

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
April 1, 2026 | 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. | via TEAMS

Attendees: Ryan Gower, Sheryl Childers, Tona Ambrose, Matt Fowler, Ryan Hawkins, Sharmila Kakac, Amber Malone, Jessica McDonald, Andrea McDowell, Cathy Robb, Chris Simpson, Paul Tait (joined at 10 am), Brandon Weger

Absent:

Guests:

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Dr. Gower called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the agenda. He recognized that the agenda continues to progress towards keeping operational processes within Divisions and allowing for more strategic administrative discussions in SEPC meetings.

Reports

Matt Fowler- Reported on a recent campus visit to Kalamazoo and the knowledge gained during that visit regarding 14-week semesters, IT support, disbursement of scholarships, and food services for students. During the HLC visit an emphasis was placed on higher education becoming more complicated, and the need for institutions to stay focused on missions in teaching and learning. He brought attention to the positive steps IECC is taking, and brought back ideas for improvement.

Ryan Gower – Brought attention to the need for a unified approach for Faculty awards. He recognized the importance of awarding and recognizing all exceptional faculty members throughout the District. He discussed teaching schedules at the individual campuses, and emphasized the need for good communication to all of those who might be affected by revisions. Discussion was held about building a strong operational structure in the upcoming year and the role of foundation funding. He reviewed his findings in the most recent budget book, and looked closely at the expected revenue cuts and requested expenditures. He encouraged the leadership team to take all upcoming budget cuts into consideration when creating a spending plan and requesting funds.

Institutional Effectiveness. Brandon Weger reported on the IECC facility survey. The survey has seen good participation and will close by the end of this week. He will collect and provide data from the survey in an upcoming SEPC meeting.

DO Staff- None.

Consent Agenda

Approved items included:

- **March 2026 SEPC minute and Divisional Minutes**
- **Grant Update (Hawkins)**

Consent Agenda approved unanimously.

Policies & Procedures

Reviewed for administrative action:

- **Procedure 100.24 Emergency Management (Gower)-** TABLED
- **Procedure 300.17 Facility Usage (Simpson)** – Revisions were made to the procedure to include the disbursement of generated revenue for both short-term and long-term facility usage on campuses. Feedback was given and the item will be returned in May. Mr. Hawkins and President Simpson have been tasked with collaborating to bring a final version by the May meeting.
- **Policy 500.14 Tuition Waivers (Simpson/Fowler)** – The policy was revised to remove the section on specified counties for tuition waivers. Approval was given and the policy will now be presented to the Board.
- **Policy 800.4 Assessment (Weger)** – Minor grammatical revisions were made to the policy. Approval was given and the policy will now be presented to the Board.

Staff Recommendations for Approval

- **AY27 Non-Bargaining Unit Wages (Gower/Hawkins/McDowell)** – Dr. Gower discussed the banded salary range and the need for adjustments in AY'27 to address the recent budget cuts. A proposal will be presented to the Board in September.
- **Health Professions Fees (Robb)** - Dr. Robb proposed reallocating the \$40 lab fee across two HEA courses to ensure that distribution of funds align with instruction and associated consumable costs. In addition, she proposed the elimination of the Radiography student fee for testing following the discontinuation of ExamSoft. Testing will now be offered through the IECC Canvas LMS, and result in a savings of \$44.25 per student

in the Fall and Spring semesters. Approval was given and item will now be presented to the Board.

Informational & Discussion Items

- **Discontinuation of Town Hall Meetings AY27 (Gower)** – Dr. Gower asked for feedback regarding the scheduled discontinuation of the meetings. Proposed next steps were discussed for continuing to keep communication open across campuses and allowing for Q&A with leadership.
- **Division Meetings/Campus Presidents (Gower) -**
- **Monthly President Meeting/VC Meeting (Gower)** – Dr. Gower expressed his support for the monthly meetings amongst the campus presidents, and he recommended that all of the Vice Chancellors begin engaging in the monthly meeting.
- **Emergency Cell Phone (Gower)** – Dr. Gower inquired about the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency cell phones. Feedback was given and discussed.
- **Draft FY'27 Operating Budget (Hawkins) -**
- **Financial Aid Disbursement Schedule AY'27 (Hawkins)** – Mr. Hawkins provided a copy of the schedule for 2026-2027 for review and discussion. In the Fall '26 and Spring '27 terms the 60% day of the FA term will fall on a Saturday pushing the date to the following business day. In the Summer '27 term there will be 58 days making day 35 past the 60% mark.
- **Student Loan Changes Due to OBBBA (Hawkins)** – Mr. Hawkins provided information for the change in structure that will be necessary in keeping IECC compliant with recently revised federal mandates.
- **CDL Coursework (Gower/Kakac)** – Dr. Kakac discussed the possibility of working with a second party who could assist IECC in offering a CDL certification to support the displaced workers impacted by the closure of Champion Labs.
- **FCC Recording Studio (Kakac)** – Dr. Kakac discussed the usage of the studio that is currently positioned on the FCC campus. Faculty participation has declined, and she asked for feedback regarding the long-term usage of the space and the equipment. Feedback was given and the Vice Chancellor's will be tasked with discussing the topic further in their monthly meeting and bringing a proposal back to SEPC.
- **Procedure 500.5.3 Credit for Prior Learning (Robb)** – Dr. Robb informed SEPC that AALT had approved necessary revisions to the procedure and provided an overview of the changes that reflect current curriculum and support the Advanced Placement table for the procedure and the academic catalog.

Capital Projects: None.

District Finance: None.

Approval of Personnel Items

- **Change in Status / Administrative Assistant to the CFO (McDowell/Hawkins)** – The recommendation is being made to ensure that thorough meeting minutes are being recorded during faculty negotiations. The change in status will only be effective during the collective bargaining process.
- **LTC Director of Performing Arts (Ambrose/McDowell)** – A copy of the revised Job Description was provided for review. The council provided feedback and the item will be revisited.

Other Business- None.

Adjournment: 12:01 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 6, 2026 @ 9 am