

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
November 26, 2025 | 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 expressing his thankfulness for the leadership team and acknowledged their leadership, the season IECC finds itself in, and acknowledged the work they are doing for IECC.

Reports

ICCTA Governance Leadership Institute Training Update (Gower)- Dr. Gower gave an update on a recent ICCTA training session he attended along with Trustees Culver and Batchelor. The training focused on the role of the Board and the role of administration. He specifically shared ways that trainers and peer schools indicated they get more strategic direction from the Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings. IECC will begin adopting this approach in January.

BOLT (Simpson)- President Simpson reported on the first onsite buyback for books utilizing E-campus. December 10-18, 2025, will be a cash in-store buyback opportunity for students. Students do have access to a buy-back option through E-campus year-round. He believes necessary communication has been shared with all appropriate stakeholders to have a smooth process.

AALT (Robb) - Dr. Robb announced her intention to host a brown bag meeting to address Q & A related to online curriculum and course development in January 2026.

Consent Agenda

Approved items included:

- **November SEPC minutes and divisional minutes**
- **2026 SEPC Meeting Schedule (Gower)**
- **2026 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule (Gower)**
- **Affiliation Agreements (Robb) –**
 - i. Middle Tennessee School of Anesthesia
 - ii. Crawford Co. Cares
 - iii. Helping His Hands
 - iv. Good Samaritan Annual Letter of Renewal
 - v. Annual IECC Affiliation Agreement Template Updates
- **Grant Update (Hawkins)**

Consent Agenda approved unanimously.

Policies & Procedures

Approved for Board or administrative action:

- **Policy 400.11 Tenure (McDowell)**- The policy was updated to reflect that full-time faculty tenure is governed by 110 ILCS 805/Art. IIIB, except where otherwise defined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- **Policy 400.35 Employee Recognition Program (McDowell)**- The Council approved the proposed policy as presented.
- **Procedure 400.35 Employee Recognition Program (McDowell)**- The Council accepted a proposed procedure outlining guidelines for employee service, retirement, and bereavement recognition.
- **Policy 800.1 Educational Curriculum and Course Development (Robb)**- The Council approved proposed revisions to the District policy governing educational curriculum and course development.
- **Procedure 800.1 Educational Curriculum and Course Development (Robb)**- The Council approved proposed revisions consolidating and updating procedures related to CTE program advisory committee structure, operations, and reporting.
- **Policy 800.9 Online Curriculum and Course Development (Robb)**- The Council reviewed a proposed policy outlining IECC's framework for online curriculum and course development.

All policies and procedures were approved as presented. Policies will now be presented to the Board for review and possible approval.

Staff Recommendations for Approval

- **2026-2027 Financial Aid Cost of Attendance (Hawkins)**- The estimated Cost of Attendance (COA) is reviewed annually and revised using data driven decisions. The 2026-2027 revisions were provided for review. Council approval was given.
- **FY27 Tuition Recommendation (Gower)**- The Council discussed a proposed tuition structure that includes a modest increase to in-district tuition, statutorily compliant adjustments to non-resident tuition rates that are intended to improve transparency and competitiveness in key markets, and the application of a Health Professions tuition structure for Nursing, Radiography, Medical Laboratory Technician, and Physical Therapist Assistant programs. The discussion also noted the potential use of targeted scholarships as part of future recruitment strategies. SEPC approval was given.
- **Athletics Auxiliary Cash Plan (Gower)**- The plan establishes the obligations and commitments of each campus in addressing negative athletics cash positions through the Athletics Sinking Fund framework. The plan includes a procedure for enforceable processes in addressing negative cash balances within athletics while promoting accountability, continuity, and fiscal discipline across all campuses. Approved.

Informational & Discussion Items

- **2026-2027 Waiver Proposal (Ambrose/Gower)**- President Ambrose shared a copy of the proposal for a tuition waiver program. The awards would be determined in the Spring 2026 semester and distributed in Fall 2026. Feedback was given, and data will be collected to assist in evaluating the proposal. The item will be returned to the January SEPC.
- **Early Dismissals (Gower)**- Dr. Gower discussed occasional early dismissals for staff members. He reminded the Presidents to identify an Incident Commander for the employees remaining on campus.
- **4-Day Class Schedule Discussion (Gower/Robb)**- Dr. Robb reported on a recent meeting held to explore the pros and cons of shifting to a 4-day class schedule. SEPC engaged in discussion of the topic and provided feedback. The team agreed that there is merit in having more conversations with key stakeholders over AY27.
- **FCC Basketball Implementation Plan (Kakac)**- President Kakac provided a copy of the implementation plan for the addition of a basketball program at FCC. The plan looks at the growth opportunities while considering operational needs, funding, and feasibility. The FCC Athletic facility is projected for completion in one year and will be utilized for housing NJCAA men's and women's basketball. SEPC approval was given.

- **Advising Follow-up (Ambrose, Fowler, Robb)-** The Council discussed next steps related to the potential realignment of advising into Academic Affairs and emphasized using this moment to identify gaps in student services, align advising with Guided Pathways implementation, and determine technology and training needs. A cross-functional group including advising, Learning Commons, retention and career-related services will collaborate to develop recommendations and an implementation plan for future consideration.
- **HLC Peer Reviewer (Fowler)-** Dr. Fowler brought attention to the need for a future HLC peer reviewer, as he is currently the only reviewer within IECC. Recommendations were made. It was determined that the VCAA should serve in this role, alongside other IECC team members.
- **Policy 500.42 Student Organizations and Clubs (Fowler)-** The newly developed policy provides institutional framework for the formation, recognition, and governance of student organizations and clubs at IECC. Dr. Fowler asked SEPC to carefully review the document and provide feedback. The item will return to the January SEPC.
- **Procedure 500.42 (Formally 700.1.6) Student Organizations and Clubs (Fowler)-** The procedure is being revised to provide guidelines for establishing and operating organizations and clubs at IECC under the authority and oversight of the Dean of Students. The updated policy will replace previous procedure 700.1.6. Feedback was provided and the item will return to the January SEPC.

Capital Projects: None.

District Finance: None.

Approval of Personnel Items: None.

Other Business- Andrea McDowell asked for a final recommendation for the date of the Fall 2026 IECC FT Employee workshop. Dr. Gower will meet with the Asst. Director of HR to discuss.

Amber Malone asked for future consideration of the Holiday break dismissal and the end of the Fall Term.

Adjournment: 12:11 p.m.

Next Meeting: January 14, 2026, at 9 a.m.