—the nation's premier award for two-year institutions. The Aspen Prize honors colleges that demonstrate exceptional achievement in student retention, completion, transfer success, workforce outcomes, equity, and continuous improvement.

"Being recognized by the Aspen Institute is an affirmation of what we already know to be true about Illinois Eastern Community Colleges—that our students receive one of the best community college educations in the nation," said Chancellor Dr. Ryan Gower.

Across the country, community colleges face challenges such as declining enrollment, fluctuating state funding, and growing skepticism about the value of higher education. Nationally, enrollment in two-year institutions has dropped nearly 40% since 2010, and persistence rates remain below 60%, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. Despite these challenges, IECC's inclusion in the Aspen Top 200 underscores its continued leadership in innovation, student success, and workforce development.

"This recognition reflects the outstanding efforts of our faculty and staff who put students first," said Dr. Cathy Robb, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. "Our success is not just about what we've achieved—it's about our willingness to evolve. We continue to embrace new technologies, flexible learning strategies, and experiences that meet the needs of today's students."

Dr. Sharmila Kakac, President of Frontier Community College and Vice Chancellor of Business and Industry, said the recognition validates the district's mission and daily efforts to serve students and the community.

"It's a huge honor and something we're really proud of. It's a meaningful affirmation of the work being done here every day. We've always believed in our mission and in the people who make it happen. This recognition confirms that our focus on students and community is making an impact in the right ways."



Linda Monge engages her students in a math lesson inside Mason Hall.



Chemistry Instructor Steve Hnetkovsky teaches his students inside Mason Hall.

Kakac emphasized that Frontier's greatest strength lies in its people—the faculty and staff whose dedication drives student success and community growth.

"It really shines a light on what makes Frontier special—our people. Everything we do is focused on helping students succeed and keeping our community strong. Whether it's helping someone start college for the first time, retrain for a new job, or transfer to a university, our goal is always the same: to give students the tools and confidence to build better lives right here at home."

She added that the recognition reflects Frontier's ongoing commitment to improvement and innovation.

"It fits perfectly. We've never been about standing still—we're always asking how we can

do better for our students and our community. This recognition tells us we're on the right track. It's motivation to keep improving, keep innovating, and make sure every student who walks through our doors leaves with a clear path forward."

Kakac also credited the dedication of Frontier's faculty and staff as the driving force behind the college's success.

"It says everything about them. Our faculty and staff are the heart of Frontier. They care deeply about students, they work incredibly hard, and they never settle for 'good enough.' This recognition is a reflection of their passion and dedication—and proof that what they do every day matters."

She noted that the acknowledgment also reinforces the college's supportive, student-centered environment.

"It's a reminder that our students are part of something special. Frontier has always been a place where students can dream big and feel supported every step of the way. We hope this recognition gives them even more pride in being Bobcats and inspires them to aim high, knowing their education is in capable hands. It should also give them confidence that Frontier is on the right path and fully committed to helping every student reach their goals."

Enrollment for the Spring 2026 term is now open. Students interested in attending one of the four IECC campuses can apply online at www.iecc.edu/apply.

The 200 eligible colleges will now advance through a rigorous review process, with the Aspen Prize winner to be announced in spring 2027.

"This recognition belongs to our people," said Gary Carter, chair of the IECC Board of Trustees. "Our faculty, staff, and administrators are united by one mission—to ensure every student in southeastern Illinois has access to an exceptional education that changes lives and strengthens communities."

For more information, visit www.iecc.edu.



Electrical Distribution Systems Instructor Dustin Wiggins and his students set a southern yellow pine pole using the program's utility truck.

Make this spring your best decision ever!
Spring registration is open at FCC!

Frontier Community College | iecc.edu/fcc | 618-842-3711



Members of Frontier Community College's Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) team who competed in the 2025 Cell Bowl. Front row (left to right): Instructor Julie Dehart, Kristen Wall, Jennifer Harvey, and Instructor Cindy Green; Back row (left to right): Trenton Michl, Spencer Headlee, and Walker Clevenger.

FCC'S MLT TEAM FINISHES 10TH NATIONALLY IN CELL BOWL

The Frontier Community College Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) Program once again made its mark in the annual Cell Bowl competition. After placing sixth nationally last year, Frontier returned this fall to compete among 59 colleges and universities from across the country.

In week one, the Bobcats got off to a strong start, ranking ninth in the West Division out of 23 teams. Walker Clevenger led the way for FCC with a perfect score and an impressive time of 59 seconds. Wichita State University took

the early lead in the West region with a top time of 42 seconds.

By week two, Frontier climbed the leaderboard, moving into a three-way tie for fourth place in the West alongside Northern Illinois University and the Houston Methodist Hospital MLS Program with a score of 48. Nationally, FCC ranked just outside the top 10 at 11th place. Clevenger once again led the charge, identifying 30 cells in only 48 seconds—an eight-second improvement from the previous week. Wichita State continued to lead the division

with a time of 34, followed by Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City at 36, and South Dakota State University in third with a time of 45.

Week three proved pivotal as the top three regional teams with the best average perfect-score times advanced to the playoffs. Clevenger once again delivered a strong performance with a score of 41, helping Frontier finish fifth in the West Division. However, it wasn't quite enough to move

on, as Wichita State (31), Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City (34), and Northern Illinois University (35) secured the top three spots.

Despite falling short of playoff contention, Frontier's score of 41 earned the program an impressive 10th-place national finish in this year's Cell Bowl competition.



Olivia Brummer (center) and Emmy Vinson (right) strike a pose on stage as Kristi Hornung (left) describes their outfits. Brummer plays as an outside hitter for the Bobcats Volleyball team, while Vinson is a pitcher for the Bobcats Softball team.

STRIKING A POSE FOR A PURPOSE

The stage sparkled with color, style, and community pride as Fairfield First Christian Church hosted the 8th Annual Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship Carnaby Square Fashion Show on Sunday, November 2. The beloved event once again blended fashion, philanthropy, and fellowship—bringing the community together to support scholarships for Frontier Community College student-athletes while showcasing the latest fall and winter trends from Carnaby Square.

Guests enjoyed an afternoon of style featuring a wide array of clothing and accessories, all available at Carnaby Square in downtown Fairfield. Attendees also took part in a 50/50 raffle, purchasing tickets and placing them into boxes for a chance to win prizes generously donated by local and area businesses. In addition, FCC's One Love Christian Club collected canned goods for its annual food drive, which officially began November 1. Catherine Singleton, advisor for One Love Christian Club, reported that 263 items were collected during the event.

Kristi Hornung, owner and operator of Carnaby Square, said she feels grateful to continue leading such a meaningful project—acknowledging that while it's a major undertaking, it's also deeply rewarding.

Top – Frontier Community College Foundation President Luke Harl welcomes the crowd to the Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship Carnaby Square Fashion Show.

Middle – Emmy Vinson walks center stage modeling a vibrant red sweatshirt.

Bottom – Olivia Brummer shows off her Bobcat pride with a big smile and school spirit.

"I feel so blessed to be able to continue with this worthy project," Hornung shared. "It's a big undertaking, but the lasting friendships I've made sponsoring the show are priceless. The Bobcat student-athletes and scholarship winners are so great to work with. The show is a wonderful experience and something different for many of them. It gives the public a chance to hear their stories and understand how important the scholarship is to them. They are always so thankful to the Carter family."

I also rely on my models who continue to step up and help make the show a success. But honestly, without the generous support of our business sponsors, table sponsors, and raffle donors, this event wouldn't be possible. We're also incredibly grateful to Fairfield First Christian Church for allowing us to use their beautiful facility."

This year's Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship recipients are Olivia Brummer, Bailey Collins, and Emmy Vinson. Representing FCC as models during the fashion show were Gael Salinas, Emmy Vinson, Olivia Brummer, KaRissa Miller, Troy Mann, Seth Harris, and Bailey Collins.

Before her passing in November 2020, Fran Carter played an active role in managing the family businesses, Carter Trucking and Carter Farms. She was a devoted member of Fairfield First Christian Church and a dedicated community servant, contributing her time and leadership to the Frontier Community College Foundation Board, the Mill Shoals



DECEMBER 2025 EVENTS

9 IECC Board Meeting at Wabash Valley College 6:15
12 Last Day of Classes
15-18 Final Exams
19 Last Day of Semester
FCC Closed December 22, 2025 - January 2, 2026 due to Winter Break.

JANUARY 2026 EVENTS

5 FCC Campus Open
7 Faculty Workshop
8-9 Registration, Testing
12 First Day of Classes
19 Campuses closed. Martin Luther King Jr. Day



Members of the Fran Carter family gather with this year's Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship recipients — Emmy Vinson (back left), Bailey Collins (back center), and Olivia Brummer (back right).

Grade School Board, and volunteering with Feed My Sheep. Carter was remembered for her selfless friendship, unwavering kindness, and the many lives she touched through her acts of love.

Luke Harl, Frontier Community College Foundation President, expressed heartfelt appreciation to everyone who helped make the event a success—especially Hornung and Linda Spicer for their behind-the-scenes efforts and to the Carter family for their continued support.

"I want to express my sincerest gratitude to all the volunteers, donors, and attendees for their contributions to the Fran Carter Memorial Carnaby Square Fashion Show," said Harl. "A special thank you to Kristi Hornung and Linda Spicer for the tremendous amount of work they do behind the scenes to make it a successful and enjoyable show for the community, and to the Carter family for their ongoing support of this show and scholarship."

This event is a wonderful representation of the FCC Foundation—it's a collaboration between the college, the foundation, and the community. We see tremendous turnout from student-athletes who volunteer, foundation members who give their time and resources, and a community that shows up and contributes. That collaboration perfectly captures the spirit of a community college. Thank you to everyone who played a part—your involvement helps fund scholarships for student-athletes at Frontier while honoring Fran Carter's legacy."

When asked what she takes away from the show each year, Hornung reflected on the pride she feels in seeing the community unite for a shared purpose.

"I take away a deep pride in our community and everyone working together with one goal—making this event a success," she said. "The donations truly make a difference in the lives of the scholarship recipients. I get emotional about all my shows. Over the years, I've worked closely with so many people on different fundraisers, and together we've raised some truly impactful donations."

DRIVEN BY COMPASSION, DEFINED BY PURPOSE



Jennifer Harvey works to identify antibodies during a lab session in the Medical Laboratory Technician classroom in Mason Hall.

Whether it's for a better career, a fresh start, or a lifelong goal finally within reach, non-traditional students are proving that the path to success isn't always straight—but it's always worth taking. They show every day that education isn't defined by age, but by ambition.

For Jennifer Harvey, a second-year student in Frontier Community College's Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) program, that ambition is rooted in her passion for helping others and her firsthand experience witnessing how laboratory work impacts patient care and outcomes.

"I have always had a passion to help people. After making decisions for family members pertaining to their health and seeing the impact that the laboratory had on all aspects of a patient's treatment and overall wellness, I knew that I wanted to be part of helping

patients get the answers they need to better their health and treatment. I chose to attend Frontier Community College for this degree mostly because of the low student-to-teacher ratio. I also knew that Frontier's MLT program offered excellent laboratory exposure in the classroom. Also, being a local college and a short drive from my home, choosing Frontier was the perfect decision!"

Harvey's decision to pursue the MLT program was inspired by her personal experiences caring for both of her parents.

"My dad was diagnosed in 2009 with Laryngeal Cancer. His diagnosis introduced me to a more in-depth understanding of how diverse the medical field was. Then, my mom was diagnosed with Glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer, in December of 2022. Due to the aggressiveness of her cancer, it required me to do extensive research on my own to make the best decisions for her treatment. I found it interesting that no matter if we were seeing her medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, neurologist, or the hospitalist, treatment decisions were always made in accordance with her laboratory results. It was at this time that I began to realize just how vital the laboratory was to patient care and treatment."

Through those deeply personal experiences, Harvey developed a strong sense of empathy—for both patients and their families—and a deeper understanding of the challenges they face during their medical journeys.

"I believe that dealing firsthand with a loved one's healthcare decisions and treatment gives me a better understanding of what patients are going through during their own medical journeys. Also, the experience I gained being a caregiver for someone so close to me gave me a better understanding of what the patient's family and caregivers are dealing with as well, which helps me to be more supportive to the patient and their family."

Now in her second year of the program, Harvey says the most valuable lesson she has learned is the importance of continuous studying and learning. She also credits her instructors, Julie Dehart and Cindy Green, for their extensive knowledge and dedication to student success.



MLT Instructor Julie Dehart (left) assists Jennifer Harvey with antibody identification.

"The most valuable lesson I have learned is that you can never study enough. Both instructors, Julie Dehart and Cindy Green, bring a wealth of invaluable knowledge to the classroom backed by years of experience working in medical laboratories themselves. The more a student comprehends from classroom work, the more understanding they gain to truly appreciate the knowledge the instructors have. There is so much to be learned through the experience of others, and Julie and Cindy both share their own personal experiences and discoveries to help their students become the best prepared and knowledgeable MLTs possible."

Harvey values the diverse and specialized opportunities available within medical laboratory work, where MLTs play a crucial role in diagnosing and treating patients through detailed specimen analysis.

"The knowledge gained with this degree is invaluable. There is such a diversity of departments in the medical laboratory to help doctors accurately diagnose and treat patients. Most hospital laboratories offer opportunities for an MLT to specialize in such as blood bank, microbiology, chemistry, immunohematology, and serology, just to name a few. Within these departments, patient specimens are examined at microscopic levels to help doctors correctly diagnose and treat patients. It is truly rewarding to be part of these discoveries to help with patient care and treatment."

Currently working in a hospital laboratory as a Medical Laboratory Assistant, Harvey enjoys both the lab environment and the opportunity to work directly with patients. However, her experience at Frontier has broadened her perspective on where her degree could take her.

"I currently work in a hospital laboratory as a Medical Laboratory Assistant. I love the atmosphere of the hospital laboratory and being able to work directly with patients as well. However, the more I learn through the MLT program, the more I realize that I also have an interest in working in a research laboratory as well. The opportunities that the MLT degree offers are truly limitless!"

Harvey adds that the MLT field offers career paths beyond the medical field.

"I think the most important takeaway from the MLT program is that you are not limited to only the medical field. Job opportunities exist for an MLT in the oil industry, farm research, factory settings, and so much more!"

For more information about Frontier Community College's Medical Laboratory Technician program, visit iecc.edu/fcc/mlt or call 618-842-3711.



EXPLORE A FUTURE IN NURSING

ILLINOIS EASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGES NURSING INFORMATION SESSIONS

FRONTIER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FAIRFIELD, IL

To make application for the nursing program, please contact Julie Bullard at 618-847-9201, ext. 4520 and make an appointment for one of the following meetings:

Location: Cox Hall, Room 105

2025 Dates

Thursday, October 16, 10-11 a.m.
Tuesday, November 18, 3-4 p.m.
Tuesday, December 9, 2-3 p.m.

OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE OLNEY, IL

To make application for the nursing program, please contact Julie Bullard at 618-847-9201, ext. 4520 and make an appointment for one of the following meetings:

Location: Wattleworth Hall, Room 213

2025 Dates

Wednesday, October 8, 1-2 p.m.
Friday, November 14, 2-3 p.m.
Wednesday, December 10, 3-4 p.m.

VIRTUAL SESSIONS (NURSING & RADIOGRAPHY)

Zoom Meeting ID: 567 828 7573

2025 Dates

Wednesday, October 15, 2:00 p.m. (Nursing & Radiography)
Friday, December 5, 12:00 noon (Nursing & Radiography)

2026 Dates

Wed., January 21, 6:00 p.m. (Nursing & Radiography)
Thursday, February 26, 2:00 p.m. (Nursing only)

LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE ROBINSON, IL

To make application for the nursing program, please contact Michelle Woods at 618-546-2335, ext. 1130 and make an appointment for one of the following meetings:

Location: Williams Hall, Room 110

2025 Dates

Tuesday, October 7, 2-3 p.m.
Tuesday, November 18, 10-11 a.m.
Wednesday, December 3, 1-2 p.m.

WABASH VALLEY COLLEGE MT. CARMEL, IL

To make application for the nursing program, please contact Michelle Woods at 618-263-5105, ext. 3431 and make an appointment for one of the following meetings:

Location: Science Building, Room 58

2025 Dates

Thursday, October 16, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Monday, November 3, 2-3 p.m.
Friday, December 5, 8-9 a.m.



FCC IN PICTURES



1 Kyndall Webb defends first base against Oakland City University in an exhibition on Saturday, October 18..

3 Gary Carter takes the mic as auctioneer at the Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship Carnaby Square Fashion Show.

5 Miles Whitesell spots Dillon James during a bench press workout in the Bobcat Den.

2 Bobcats Baseball Coach Matt McCue pitches at the Monster Mash.

4 A construction worker operates a backhoe during the new athletic facility's construction.

6 Students enjoy a free lunch under the Dreith Pavilion during Midterm Grill & Chill on Wednesday, October 15.