

OCTOBER 2025



BUILDING FUTURE TOGETHER

New athletic facility symbolizes student vision and community pride.



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A NEW CHAPTER FOR FRONTIER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A large crowd of community leaders, students, faculty, and staff braved the heat and gathered at Frontier Community College on Tuesday, September 16, for the groundbreaking of the new athletic facility. The ceremony took place in the field between Mason Hall and Bob Boyles Hall.

FCC President Dr. Sharmila Kakac shared her excitement about the strong turnout, noting that the event came together on very short notice to coincide with the Illinois Eastern Community College Board of Trustees meeting that same evening.

"We planned it, executed it, and it went off fantastically," Dr. Kakac said. "The proof is in the turnout—it was wonderful to see so many members of the community, strong support from the FCC Foundation, and even former employees returning to celebrate with us. Illinois State Senator Terri Bryant joined us, as well as our entire Board of Trustees.



Dr. Sharmila Kakac speaks to the crowd during the groundbreaking ceremony.

But for me, the most exciting part was the student participation. This ceremony was truly their idea and seeing so many of them lined up with golden shovels in hand drove home how meaningful this facility will be. It represents more than just a building—it's about enhancing student life on campus and creating a space the entire community can enjoy. The excitement in the crowd reminded me why we're doing this: it's for the students, and it's for the community."

The vision for Frontier Community College's new Athletic Facility traces back to 2018, when a Civil Rights Compliance review revealed costly accessibility issues in the Bobcat Den. Rather than invest in upgrades, leaders began exploring new possibilities. In 2021, Student Senate members voiced their top needs—food service and recreation—sparking a plan that grew through meetings, site visits, and student input. With Board approval, the vision expanded into a facility that will host volleyball and basketball, provide recreation for all students, and serve the community. Born from compliance and necessity but fueled by student voice, the project

shows how listening to students can shape a college's future.

A project of this size could never move forward without the support of many, and their shared vision and commitment have made this milestone possible. Dr. Kakac emphasized the importance of that collective effort, noting there are countless people to thank.

"Without the Frontier Community College Foundation, I'm not sure we would have been able to break ground in September 2025. They stepped up to fund a major portion of the project, and that partnership was critical. We've also been blessed with several significant donors whose generosity made this possible. The City of Fairfield has been behind us 100% from the beginning and having that level of support from local government is vital for a project of this scale. Our Board of Trustees caught the vision of what the students wanted, and Chairman Gary Carter was especially instrumental in championing that vision and helping bring it to life. I'm also grateful for our faculty and staff, who have supported us every step of the way. Truly, this project has been made possible by so many people, and I am thankful for each one of them."



FCC Foundation President Luke Harl addresses the crowd, sharing how the Foundation and Frontier Community College have positively impacted countless students over the years.



Members of the IECC Board of Trustees and the FCC Foundation take part in the ceremonial groundbreaking, turning the first shovels of dirt to officially begin construction on Frontier Community College's new athletic facility. Pictured (L to R): IECC Board Chairman Gary Carter; Dianne Taylor; Bill Taylor; Sarah Rush; IECC Board Secretary Pro Tempore Barbara Shimer; FCC Foundation President Luke Harl; former FCC President Richard Mason; IECC Chancellor Dr. Ryan Gower; IECC Board Vice Chair Brenda Culver; IECC Trustee Roger Browning; Doug Anderson; IECC Trustee Dr. Susan Batchelor; Student Trustee Mireya Rose; former FCC President Dr. Jay Edgren; IECC Trustee John McLaughlin; IECC Trustee Jan Ridgely; FCC President Dr. Sharmila Kakac; and Jerry Cox.

Frontier Community College Foundation President Luke Harl spoke about the college's impact on countless lives—providing a top-quality education to people of all ages, whether they enter the workforce after earning a degree or certificate or transfer to continue their studies. He also emphasized how deeply invested the community is in the college's success and in the importance of this project.

"I am thankful for the turnout from the community and the college faculty, staff, students, and trustees and foundation members and donors. It is a reminder that people have a vested interest in the college's success and the importance of this project. I am excited to see the return that this investment brings in the years to come."

Following the ceremony, the Board of Trustees held its meeting on campus and approved naming the new volleyball and basketball court in honor of Jerry Cox. Cox recently donated \$200,000 toward the construction of the facility and is also the founder of the Clemence Elizabeth Cox Scholarship, established in 2009. Since its inception, the scholarship has awarded more than \$100,000 to 104 nursing students. Dr. Kakac noted that Cox's generosity has consistently stood out over the years, reflecting his deep commitment to supporting FCC and its students.

"It's a wonderful way to recognize Jerry's gift and show our appreciation for all he has done," Dr. Kakac said. "He feels strongly about what the college means to this community and about the potential this facility has to bring in new students, support growth, and serve the region. Jerry has always been generous—not just with this new facility, but also through his ongoing support of the nursing program. Through the Clemence Elizabeth Cox Scholarship, he has invested

more than \$100,000 in scholarships for nursing students, helping 104 students since 2009. We are truly grateful for everything he has done for Frontier."

A groundbreaking is always a symbolic moment—it represents more than the start of construction; it marks the beginning of a new chapter. For Frontier Community College, this project signals an exciting future filled with new opportunities for students and the community. And for Dr. Sharmila Kakac, who began serving as FCC President on July 1, 2025, the moment held special meaning.

"I have been involved with the college even before becoming president, having served on the FCC Foundation for years. We've often discussed what athletics could mean for both the college and the community, and it was powerful to see that vision finally take shape. Personally, two things stood out to me: first, the joy of seeing that vision come to fruition; and second, the incredible turnout. People of all ages, from different walks of life, and from across the region—including Flora and Albion—came together for this event. To me, it reinforced the 'community' in community college. This project is possible because of the broad support we've received, and that is what resonated with me the most."

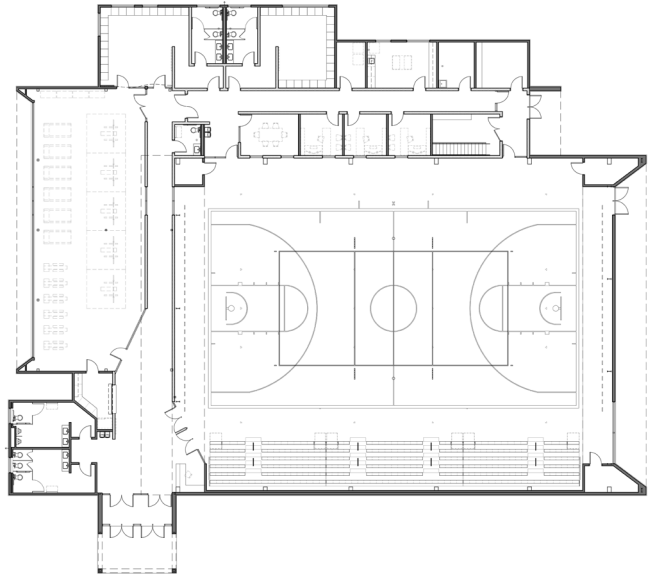
Bevis Construction, Inc. of Mt. Vernon, Illinois, has officially begun work on the new \$5.6 million, 19,250-square-foot athletic facility. For Dr. Kakac, the project holds special meaning—she can watch the transformation unfold each day from the view outside her office window.

"The substantial completion date is set for October 2026—just about a year from now. Soon we'll start to see major changes: more digging, rock being hauled in, larger equipment on site, the pouring of the foundation, and more construction crews at work. It will get messy, but sometimes you have to make a mess to make progress. Each step is a milestone, and it's exciting

to watch it all take shape right outside my window. Honestly, I feel like a kid in a candy store. Even members of the community have been driving by just to see the progress, which makes it even more exciting."

With each passing day, the facility moves closer to completion. The campus landscape has already changed dramatically since construction began—and it will continue to evolve. Dr. Kakac says the project opens the door to many possibilities.

"Anytime you have a project of this magnitude, it marks the beginning of



The floor plan of the new athletic facility shows the main entrance on the west side of the building. The facility will include a volleyball and basketball court, bleacher seating, locker rooms, a weight training area, a conference room, and coaches' offices.



IECC Board Chairman Gary Carter and State Senator Terri Bryant listen attentively during Dr. Kakac's speech.

something exciting—the promise of what's ahead. I'm thrilled about all the ways we'll be able to use this facility, from serving the community to hosting volleyball games right here on campus. It will be a tremendous blessing for Frontier, and I'm truly looking forward to everything we can do with this space."

The public is reminded that ongoing construction on campus may cause delays. The Mason Hall parking lot is now an active construction zone, and pedestrians and motorists should use caution and remain alert for workers and heavy equipment in the area.

CLEMENCE ELIZABETH COX SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTS FUTURE NURSES

Jerry Cox, founder of the Clemence Elizabeth Cox Scholarship, recently presented the Fall 2025 awards to five second-level nursing students at Frontier Community College. This year's recipients are Taylor Postin, Curtlyn Coale, Casey Atteberry, Brittney Wiggins, and Brittany Johnson.

Since its establishment in 2009, the scholarship has supported 104 nursing students, with contributions totaling more than \$100,000. Cox's enduring commitment to the fund stems from his service in Vietnam, where he gained a deep respect for the nurses who cared for soldiers under challenging circumstances. That experience inspired him to create a scholarship that continues to impact generations of nursing students.



Front Row: Taylor Postin, Curtlyn Coale, Casey Atteberry, Brittney Wiggins, and Brittany Johnson.

Back Row: Nursing Instructors Tracy Hicks, Brittany Rose, and Brianna Trowbridge; FCC President Dr. Sharmila Kakac; FMH CEO Andy Flemer; Jerry Cox; FMH CNO Hollie Barrett, MSN, RN, CRHCP; FCC Foundation President Luke Harl; Allied Health Program Advisor Julie Bullard

Over the years, Cox's friends T.J. Minton and Adella Williams have also contributed to the scholarship fund, sharing his passion for supporting both students and the community. Cox takes great pride in seeing many scholarship recipients go on to serve patients at Fairfield Memorial Hospital and other healthcare facilities throughout the region.

While he encourages graduates to remain local, Cox celebrates every student who enters the nursing field—knowing their skills and compassion are needed everywhere.

The Clemence Elizabeth Cox Scholarship stands as a powerful reminder of how generosity, gratitude, and community spirit can shape the future of healthcare—one nurse at a time.

AMBASSADORS REFLECT THE BOBCAT SPIRIT



FCC's 2025 Student Ambassadors: (from left) Aubrey Churchill, Peyton Owen, and Allie Brach.

Student Ambassadors at Frontier Community College embody the very best of what it means to be a Bobcat—dedicated, welcoming, and service-minded. These outstanding students serve as leaders on campus and in the community, assisting with college events, campus tours, student orientations, and outreach activities.

Through their involvement, ambassadors gain valuable leadership experience, strengthen their communication and teamwork skills, and build lasting connections with faculty, staff, and fellow students. Whether greeting visitors, volunteering at local events, or sharing their college experiences with prospective students, ambassadors play a vital role in promoting the positive and supportive environment that defines Frontier.

This year's Student Ambassadors are Allie Brach, Aubrey Churchill, and Peyton Owen. It is the first year of service for Brach and Owen, while Churchill returns for her second year in the program.

Allie Brach, a resident of Cisne, is the daughter of Michael and Jamie Brach. A 2025 graduate of Cisne High School, she was active in FFA for four years, played volleyball for two years, and was a member of both the National Honor Society and Spanish Club. Brach is currently pursuing a nursing degree at FCC, with plans to earn her master's degree in the future. She said she chose Frontier for its smaller class sizes and welcoming atmosphere, describing it as the perfect place to begin her college journey.

Aubrey Churchill, from Mt. Erie, is the daughter of Jennifer and Daniel Churchill. A 2024 graduate of Cisne High School, she participated in FFA, FCCLA, Spanish Club, and Student Council, where she served as a school officer. Churchill is active in her church's worship team and works at Cisne's Dollar General. She is pursuing an associate in science and arts degree and said she chose Frontier to stay close to home and take advantage of the Student Ambassador Scholarship.

Peyton Owen, a resident of Fairfield, is the son of Ben and Heather Owen. A 2025 graduate of Fairfield Community High School, he ran cross country for two years, played tennis all four years, and was a member of the National Honor Society. Owen volunteers with Kids in Motion, is active in his church, and works at Brownstown Electric and Iron Jungle Gym. He is pursuing an associate in science and arts degree with plans to become an elementary school teacher. Owen said Frontier felt like the right fit for him—close to home, family-oriented, and full of opportunity.



Student Ambassadors Allie Brach and Peyton Owen (pictured in the Bobcat mascot costume) give a thumbs-up. Standing at 6'7", Owen may be the tallest person ever to wear the Bobcat suit.

Frontier Community College takes great pride in its Student Ambassador program, which highlights the leadership, service, and character of its students. Through their commitment and example, ambassadors like Brach, Churchill, and Owen continue to strengthen the bond between FCC and the community it serves.

THE POWER OF GETTING INVOLVED

In recent years, Frontier Community College has seen its students shine—both on campus and beyond—and among those making an impact is alumnus, Bob Ellis IV, who graduated in May 2024. During his time at FCC, Ellis served as a student ambassador, a role vital to welcoming new students, representing the college at events, and building a strong campus community. Now a senior at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ellis continues to carry forward that same drive and engagement.

“Being a student ambassador at FCC was one of the greatest decisions I’ve ever made. It opened up so many opportunities when I transferred to Eastern Illinois University. It taught me leadership skills, and those are important no matter where you go to college. I also got involved in Student Senate and Phi Theta Kappa. Because of all that, I’ve received



NOVEMBER 2025 EVENTS

1	Bobcats Softball @ IU-Southeast	1/3 P.M. EDT
2	Fran Carter Memorial Scholarship Carnaby Square Fashion Show at Fairfield First Christian Church	2:30 P.M.
7	FAFSA Friday at FCC Student Services	8 - 4
11	Veterans Day - Campus Closed	
13	USI Representative in Mason Hall	10 A.M.-1 P.M.
14	FAFSA Friday at FCC Student Services	8-4
18	FCC Campus Nursing Info Session	3-4 P.M.
18	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ OCC	6:15
26	Last Day to Withdraw from Fall Courses	
27-28	Thanksgiving Break - Campus Closed	

DECEMBER 2025 EVENTS

5	Virtual Nursing Info Session	12 Noon
9	IECC Board of Trustees Meeting @ WVC	6:15
12	Last Day of Fall Classes	
15-18	Final Exams for Fall Classes	
19	Last Day of Fall Semester	
Dec 22 - Jan 2	Winter Break - Campuses Closed	

Events listed on this calendar are current as of Tuesday, October 14, 2025. For the most up-to-date information, visit our Calendar of Events page on the Frontier Community College website under the Community tab. You can also find announcements and updates on FCC's official social media channels.

"One of my favorite memories was the Christmas Parade here in Fairfield when I got to dress up as the Bobcat. Those extra events weren't required, but I loved doing them. They ended up being some of my best times at Frontier."

Students at FCC come from many different walks of life—some are local, others travel in. Some balance families and jobs while taking a full load of classes. Ellis encourages every student to get involved whenever possible.

"Getting involved in the community wherever you go to college is really important. At Frontier, I got heavily involved in Mule Nation and Bobcat Nation doing live streams. Balancing work and school isn't as hard as you think. I worked at McDonald's, streamed games multiple times a week, and still managed full-time classes. I have absolutely zero regrets—it was great."

Shortly after arriving at EIU, Ellis was named a student ambassador there, thanks to the leadership experience he gained at FCC.

"One of the main reasons I was accepted as a student ambassador at EIU is because I had already done it at Frontier. Even though I didn't know the EIU campus, they still hired me. It's been so much fun, and I've also gotten involved in other clubs because of that experience. I now serve on the Interfraternity Council executive board, I help schedule events, and I'm the secretary for my fraternity. None of that would have been possible if I hadn't been so involved at Frontier."

Ellis credits his ambassadorship for teaching him time management and organization.

"I used to just remember things, but eventually I had to get organized. That role helped me a lot with time management and being more social. It pushed me to reach out to people I normally wouldn't, and it gave me the chance to share my Frontier experiences so others could make the same great choice I did."

He added, "I've been able to take on a lot of leadership roles in just one year at EIU. As a transfer student, I was worried I'd only have two years to get



FCC participated in the 2023 Fairfield Christmas Parade with one of the event's most recognizable floats. Pictured are Bob Ellis wearing the Bobcat mascot costume, Derek Dunn dressed as Elvis Presley in the center, and former FCC ambassador and alumna Charley Robertson on the left.

involved while everyone else had four, but it's easier than you think. Don't be afraid to jump in."

When asked for advice for future student ambassadors, Ellis was quick to respond:

"Don't stress too much about it. I was nervous when I applied—wondering if I was qualified or had the time. But you do, and you'll regret it if you don't. Being a student ambassador makes college so much more fun. Every week I get to look forward to events and meet great people. It also opens doors for scholarships—more than you might expect. I highly recommend starting at a community college. Frontier was the best decision I ever made, and it helped me earn enough scholarships to cover all my tuition at EIU."

Looking back, Ellis gives credit to the faculty

and staff at FCC who pushed him to be his best.

"If I hadn't gone to Frontier, I don't know if I would have gotten so involved at EIU. The teachers and staff—people like Mrs. Monge, Carrie Halbert, and Derek Dunn—really pushed me to do my best and get involved. I wouldn't be where I'm at today without them."

As he prepares for the next step, Ellis is looking ahead to his future goals. He plans to become a high school business education teacher and will begin student teaching in the spring.



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 Bulgar 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.	LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE ROBINSON, IL To make application for the nursing program, please contact Michelle Woods at 618-546-2303, 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.
OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE OLNEY, IL To make application for the nursing program, please contact Julie Bulgar at 618-847-9201, ext. 4520 and make an appointment for one of the following meetings: Location: Waffleworth 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.	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.

VIRTUAL SESSIONS (NURSING & RADIOGRAPHY)
Zoom Meeting ID: 547 528 7573
2025 Dates
Wednesday, October 15, 2:00 p.m. (Nursing & Radiography)
Friday, December 5, 12:00 noon (Nursing & Radiography)
2024 Dates
Wed., January 21, 6:00 p.m. (Nursing & Radiography)
Thursday, February 26, 2:00 p.m. (Nursing only)

FCC IN PICTURES



1 An Electrical Distribution Systems student shows confidence and control while hanging upside down during pole-climbing practice.

3 Students Jenna Hinkle and Sam Coomer enjoy a game of Bingo in Bob Boyles Hall.

5 FCC Student Ambassadors and student-athletes have been visiting local schools for High Five Fridays.

2 Chemistry instructor Terry Koker leads an interactive lesson with students inside Mason Hall.

4 Instructor Linda Monge shares a smile with the Bobcat in celebration of World Smile Day earlier this month.

6 Students gathered for a fun evening of s'mores, games, and fellowship at the Dreith Pavilion on September 11.