

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
March 4, 2026 | 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. | TLB West Richland Center

Attendees: Ryan Gower, Sheryl Childers, Tona Ambrose, Matt Fowler, Ryan Hawkins, Jessica McDonald, Andrea McDowell, Cathy Robb, Chris Simpson, Paul Tait, Brandon Weger

Absent: Sharmila Kakac, Amber Malone

Guests: Chris Forde

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Dr. Gower called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the agenda. He noted that several IECC representatives would be at job fair being held by the Albion Chamber of Commerce following the recent Champion Labs closure. He verified that the IECC website has been updated with a list of rapid response actions that the organization is offering to assist dislocated workers. He thanked leadership for their extraordinary effort in organizing support and asked that they communicate to their teams his appreciation and the appreciation of the Board of Trustees for the remarkable ways they are supporting those who have been impacted. He asked that the council keep brainstorming for ways to improve services being offered to displaced workers and their families moving forward. He noted that the structure of SEPC agendas is moving in the right direction, reflecting more decisions being made locally within divisions and allowing for more higher-level and future focused conversation amongst the council.

ADA Guidelines Presentation

Chris Forde gave a presentation intended to familiarize the council with the WCAG 2.1AA Compliance guidelines that will go into effect on April 24, 2026. The guidelines emphasize simplifying digital accessibility for those with disabilities. He asked that SEPC members mark their calendars for Friday, March 6, 2026, from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. for a Marketing Mixer that will provide more information about the topic. Dr. Gower asked him to work with Lori Barger in updating the IECC website to create a page that will reflect what steps we are taking to address compliance and to inform employees of the Marketing Mixers that will address questions and provide instruction.

Reports

Institutional Effectiveness. Brandon Weger reported on the recent results of the IECC District 529 Economic Impact Study conducted jointly with the ICCB and Lightcast.

Currently the results are embargoed but will be released via IECC Marketing after the embargo is lifted. Results include return on investments (ROI) for students, taxpayers, and society.

DO Staff- Dr. Gower gave an update on a recent audit committee meeting. He reviewed with the leadership team the areas of importance in the audit and how they are likely to impact IECC operations moving forward. He thanked Mr. Hawkins, Bonnie Chaplin, Krystal Jahn, the IT staff, and all others involved for their work in producing a clean and organized audit.

Consent Agenda

Approved items included:

- **February 2026 SEPC minute and Divisional Minutes**
- **Grant Application Checklist & Process Overview (Fowler)-** Dr. Fowler inquired about process and the possibility of revising the procedure to reflect the appropriate channel for approving checklists. Dr. Gower plans to meet with Dr. Fowler and Mr. Hawkins to develop a procedure that improves the process when applying for grant funding. The procedure will be brought to SEPC in May for approval.
- **Grant Update (Hawkins)**

Consent Agenda approved unanimously.

Policies & Procedures

Reviewed for administrative action:

- **Procedure 100.24 Emergency Management (Gower)-** TABLED

Staff Recommendations for Approval

- **2027-2029 Academic Calendar (Malone/McDowell)-** Andrea McDowell updated the council on the revisions made to the academic calendar. The calendar was presented and approved.

Informational & Discussion Items

- **IECC Food Services (Simpson)-** President Simpson council about the performance of IECC food services over the past three years. He discussed challenges and opportunities. Dr. Gower requested that he share this information with the IECC Board of Trustees in the March 24 meeting. The report provides baseline information that can assist in strategic decisions about the direction of food services across all four IECC campuses.
- **LTC CEMT Meeting Date/Time Revision (Ambrose)-** President Ambrose informed that the LTC Emergency Management meetings will be held on

4th Monday of each month combining them with monthly Faculty Staff meetings. The combined meetings will be held from 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. This revision has been updated on the IECC website. Dr. Gower suggested that the other Presidents consider adopting something similar to streamline operations and encourage a wider participation in safety conversations.

- **Hazard Response (Gower/Presidents)**- As a follow-up to the presentation that was given in February, Dr. Gower solicited feedback from the presidents. Feedback was given and Dr. Gower asked that all suggestions be forwarded to Mr. Forde for review and possible inclusion.
- **Emergency Response Quick Action Checklist (Gower/Presidents)**- As a follow-up to the presentation that was given in February, Dr. Gower solicited feedback from the presidents. Feedback was given and Dr. Gower asked that all suggestions be forwarded to Mr. Forde for review and possible inclusion.
- **Campus Honors (Malone)**- Dr. Gower reported on the evolving procedure for unifying campus honors. He turned to Dr. Fowler for an overview of the proposed revisions for distribution of student honors. Dr. Gower asked that the Presidents work together to develop a plan for approval.
- **Campus Safety & Emergency Preparedness Director (Gower/McDowell)**- Dr. Gower discussed the job description for the position and stated that the application process for the position is currently open. He encouraged SEPC to circulate it widely.
- **IECC Fire Drill Day (Ambrose)**- President Ambrose brought a proposed date for the drill, feedback was given, and it was suggested that the drill take place in the Fall '26 semester. A definite date will be established this semester and communicated with AALT and faculty in advance to minimize disruption to instruction.
- **OCC/Youth Soccer (Simpson)**- President Simpson reported on the anticipated August 2029 launch date for the OCC soccer program. IECC had been brought into discussions about where the youth soccer program will be housed during anticipated construction of fields and a new athletic facility at OCC. He reported that he is receiving a considerable amount of feedback from the community. Dr. Gower noted that any planned construction of addition of fields was contingent upon the IECC Board of Trustees authorizing a bond issuance for such projects in the Fall 2027 semester. Any characterization of these decisions as final or presumptive is premature.

Capital Projects: None.

District Finance: None.

Approval of Personnel Items

- **LTC Full-time Volleyball Coach/IECC Enrollment Management Specialist Job Description (Ambrose)-** President Ambrose presented the job description for the position and solicited feedback. Feedback was given. The position was approved and will be posted. Dr. Gower asked that President Ambrose and Andrea McDowell meet to revise and updated the JD prior to the official posting.

Other Business- None.

Adjournment: 11:45 a.m.

Next Meeting: April 1, 2026 @ 9 am