

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
January 14, 2026 | 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. | TLB West Richland Center

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, Brandon Weger

Absent: None

Guests: None

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Dr. Gower opened the meeting by welcoming the leadership team to the Spring term. He expressed excitement for the work ahead as the team works on Operational Planning. He noted a scheduling error that resulted in the Emergency Plan Presentation being rescheduled until next month. He reminded the Presidents that their Night Lock orders were supposed to have been submitted by 1/12/26. He asked that these be submitted ASAP.

Reports

Institutional Effectiveness (Weger) – Mr. Weger gave a presentation on Institutional Assessment and the framework the Chancellor will use to help the Board gauge organizational performance. Copies were provided of the document and feedback was given. Mr. Weger will share the framework with the Board of Trustees in their January meeting.

Chancellor's Office – Dr. Gower discussed the "Moving Forward" Operational Plan and gave his charge to the council. The operational plan will retain the existing strategic framework while shifting leadership's attention toward execution and operational clarity throughout AY 27-28. The "Moving Forward" plan aims to ensure that IECC operations, systems, and leadership practices are predictable, disciplined, and sustainable. Vice Chancellors will be tasked with evaluating the questions provided within the Assessment Tool and to bring forward areas where there is room for growth or improvement. The leadership

team will pull together for a day of planning and integration in May 2026, prior to the Summer '26 Board of Trustees Retreat.

Consent Agenda

Approved items included:

- **November 26, 2025 SEPC minutes (December meeting) and divisional minutes**
- **Policy 400.38 Employee Code of Conduct (McDowell)**- The newly developed policy establishes an expectation for professional conduct among employees.
- **Procedure 400.38 Employee Code of Conduct (McDowell)**- The newly developed procedure provides guidelines on how Policy 400.38 would be operationalized.
- **Policy 400.39 Employee Disciplinary (McDowell)**- The newly developed policy outlines IECC's commitment to fair, consistent, and progressive disciplinary action when appropriate.
- **Procedure 400.39 Employee Disciplinary (McDowell)**- The newly developed procedure outlines the process for addressing employee performance or conduct issues and provides examples of infractions and corresponding disciplinary actions.
- **Incident Report Fillable Form (Fowler)**- Dr. Fowler recommended a single fillable form for reporting incidents on campuses. The fillable form will provide options for each type of incident and will enhance IECC data reporting. Leadership was encouraged to remind all staff of the form with an emphasis on carefully selecting the correct incident type when submitting.
- **Practicum Site Agreement (Robb) –**
 - I. Middle Tennessee School of Anesthesia
- **Affiliation Agreements (Robb) –**
 - I. Crawford Co. Cares Standard Clinical & Non-Standard Clinical
- **Grant Update (Hawkins)**

Consent Agenda approved unanimously.

Policies & Procedures

Reviewed for administrative action:

- **Procedure 300.17 Facilities Usage (Simpson)** – The procedure has been revised to include the process for revenue that is generated from the leasing of available campus space. The item will be returned for a final vote at the next SEPC meeting.

Staff Recommendations for Approval

- **Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Changes (Hawkins)**- Mr. Hawkins proposed updates to the SAP Appeal process. These changes are aimed at improving consistency, transparency, and student success. By standardizing forms and requiring an Academic Success Plan, the process promotes accountability and improves compliance with federal guidelines. Approval was given.
- **Running Start & School Counselor Waivers (Ambrose)**- President Ambrose provided a revised waiver proposal for the 2026-2028 academic years. The purpose and rationale for the waivers are to promote increased enrollment and access to IECC for current high school seniors enrolled in Dual Credit and/or the IECC CEO program. The waivers are intended to reward academic excellence and strengthen recruitment and retention efforts. Approval was given.

Informational & Discussion Items

- **Theater Waivers (Gower/Ambrose/Simpson)** – Dr. Gower requested that Presidents Simpson, Ambrose, and Fowler work with Dr. Robb to develop a uniform and defensible process for enrollment and tuition waivers in Theater production courses.
- **Procedure 300.1.1 Accounting: Payroll (Hawkins)** – Revisions have been made to the procedure that provides general guidelines for payroll documentation, deadlines, and disbursements including direct deposit and payment by check.
- **Procedure 300.1.26 Accounting: Employee Direct Deposit Authorization (Hawkins)** – The newly developed procedure establishes a process for employees to authorize direct deposit of payroll and/or reimbursement payments to checking or savings accounts outside of the new hire process. It also provides guidelines for Payroll/HR when processing, verifying, and maintaining related banking information securely.
- **Procedure 100.16.1 Complaints from Students (Gower)** – Revisions to the procedure will clarify the process for evaluating and housing student complaints.
- **Immigration Enforcement (Gower)** – Discussion was held regarding the Bivens Act. These revisions have created requirements for documenting

procedures that address the presence of Immigration Enforcement on campus.

- **IECC Social Media Calendar (Ambrose)** – President Ambrose noted the development of a social media master content calendar to assist with balancing engagement with clear informational messaging and avoiding oversaturation of promotional content. The calendar divides promotional content into four pillars: Information, Community, Entertainment, Promotional.
- **Transfer Pathways (Robb)** – Dr. Robb provided an updated list of transfer pathways for review. The list curriculum was developed through a combination of faculty and Dean meetings. The transfer pathways will now be presented to the Board for review and possible approval.
- **New AAS Business Leadership Program (Robb)** – Dr. Robb informed of a new program that is expected to launch in Fall 2026. The degree will encompass general education requirements and a Business core curriculum with concentration options for students to select for specialization.
- **Dual Credit Agriculture Certificate (Robb)** - Dr. Robb announced the launch of a dual credit Ag. Certification at LTC in the Fall 2026. The goal is to create a pipeline into an associate degree in agriculture at WVC. The Dual Credit Agriculture Certification will serve as a guide for the development of future CTE Dual Credit pipelines into IECC programs.

Capital Projects: None.

District Finance: None.

Approval of Personnel Items

- **OCC Healthcare Professions Building O&M position (Simpson/McDowell)** – With the addition of the Healthcare Professions building at OCC the need for routine building custodial and maintenance services has been presented. President Simpson requested to eliminate one part-time OCC O&M position and advertise a full-time opening. Approval was given and the position will be posted.

Other Business-

Adjournment: 11:48 a.m.

Next Meeting: February 4, 2026 @ 9 am