

Faculty Advisory Council Illinois Board of Higher Education



MINUTES

FAC-IBHE Meeting
March 20th, 2026
Rockford University

FAC members/alternates attending and their institutions

In person:

Mary Laundry	Adler University
Patrick Crawford	Augustana College
Daniel J. Coles	Aurora University
Patricia Saleeby	Bradley University
Dan Hrozencik	Chicago State University
Marie Donovan	DePaul University
Shawn Schumacher	DeVry University
Allison Douglas	Elgin Community College
Shaalein Lopez	Governors State University
Trish Aumann	IBHE Managing Director of Academic Strategy & Programs
Andy Howard	Illinois Institute of Technology
Greg Ferrence	Illinois State University
Mike Phillips	Illinois Valley Community College (at-large)
Jack Haines	Joliet Junior College
Cynthia Boyce	Lincoln Trail College (at-large)
Lara Hernandez Corkrey	Moraine Valley Community College
Jason Edgar	Morton College
Juan Martinez	Northeastern Illinois University
Tiffany Puckett	Northern Illinois University
Paul Bialek	Oakton Community College
James Marshall	Rockford University
Mary Ellen Schiller	Roosevelt University
Kristine Burgess	Rosalind Franklin University
Lichang Wang	Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Sue Wiediger	Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
Tyrone Forman	University of Illinois-Chicago
Kristi Barnwell	University of Illinois- Springfield
Gay Miller	University of Illinois- Urbana Champaign
Tosha Baker	Wabash Valley College

Amy Carr Western Illinois University

Absent:

Nicole Zeller Eastern Illinois University
Matt Landrus Lake Land College
Jessica McDonald Olney Central College

9:00 **Chair Dan Hrozencik, CSU**, Call to order and Introductions.

9:03 **James Marshall (Rockford)** delivered a speech of introduction for President Dr. Patricia Lynott. She opened by noting that Greg Ferrence from ISU has an exceptional voice, then transitioned into a reflection on the challenging landscape in education and academia. She described RU (Rockford University) as balancing the liberal arts with serving their community in Rockford in the 21st century. She distinguished between changes designed to support RU's mission and changes that diminish it. She emphasized the importance of serving as agents of change and encouraged all participants to approach their discussions with seriousness and purpose.

9:10 James then introduced Elizabeth Davies, Ph.D., Provost of Rockford University, who presented "Community Partners Become Community Internship Opportunities." She discussed the legacy of Jane Addams (RU alum) and highlighted how the university has collaborated with local officials in Rockford to strengthen mutual initiatives. She also noted that Addams' legacy included the development of a summer program for women. Addams brought 100 women from settlement houses to RU each summer for 10 years.

9:18 James then introduced Kristen Clarke, MSW, LCSW, Director of the Lang Wellness Center and Social Work Program Director, along with Elizabeth Nardi, MBA, Chief Strategy and Research Officer, for a presentation titled "Rockford University's Economic Impact and Growing Partnerships." Clark's presentation highlighted Jane Addams as the founder of social work and examined the university's partnerships with various institutions to support funding for its social work programs. Clarke encouraged working with student affairs to identify community partners.

9:24 The presentation then transitioned to Elizabeth Nardi, who outlined the program's economic impact. She noted that these data are shared with the community, local officials, and businesses, and that the program actively tracks student outcomes, including retention rates. She also presented concrete data on the program's regional economic contributions and discussed a counterfactual scenario examining the potential impact on the community if Rockford University did not exist. Nardi described the RU Pathways program, developed with Rockford public schools to address a teacher shortage, offering participants reduced tuition, preferred hiring by the district, and free Education Master's degrees (paid by the district). They are in their ninth cohort of this program. The Rockford Promise Partnership, which supports up to 100 local high school students per year with free tuition. Several regional colleges participate. **Paul Bialek (Oakton)** asked who is funding the Rockford Promise Partnership, and she discussed multiple revenue streams including income from a nearby casino.

9:40 Deepshikha Shukla, Ph.D., MBA, Associate Vice President of Business Innovation and Dean of the College of Professional and Extended Learning (CPEL), presented “Bridging Opportunities, Empowering Individuals,” beginning with an overview of CPEL and its mission. In Rockford, which has one of the hottest housing markets in the nation, she emphasized the college’s responsibility to respond rapidly to evolving workforce needs and highlighted its role in bridging the gap between higher education and employer demands. She also noted CPEL’s ability to serve adult learners and underserved populations, with the overarching goal of creating pathways for economic mobility. CPEL aims to meet workforce demand for skills rather than degrees. Rockford is an industrial town. CPEL supports traditional learners too, but in a skills-based setting. It also develops skills-based certificates that are short-cycle, modular, employer-informed, and involve open enrollment and corporate partnerships. A youth pipeline program for at-risk youth fosters their career development and internships. Over 50% are PELL and MAP-eligible students. Students get a career development course. Adult learners and underserved populations get stackable credentials.

Tyrone Forman (UIC) asked a question about sustainability and the metrics of success. She discussed a number of concrete ways the university has stabilized sustainability, including revenue streams and building a better name recognition with the community. **Sue Wiediger (SIUE)** asked about the faculty workload connection to CPEL. Shukla said that faculty received additional stipends/income if they choose to participate. **Andy Howard (IIT)** asked if they have FTEs devoted to resources. She said it is dependent on the work of a few passionate individuals, but it's important for the success of the program. She also stated that they have managed to create boards with local funding connections, and their job is to prepare the workforce. The university has the people; the local connections have the funding.

10:02 Mary Weaks-Baxter, Ph.D, Department of English; and Director, Jane Addams Center for Civic Engagement discussed “Grounding Community Engagement in University Mission: A Case Study of the Jane Addams Center at Rockford University.” She discussed several important community based programs, such as: the Jane Addams day of service, RU Hearts in Action, and the Rockford Plunge, and their website shows their areas of focus. She talked about campus events that included nearly every member of campus including students and staff. She discussed civic engagement initiatives and community-based learning courses. She ended with highlights including hosting a global event on campus in 2027. **Tiffany Puckett (NIU)** asked about the date of the event, and she said Fall 2027. **Jack Haines (JJC)** asked how the civic engagement days revolved around its academic calendar, and she said that all day classes are canceled. **Tyrone Forman (UIC)** asked how the university connects more to social justice similar to Jane Addams, and she discussed anti-racism initiatives that have been on campus. She discussed their website's land acknowledgement page and said they make sure the organizations they partner with are in line with their social views. **Patricia Saleeby (Bradley)** asked about monetary funding, and she said they need a community engagement impact statement to know for sure, as well as pairing with what a speaker had discussed earlier such as transportation support and day care.

10:26 The program then transitioned to The Honorable Thomas P. McNamara, Mayor of Rockford, who spoke on the importance of partnerships between communities and higher education. He emphasized that his role is to reduce barriers so that residents and students

can succeed at all levels, from K–12 through higher education and adult learning. Noting that higher education attainment in Rockford (23%) is below the state and national averages, he highlighted the city’s partnerships with Rockford University and Northern Illinois University, including programs that allow over 500 Rockford residents with a 3.0 GPA to attend either institution tuition-free, citing 70% are first gen; 60% students of color; they outperform general admission students at NIU. He also noted the strength of their mentorship initiatives, with each student paired with a mentor, 10 to 1 for A students, and 1:1 for C students. He concluded by underscoring the importance of engaging in difficult conversations within safe spaces and expressed appreciation for Rockford University’s role in the community. **Gay Miller (UIUC)** asked more about the mentor programs, and he spoke about the importance of them along with the next tier of the program: internships. He said a lot of these programs are meant to be sticky, meaning the students have an impetus to stay around Rockford and call it home, citing about 97%. **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** asked about funding, and he reiterated the agreement with the local casino.

10:45 BREAK

10:50 **IBHE Board Chair Pranav Kothari** immediately transitioned to the next portion of the meeting, organizing his remarks into two categories. He began with master planning and the needs of the state, explaining that the role of IBHE is to propose a budget to the Governor’s office, typically recommending increases between 1% and 4%. He also outlined IBHE’s responsibilities in program and institutional approval, noting, for example, the process for approving or not approving institutions such as Grand Canyon University to offer programs (e.g., nursing) in Illinois. He added that they also have to address anything ICCB approves, which he didn’t necessarily think was a good use of IBHE time. Additionally, he discussed IBHE’s management of statewide data systems and grant administration. (The IBHE has six functions by statute, available here: <https://www.ibhe.org/statsresp.html>) In response to questions about whether IBHE serves an advocacy role in higher education, he clarified that while their policies support the sector, advocacy is not their primary function, as other organizations are more directly responsible for that work. There was a question if they always do what the Governor says, and he said that it depends on who the Governor is.

11:02 **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** said that IBHE is appointed by him (Governor), so obviously the role is to support him, and although **Kothari** agreed, he said they can disagree on core principles and that the IBHE Board and staff are content and policy experts, not political experts.. **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** asked if the IBHE needs approval from the Governor’s office before they promote or take a policy to the legislature. Kothari said the Executive Director appears in that role and is in regular contact with the Governor. They both discussed obstacles with the GCU discussion. **Tena Helton (UIS)** asked a question about the board being proactive about proposals and needing more information. **Kothari** said he has this great data set with employment gaps, but universities don’t ask for more data even if it’s published. He would like the data to be more “well promoted”. He said that to do such a program at the state level would include IAI, HLC, etc. He said the IBHE publishes data and workforce needs, but doesn’t go finding programs to fill them. But workforce agencies might do that. He added that the IBHE doesn’t have a habit of looking at how other states are solving issues, but he’s on a Midwest commission that includes some state legislators that are helpful here. **Sue Wiediger (SIUE)** added that in a previous FAC meeting we received the quad cities report on the workforce, and that it was an awesome report, agreeing that the

data is there. **Cynthia Boyce (Lincoln Trail)** asked if there are any programs to help two-year institutions compete with four-year institutions, and he said they are focusing on removing obstacles, which may fall back to funding. **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** asked a question about information regarding the three-year degree. **Trish Aumann (IBHE)** provided an answer that included HLC, teaching, and learning outcomes. Dan also asked a question about funding advocacy and how IBHE sees it. Kothari said the funding is now a political process not a policy process, which is outside of his scope. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** asked about guardrails to determine equity, and Kothari said that the bill has to be crafted well in order to not welcome lawsuits.

- 11:22 **IBHE Chair Kothari** answered a question about SB3314, a bill that would gather data about credit hour production by various types of faculty. He said it wasn't created by the IBHE staff, and the IBHE is unclear on the use data. **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** asked why the data bill was even created and he said he didn't know. He moved to a question about the bill allowing community colleges to offer 4-year degrees, and he said the bill would involve the IBHE and ICCB in a double-review process, and does not think there would be many 4-year degrees at CCs. It's another tool supporting equity and access. . He said there is a different funding formula that includes property taxes, and even if passed in the Fall, it will be fully implemented much later. He read a question regarding their role in other education such as K-12, and he reminded the FAC members that there are over 800 school districts in Illinois, as well as a significant number of community colleges and public colleges. He then responded to a question about the implications for "professional" students whose graduate degrees who might no longer be offered loans through the federal government—like some health degrees—and said the state doesn't agree, and he said the state doesn't agree with that sentiment and that the federal approach, although arbitrary, is more of an ISAC issue. **Patricia Saleeby (Bradley)** talked about social workers and their loan payoff cycle, and that there needs to be great coordination with academics and professional associations. **Daniel Coles (Aurora)** said that previous budgets in the state came from other budgets in the administration, which created agencies that could share funds. Kothari basically reiterated that it's important to discuss these funding formulas and how much the gaps are. He pointed out that community colleges have the ability to raise property taxes that the 4-years don't have. Kothari can see the difference when they have meetings at community colleges; the 4-years have much greater deferred maintenance needs, and the IBHE did put some attempt to address this in the budget. But there is no money for the funding formula. He's been thinking about whether the IBHE should flag the gap in higher education funding, as we do on the SURS board. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** said that once a formula is passed, it makes the institutional decision-making processes much easier since the politicians voted on it.
- 11:44 **IBHE Chair Kothari** raised a question regarding student needs and the use of a student needs survey. As part of the SUCCESS program, liaisons on each campus are being asked to identify the basic needs of their students, and he noted that last year's report is available online. **Trish Aumann (IBHE)** explained that the process between the ICCB and IBHE regarding the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is intended. She clarified that IBHE does not require individual course submissions, but instead focuses on alignment with learning outcomes. She added that further clarification of the question may be needed to provide a more complete response and emphasized that alignment remains a central goal across Illinois higher education organizations. **Jack Haines (JJC)** raised concerns about workplace equity between high schools dual credit courses and colleges, particularly regarding class sizes and

caps. Aumann responded by noting the importance of considering the full educational landscape. **Greg Ferrence (ISU)** added that class size caps at ISU differ significantly from those at community colleges and high schools. **Cynthia Boyce (Lincoln Trail)** emphasized that institutions must work diligently to ensure dual credit quality and build strong collaborative partnerships.

- 11:54 **Amy Carr (WIU)** posed two questions regarding how four-year institutions can maintain unique gen ed programs and how to reflect on the structure of GECC. Aumann responded that IBHE reviews policy, identifies areas needing additional context, gathers feedback, and then develops recommendations. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** provided an example from his institution, highlighting the challenges and implications of the GECC requiring one lab versus the two he used to in a two-course geology sequence, and the impact Aumann indicated that such a proposal would likely be approved if formally submitted. **Tena Helton (UIS)** added that while the GECC was intended to expand flexibility and maximize institutional and student options, in practice it has narrowed curricular choices and limited the ability of institutions to maintain distinct Gen Ed program structures. The GECC was set as a minimum, but functions as a maximum for 4-year schools. An unintended consequence is that it limits the ability of individual 4-year institutions to offer unique Gen Ed programs.
- 12:00 **Chair Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** sought a motion to adjourn for lunch. **Jack Haines (JJC)** made the motion, **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** with the second, with unanimous consent. So moved.
- 12:45 **Chair Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** reconvened after lunch to begin with reports. Wednesday, March 18th was an IBHE board meeting day. He also attended the Coalition for Transforming Higher Education funding meeting. He said that there is a growing frustration with the Governor and the Board to get behind the funding bill, and said he's going to send out a funding bill email which the FAC can send to representatives. The next FAC meeting after May is June 17th in Springfield with meetings in the morning and lunch (potentially) with members of the IBHE afterwards. He said that the Capitol portion of the May meeting will be part of the official agenda for reimbursement purposes. He said that due to time we are going to cut caucus meetings today, and the chairs agreed. He then transferred over to a discussion where he will be evacuating the Chair position in the Fall and that there will be elections in May.
- 12:50 **Vice Chair Jack Haines (Joliet Junior College)** started by saying thank you to the host James Marshall at Rockford University. He said that the next meeting is in April and that individuals can decide whether to use the room block or not and that it's the last meeting before the Capitol visit.
- 12:55 **Secretary Jason Edgar, Morton College,** asked everyone to look at the membership list and make sure everything looks good including title, email, and term.
- 1:00 **Sue Wiediger (SIUE)** spoke about the seven focus areas of the meeting that she had previously attended. The seven focus areas are: Pathways to Degree Completion; Affordability; Workforce & Economic Development; Targeted Talent Development ; Efficiency; Equity & Student Success; and Student Access & Keeping Talent in Illinois.

Nora Heist drew on the list of questions the FAC had provided to Chair Kothari to highlight that many faculty concerns were grouped under the Pathways to Degree Completion topic. The business meeting was also interesting because in the discussion of the Grand Canyon request for operating permission in Chicago (which was tabled to wait for more information), one board member suggested a state-wide inventory of nursing programs might be helpful to guide understanding of future requests for nursing program approval.

- 1:05 **Legislative Liaison Mike Phillips (IVCC)** talked about the timing and stalling of the academic bills at the Capitol. He talked about a house appropriations committee meeting and working through the bills. He also said that when filling out witness slips to fill it out as “self”. He said there is a teach-out at the Capitol on April 16th among other protests at the Capitol on that day. He said that the students really enjoy the trips to the Capitol, and tries to schedule as many appointments as possible, including with chairs and minority spokespeople. **Sue Wiediger (SIUE)** asked a question about delayed transfers, and although he didn’t have an answer, he was sure the information was available online. **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** said that the FAC is down one public caucus member, and the community college caucus is entertaining an at-large member, Angela Antoulou from College of DuPage.
- 1:15 **IBHE Liaison Trish Aumann** talked about academic awards and their due dates. She said the DFI board has new members. She thanked everybody for the information about the IAI panels. She said the students did a great job sharing their voice in regards to the strategic plan. She discussed the HOUSE liaison summit on May 21st and that they will host a session on the house report. She also requested feedback on the workforce piece and other pertinent reports. **Tena Helton (UIS)** expressed it was extremely reassuring that those reports were going to be available. **Patricia Saleeby (Bradley)** talked about bringing in the data showing the connections. **Gay Miller (UIUC)** asked if there are exceptions to degrees with low enrollment, and Aumann said not every degree will meet every metric.
- 1:29 **Chair Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** asked for a motion to pass the February minutes. **Jack Haines (JJC)** made the motion, **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** made the second, with the motion passing, with the exception of **Patricia Saleeby (Bradley)** who abstained.

1:30 Working Group

Mental health group- waiting on IRB approval.

Technology working group- deciding on what topics to focus on in Spring 2026 with a working document known as a rambler with the next meeting to align the ramble with the IBHE’s specific plan.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) working group- discussions of groups that are attempting to get funding to map out the PLA landscape, in hopes that both groups can join forces and start working on policies.

Equity working group- working on accommodations offices and various questions about what is working and what needs to change. The group has not been looking at cost for accommodations.

Faculty and student mental health working group- continuing to work on the survey that they would like to pass out to all institutions.

Early college working group- the group looked at the Administrative Rules of the Dual Credit Quality Act and reviewed and reviewed where they could compare the NACEP requirements to administrative rules.

Student needs working group- the group said that they were working on creating a shared document, and tweaking their questionnaire to direct it more to faculty who might be on the front lines of student need. **Cynthia Boyce (Lincoln Trail)** asked how everyone was doing with their compliance and accessibility policies at their institution. A majority of the FAC said they were not working towards compliance, and Cynthia wondered out loud how enforcement was going to work in the first place.

2:15 Chair Dan Hrozencik, CSU, sought a motion to adjourn. **Jack Haines (JJC)** made the motion, **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** with the second, with unanimous consent.

Minutes respectfully submitted by *Secretary Jason Edgar, Morton College*