Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes
November 5, 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 and reviewed the agenda. He led a discussion on the pressures that have faced the IECC leadership team and what our response says about us and the people applying the pressure. The team discussed certain issues that had been published in newspapers and social media. Dr. Gower walked through these items line by line providing context, history, and clarification of actions and implications.

Consent Agenda
Approved items included:

- **October SEPC minutes and divisional minutes**
- **Federal Work Study Timesheet Deadlines (Hawkins)-** Provided deadlines for the submission of electronic and paper timesheets, and guidelines for late submissions and supervisor responsibilities.
- **2025-2026 Tuition Waiver Report (Hawkins)-** Provided the FY'24-25 in-district tuition and fee waiver report for review.
- **Activity Allocation to ISAB (Hawkins)-** In compliance with Policy 300.3 the District will transfer $51, 977 to the Student Advisory Committee.
- **Affiliation Agreements (Robb) –**
  i. Little Company of Mary Hospital of Indiana, Inc. d/b/a Deaconess Memorial Medical Center
  ii. SSM Health

- **Grant Update (Hawkins)**

Consent Agenda approved unanimously.

Policies & Procedures

Approved for Board or administrative action:

- **Policy 400.14 Definition of Full-time Employment (McDowell)-** Defines "full-time employment" as it applies to IECC and the personnel policies of the Board of Trustees. Provides definitions for Academic Year, Fiscal Year, Normal Workweek Schedule, and Student Credit Hours.

Staff Recommendations for Approval

- **Revised 2025 IECC BoT Regular Meeting Schedule (Gower)-** The regular December 2025 meeting time will be adjusted to 5 p.m. to accommodate the Special Meeting of the Board. The Special Meeting to be held on 12/9/25 at WVC from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. will be a working retreat with no formal action taken. Approved.
- **Equity in Athletics Framework for Coaches (Presidents)-** Presidents will begin discussions in their monthly meetings for standardized staffing for coaches throughout IECC. The final plan will be submitted for approval by the February 2026 SEPC meeting. Approved.
- **FY27 Tuition Recommendation (Gower)-** Dr. Gower presented a draft of a AY27 tuition adjustment for leadership to review and provide feedback on. This item will be returned to December SEPC as an approval item with suggestions from the team incorporated as appropriate.

Informational & Discussion Items

- **Campus Emergency Management Teams & Future Meeting Times (Presidents)-** Presidents shared the list of participants for CEMT teams and provided the dates for future meetings.
- **CEMT Reports (Gower)-** In compliance with Board Policy 100.24 Emergency Management, the Presidents must submit their AY26 CEMT Annual Report to the Office of the Chancellor no later that July 15, 2026. The Chancellor's Office will compile the submissions and present a single summary to the Board at the August/September 2026 regular meeting.
- **Night Lock Project (Gower)-** As the second phase of campus security, all offices and administrative spaces will be equipped with Night Lock systems for AY27. Presidents will verify that all remaining instructional, administrative, and student-facing areas are included in the next phase of implementation and submit a needs list the Purchasing Coordinator by 1/9/26. O&M will prioritize installation during Summer 2026, and Presidents will submit a confirmation report by the Fall 2026 term.

- **Emergency Response Plans/Incident Commander list (Presidents)-** Presidents were asked to provide a summary of their plan for placing an incident commander in charge during their absence. They were asked to provide the procedure for reporting an emergency to the commander and the procedure for responding.
- **ReGroup Training (Presidents & Tait)-** Presidents submitted a list detailing the campus members who should be authorized to send emergency alerts on ReGroup. FCC will work with Paul Tait to refine their list. Mr. Tait provided instructions (in writing) for installing the ReGroup application on mobile devices, using the ReGroup website, and sending alerts. Formal face-to-face training for all verified users will take place centrally (all campuses at one time) prior to the end of the Fall 2025 term.
- **IECC Fire Drills (Gower)-** Dr. Gower has asked that all drills be coordinated with Academic Affairs to ensure that faculty are expecting the disruption and can adjust their schedule/syllabus accordingly. It was suggested that the drills happen during workshops when all staff are present. The 11/14/25 Fire Drill has been postponed. The drill will be held in Spring 2026.
- **Athletics Annual Report Follow-up (Gower)-** In compliance with Policy and Procedure 100.43 Intercollegiate Athletics, presidents must submit their AY26 Athletics Report to the Chancellor's Office no later than July 15, 2026. The Chancellor's Office will compile the reports into a comprehensive summary to be presented to the Board in August/September 2026.
- **Athletics Auxiliary Cash Plan (Gower/Hawkins)-** Negative cash positions within athletics accounts will be retired through structured financial and operational measures. Presidents were provided with future expectations and obligations for athletics spending and fundraising. Obligations will survive leadership turnover and will be reflected in annual performance reviews. The CFO's office will maintain documentation and provide the Chancellor with annual progress reports. Negative balances of sports will be retired over time through a combination of fundraising and scholarship penalties.
- **Law Enforcement Access to Campus Video Surveillance (Gower)-** Discussed a request from local law enforcement to have 24 hr. a day access to all campus cameras. The leadership team agreed that the request should be denied. IECC will continue to work alongside law enforcement by providing any requested and pertinent footage.
- **Academic Advising (Gower)-** Discussed the movement of Academic Advising from Student Affairs to the Academic Affairs division. A committee (Fowler, Ambrose, Robb & advising representative) will engage in monthly meetings to discuss the topic further and prepare a recommendation. This change will be effective AY27. This group will explore placement, job duties, and emerging technologies.

- **Discussion Regarding Log of Student Complaints (Fowler)-** In addition to the approval of the annual log of student complaints, SEPC will review each detailed occurrence to determine if there is an opportunity to improve operations to improve the student experience and reduce student complaints. The current log of student complaints was reviewed, and no actions were identified. The team discussed ways to capture informal complaints for the same purpose. Dr. Fowler will discuss this with SALT at a future division meeting and return with recommendations.
- **2026-2027 Financial Aid Cost of Attendance (Hawkins)-** The COA was provided for review and serves as the foundation for determining student financial needs, and the limit for the total Title IV aid a student can receive. Mr. Hawkins asked that SEPC review the document and bring recommendations back in December. Brandon Weger and Mr. Hawkins will review the recommendation together.
- **2025-2026 Tentative Tax Levy (Gower)-** Provided a copy of the document for review and discussion. SEPC was asked to look at IECC's EAV increase year-over-year, reminded the leadership team that IECC is already operating at its statutorily capped Education Fund levy, and called attention to the expected decline in our special levy.
- **Holiday Gift Giving (McDowell) –** Discussed a uniform approach for holiday gift giving. There will be a holiday meal provided at each campus and District Office.
- **Policy 400.11 Tenure (McDowell)-** The revised policy will ensure Board recommendations for full-time faculty tenure remain in accordance with 110 ILCS 805/Art. IIB unless otherwise defined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- **Policy & Procedure 400.35 Employee Recognition Program (McDowell)-** The newly developed P&P would provide guidelines for honoring employment milestones, retirement, and bereavement, and define eligibility, forms of recognition, and funding allowances.

Capital Projects: The WVC Foundation and IECC are engaged in a study to determine the probable costs of improvements to the tennis courts at WVC.

District Finance: None.

Approval of Personnel Items:

- **LTC Temporary Head Softball Coach/LTC Special Project Director (McDowell/Ambrose)-** The temporary FT status was approved for AY26.

- **Associate Dean of Nursing (McDowell/Robb)-** Adding this position was a recommendation that followed the most recent Nursing accreditation visit. This position had been budgeted and was approved.

Other Business-

Adjournment: 12:37 p.m.
Next Meeting: November 26, 2025, at 9 a.m.