

**Illinois Eastern Community Colleges**  
**Strategic Engagement Planning Council (SEPC) Minutes**

**October 2, 2024**

**2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Participants:** Ryan Gower, Sheryl Childers, Tona Ambrose, Alex Cline, Jay Edgren, Matt Fowler, Ryan Hawkins, Amber Malone, Jessica McDonald, Andrea McDowell, Chris Simpson, Brandon Weger

**Not Participating:**

**Invited Guests:** Paul Bruinsma, Cyndi Boyce, Robert Conn, Alani Frederick, Cassandra Goldman, Amy Tarr, Sharmila Kakac

**Call to Order & Welcome:** Dr. Gower called the meeting to order and welcomed the Council to the meeting. He provided an overview of the agenda and goals for the day. He asked the group to participate in a group exercise that demonstrated how difficult it can be for someone with knowledge of a subject to understand the perspective of someone without it. This highlighted the importance of clear communication when conveying information with stakeholders who all have various levels of knowledge.

**Recognition of Visitors & Guests:** Dr. Gower welcomed the Deans in attendance and encouraged their participation in the meeting.

**Reports:**

Alani Frederick gave a report on the recent accreditation visit for IECC Nursing. Dean Fredrick was pleased with the visit, and believes it was positive and that there will be several takeaways that lead to continuous and ongoing improvement.

Brandon Weger gave a reminder of the upcoming employee satisfaction survey that will be open from 10/15/24 – 10/31/24.

Ryan Hawkins reported on a new credit card platform for IECC purchases. He is optimistic that the service will be in place by January 1<sup>st</sup>. The platform will reduce redundant processes within the IECC Business Office.

Amber Malone reported that the first semester midterm will be on 10/9/24. On 10/16/24 OAR will host a quarterly meeting. Dean Malone asked the council to please provide feedback on OAR operations prior to that date. OAR has researched information for students who might be affected by the recent Hurricane Helene. The office has reached out to those students to confirm if they need additional resources. She reported that the student application is open and that minor revisions were made following student feedback.

**Chancellor-** Dr. Gower provided an update on negotiations, reminding the group of the Board team's most recent economic offer and key sticking points on several of the language items under consideration. He asked the Deans to communicate openly with faculty and encouraged them to continue to communicate with each other and with their supervisors to share commonly asked questions. [Dr. Edgren](#) indicated that he would follow up with the Deans on communication.

### **Presidents & Divisions-**

**SALT** – WVC recently held a fishing event for students, and he encouraged the council to visit the website and view footage of the event. Diesel Day will be held on 10/16/24. WVC College and Career Fair will be held on 10/18/24. SEPC was invited to attend both events. SALT recently held its first cocurricular assessment meeting. SALT will soon be reviewing progress toward stated goals for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the academic year.

**AALT** – Dr. Edgren reminded the upcoming dedication for Mike Dreith Pavilion on 10/11/24 and encouraged all to attend. He congratulated IECC Nursing on their recent accreditation visit. Academic Affairs is expected to finalize their mission statement this week.

**BOLT-** President Simpson gave an update from Business Operations. He reported that Health Fest is coming up at OCC on 10/5/24. The event will promote health and wellness in the community. OCC Foundation will be hosting a wine & bourbon tasting fundraiser on 10/25/24 at the Richland County Golf Course, all were encouraged to attend. His team anticipated selecting a vendor to handle book transactions across the District by December.

**IOLT** – President Ambrose gave an update on a recent Marketing vacancy at FCC. The position will be posted soon. She reported on the addition of a driver's education program at IECC. The Enrollment Management Summit is coming up on 10/23/24 where we will engage various stakeholders to discuss opportunities and challenges. A second phase of the summit will encourage strategy development with the end product being a three-year enrollment management plan. She noted that LTC is participating in the Great American Shakeout, and the other campuses indicated they are also participating. LTC will have a tent set up at the Heath Harvest Festival event in Robinson, IL on 10/5/24.

**Faculty-** Jessica McDonald reported on an inquiry regarding reporting and emergency procedures for evening instructors at OCC. [Dr. Edgren](#) will follow up with Jessica and ask the Deans to review and develop a plan. She sought clarification on mandatory training and the timing of when such training should be completed. She discussed the process for reporting excused absences for students, and challenges with doing so within Canvas. [Alex Cline](#) noted that he would explore and bring a solution forward soon.

## Consent

1. **September SEPC Meeting Minutes (Gower)**- Minutes from the September 2024 meeting were reviewed and approved as presented.
2. **Divisional Meeting Minutes (Vice Chancellors)**- Minutes from the most recent AALT, SALT, BOLT and IOLT were reviewed and approved as presented.
3. **Job Description- Academic Advisor TRIO SSS (Fowler)**- Dr. Fowler presented a copy of the Job Description for review. Approval was given.
4. **Annual Review of Student Complaints (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren presented a copy of the Institutional Record of Student Complaints for FY22-FY24 for review. Approval was given and the document will now be presented to the Board on October 15, 2024.
5. **Articulation Agreement SIU/IECC Nursing (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren presented a copy of the agreement that reflects support for IECC nursing students seeking baccalaureate degrees at SIU for review. Approval was given.
6. **Affiliation Agreements- Harsha Behavioral Center, PT Solutions (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren presented copies of the agreements for review. Approval was given and the agreements will now be presented to the Board on October 15, 2024.
7. **Policy 400.20 Family Medical Leave Act (McDowell)**- Ms. McDowell presented a copy of the revised policy that reflects compliance with the Family and Medical Leave Act for review. Approval was given and the policy will now be presented to the Board on October 15, 2024.
8. **Procedure 500.5.2 Credit for Prior Learning (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren presented revisions to the procedure that reflect the appropriate steps for processing CPL request forms. Approval was given.
9. **Grant Update (Gower)**- Dr. Gower presented a copy of the grant update for review. Approval was given.

The Consent Agenda was Approved.

## Removed from Consent Agenda

**IECC Student Housing Agreement (Fowler)**- Dr. Fowler presented a copy of the agreement for review. This item was removed for further discussion. Feedback was given by the group for areas within the document that could present challenges, and the council discussed solutions for how those challenges will be addressed. Revisions will be explored, and the document will be returned for review.

## Policy & Procedure First Reading (and Possible Approval)

1. **Procedure 300.16.1 Request for Travel Advances (Hawkins)**- Mr. Hawkins presented revisions to the procedure that outlines the process for submitting claims for necessary work-related travel expenses. Approval was given.

## Staff Recommendations for Approval

1. **HLC Assurance Argument (Edgren/Bruinsma)**- Dr. Edgren and Dr. Bruinsma presented a copy of the document that will be submitted for HLC Accreditation. The document is scheduled for review on December 2, 2024,

and outlines IECC's dedication and commitment to delivering exceptional education. The group discussed minor details within the document. Dr. Bruinsma encouraged the group to submit any final suggestions for inclusion within the upcoming week. All updates are expected to be complete by 10/18/24. He asked the group to be mindful of the timeline for returning information that might be requested from them to complete the document. Approval was given.

### **Informational/Discussion Items**

- 1. Faculty Survey Review (Gower/Edgren)-** Dr. Gower invited SEPC to discuss the survey results presented by the faculty union on September 17. The council discussed themes in the survey and how ongoing and prolonged negotiations have complicated both communication and reorganization efforts. Dr. Gower emphasized that individual discussions with bargaining unit members about working terms and conditions are off limits, and that faculty with those types of questions should be referred to the union leadership so their questions or concerns can be raised in negotiations. He reminded the team to avoid detailed conversations about subjects currently being negotiated, but that nothing prevents us from continuing to talk openly with our teams about the work being done and actively soliciting feedback and ideas from our faculty and staff. Academic Affairs will look to add a few more opportunities for Townhall meetings this semester.
- 2. 2. Exempt/Non-Exempt Discussion (McDowell/Gower) -** Dr. Gower sought further input from the team on navigating the expected changes from the Department of Labor concerning earnings thresholds for exempt and non-exempt employees. SEPC acknowledged the challenges of reclassifying employees, particularly how it impacts their benefits. No additional suggestions or solutions were offered by the team. [Human Resources](#) will begin communicating anticipated changes to affected employees in November.
- 3. Negotiations Update (Gower)-** Dr. Gower reminded the group that the next mediated sessions were scheduled for 10/5, 10/25. Those meetings are scheduled from 1:00 to 5:45pm. The only other scheduled meeting is 10/30 and it is a virtual meeting scheduled from 3:00-5:45.
- 4. Enrollment Management Summit (Gower)-** Dr. Gower and President Ambrose shared information about the upcoming EM Summit and the anticipated outcomes of the event. For the past three years, the administration has sought to turn the focus to the student experience and educational quality. IECC must have an enrollment management plan with target numbers to help guide future budget forecasting. The summit will be held on 10/23/24 at the TLB WRC from 9am – 3pm.
- 5. Data Support Ticket (Gower)-** Dr. Gower noted the importance of streamlining requests for data or reports. He reminded the council, and asked that they remind their staff that the Data Standards team has a process for submitting electronic ticket requests very similar to help desk and marketing. Employees are encouraged to utilize the formal data request ticket when seeking support from Institutional Effectiveness.

6. **IECC Housing Discussion (Ambrose, Simpson, Goldman, Gower)**- The council held a discussion regarding recent challenges with OCC housing. President Simpson shared insight to the communication he has engaged in with the facilitators of the property. The challenges were not dissimilar from those long experienced by LTC student athletes. Dr. Gower emphasized the importance of having shared expectations and some amount of institutional leverage to protect and support our students when they are experiencing sub-optimal living conditions.
7. **Signal Vine Texting Service (Ambrose)**- President Ambrose discussed the texting service that is currently being utilized at IECC and that expires in June 2025. Ms. Ambrose and Mr. Cline offered alternatives for moving away from this specific provider, including using the IECC CRM. The council discussed potential challenges and will explore the best options for reaching students, as well as a transition plan.
8. **FY24 Tuition Waiver Report (Hawkins)**- Mr. Hawkins shared with SEPC a copy of the report for FY23-FY24. The report indicated an increase in waived tuition for 2024.
9. **Employee Handbook (McDowell)**- Ms. McDowell shared a copy of the updated employee handbook for review.
10. **Athletic Equity Plan Enrollments (Fowler)**- Dr. Fowler shared a document that gave the group an understanding of where athletics hit, missed, or exceeded the minimum enrollment targets they had been provided. WVC exceeded their minimum enrollment targets by 7 students, LTC, FCC and OCC missed their minimum enrollment targets by 43, 7, and 27 students respectively. Dr. Gower reminded the President's that the purpose of Equity in Athletics was to a) ensure equal funding across the District, and b) to improve the operating budget for each team. The only way to accomplish this goal is for minimum targets to be exceeded.
11. **ESL Burlington English Access Codes (Fowler)**- In an effort to streamline the textbook usage across the District for all English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, the International Department would like to use an access code through Burlington English that would allow international students to utilize online resources for ESL I, ESL II and ESL III courses. The cost to the student will be \$48 per semester no matter how many ESL courses the student was able to complete in that semester.
12. **Requirement for Professional Licensure Disclosure (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren discussed the requirements of disclosing licensure information to individual states regarding IECC's compliance in specific programs. This process is onerous to the point of being impossible to manage. Dr. Gower will add this item to the ICCP agenda in November.

### **Capital Projects-**

1. **Preconstruction, construction, and timelines (Hawkins)**- Tabled due to time constraints.

### **District Finance-**

- 1. Three Year Budget Projection (Hawkins)**-Dr. Gower and Mr. Hawkins laid out anticipated revenues and expenditures in the three-year budget projection. Absent changes, the three-year forecast shows unsustainable deficit budgets for IECC. This is the impetus for a November SEPC retreat where each Division has been asked to identify a 5% reduction in spending for AY26.
- 2. November AY26 Planning Meeting (Gower)**- Dr. Gower reminded Presidents of their charge and encouraged them to move beyond identification of line items to eliminate, and to begin developing one-, two-, and three-year plans to ensure that any such reductions are done with careful planning, communication, and training or support to ensure that student services are not disrupted.

### **Approval of Personnel Items-**

- 1. Advertise Vacant FCC Marketing Position (Ambrose)**- President Ambrose sought SEPC approval to advertise the vacant position. SEPC approval was given.
- 2. Student Life/Head Volleyball Coach FCC (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren requested special consideration for SEPC for the creation of a new position on FCCs campus. Such positions have temporarily been put on pause as District leadership reassess current financial priorities. He shared a copy of the job description for the position for review and indicated that it was modeled after a position already in place at WVC and would actually be an elimination of .5 FTE. and discussion. Dr. Gower encouraged SEPC to accept this exception to the hiring pause in light of the reduction to FTE, the need for student programming at FCC, and the importance of strong and present leadership for women's athletics. SEPC approval was given.
- 3. Open Nursing Positions/WVC (Edgren)**- Dr. Edgren informed the council that IECC still has three vacancies in nursing and is anticipating an additional retirement in the next few days.
- 4. Other- None.**

### **Other Items-**

**Adjournment-** The meeting adjourned at 5:17pm

### **Date of Next SEPC Meeting-**

Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 2 pm @ District Office Conference Room