

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
June 4, 2025 | 2:00–4:30 p.m. | TLB West Richland Center

Attendees: Ryan Gower, Sheryl Childers, Tona Ambrose, Jay Edgren, Matt Fowler, Ryan Hawkins, Amber Malone, Andrea McDowell, Cathy Robb, Chris Simpson, Paul Tait, Brandon Weger

Absent: Jessica McDonald

Guests: Cyndi Boyce, Sharmila Kakac, Amy Tarr, Robert Conn

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Dr. Gower opened the meeting by recognizing Dr. Jay Edgren for his service ahead of his upcoming retirement. Dr. Edgren expressed gratitude to the council and reflected on relationships and accomplishments. New SEPC members and guests were welcomed: Paul Tait (as the new CIO), Sharmila Kakac (as the incoming FCC President), and Cathy Robb (as the new VCAA). Dr. Gower provided a legislative update, noting multiple bills that could impact college budgets and personnel decisions. He also provided an update on the State of Illinois budget and the expected allocation for the Illinois Community College System.

Reports

- **Enrollment (Weger):** 272 graduates completed the Grad Survey: 48.7% plan to transfer, 41.4% seek employment, 9.9% undecided. Weger will collaborate with President Ambrose on Fall 2025 enrollment data.
- **IT (Tait):** Preparing for transition into CIO role.
- **Business & Industry (Kakac):** Brief introductory update and overview of upcoming classes.
- **Academic Affairs (Robb):** Engaging in listening sessions across campuses; appreciative of warm welcome.
- **Finance (Hawkins):** Tentative budget is released for review; no material changes expected prior to Board approval.
- **WVC/SALT (Fowler):** Registration initiatives in progress. Mental Health America and NetTutor services launching for students. Power outage planned June 20 due to construction; WVC will close that day and calls will be routed to the District Office. Dr. Gower reminded SEPC that regardless of division assignment, employees follow the open/closed decision of their primary campus.
- **OCC/Bookstore (Simpson):** Updates on Applied Tech Center and theater/gym renovations. E-campus bookstore liquidation underway; a student guide video is

in development. A request was made to Deans to remind faculty to update course materials. Dean Boyce raised concerns about lab kit pricing – exploration to a solution is underway.

- **FCC/AALT (Edgren):** Transitioning duties to VCAA Robb. FCC athletic facility progressing. Shared out-of-office dates.
- **International (Goldman):** Upcoming international travel noted.
- **HR (McDowell):** No verbal report.
- **OAR (Malone):** 837 credentials were issued in Spring 25. Updating diploma design and analyzing graduation costs. Reviewing dual credit FAFSA considerations for students heading to 4-year institutions.
- **Institutional Outreach (Ambrose):** Community Ed camps full for summer/fall. Health professions camps expanding. Summer Theater age limit raised beyond 8th grade.

Consent Agenda – Approved

- May SEPC minutes
- Divisional minutes
- 2025–2026 Academic Catalog
- **Procedures:**
 - 300.1.16 – Tuition & Fees Collection
 - 300.1.17 – Accounts Receivable
 - 300.1.19 – Overdue Accounts
- **Policy 500.5** – Credit for Prior Learning
- **Procedures:**
 - 500.5.2 – Certifications & Licensures
 - 500.27 – Drug Testing of Student Athletes
- **Affiliation Agreements:**
Clay County Rehab, CTF Illinois, Edwards Co. Health Office, RPI, Small World CDC, Stone Bridge Memory Care, Trilogy Rehab, Wabash Co. Health Dept., Kid's Kingdom Preschool, Memorial Hospital, SIHF Healthcare
- **Grant Update** (Hawkins)

No items were removed from the Consent Agenda.

Policies & Procedures

- **Policy 400.36 – Remote Work (Gower):** New policy draft outlines long-term remote work standards to allow for continuity in practice across the system. Feedback requested by July SEPC.
- **Procedure 400.36 – Remote Work (Gower):** A partner procedure that operationalizes how remote work is reviewed, approved, and monitored. Feedback requested by July SEPC.

Approval of Personnel Items:

- **Director CTE Strategy & Effectiveness (McDowell):** Revised job duties presented to SEPC. The modified position was approved and a change in status will be presented at the June Board of Trustees meeting.
- **Director of Assessment, Discipline Facilitator, Special Assignment Stipends (McDowell):** SEPC approved the revised job descriptions.
- **Agriculture Staff (McDowell/Gower):** *This item was tabled to allow Dr. Robb and President Ambrose an opportunity to review the planning document and make adjustments. It is anticipated that IECC, with financial support from the LTC Foundation, will secure the temporary services of an individual to organize, plan, and bring a recommendation for how a Dual Credit pipeline to IECC's agriculture program can be developed across the District.*
- **WVC Bookstore & Food Services (Simpson):** *This position was tabled during the meeting, and the subsequent decision was to move forward with a PT position for AY26.*

Informational & Discussion Items

- **Signal Vine (Ambrose):** Texting platform being phased out.
- **Policy 400.37 – Employee Residency (Gower):** *Tabled.*
- **Alumni Software (Ambrose):** New districtwide platform adopted. Coordination underway with three foundation boards.
- **Graduate Survey Report (Weger):** *Tabled*
- **NSC Transfer Report (Weger):** *Tabled*

Capital Projects

- Property insurance premiums increased 24%.
- FCC Athletic Facility bids open next week.
- Roof project approved.
- OCC Solar array commissioning set for June 11.
- LTC hail damage appraisals pending.

District Finance

- No additional items.

Other Business

- **Adjunct Compensation (McDowell):** Fall 2025 pay adjustments to \$630/credit hour. The extra \$100/credit hour for hard to fill positions is eliminated.
- **Dean Reorganization:** With the addition of Dean Tarr to the Academic Affairs leadership team, there will be a few faculty whose reporting lines will adjust beginning July 1. Notification to the union has already occurred, and Dr. Robb and the Deans will share coordinated communication in the upcoming weeks.

- **Secondary Employment Policy:** Presidents asked to submit feedback to McDowell by June 11.
- **Health Professions Data (Boyce):** Positive trends reported. Boyce and Volk invited to present on high school dual credit at *College Changes Everything*. She expressed an interest in refining Discipline Facilitator roles.
- **Fall Training (Weger):** College-wide workshops scheduled for August 14. Input requested on desired training topics.
- **Phone System Update (Tait):** Upgrades scheduled for June 19; emergency communication protocols will be shared. Phone systems will be unavailable during this update.
- **Health Professions Partnership (Frederick):** New collaboration in development.

Adjournment: 4:27 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 2, 2025 | 2:00 p.m. | TLB WRC