



## Faculty Advisory Council Illinois Board of Higher Education

### MINUTES

16 January 2026 Meeting Agenda  
IBHE FAC Meeting

Elgin Community College  
1700 Spartan Drive  
Elgin, IL 60123  
Meeting room B180 and B18

### 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
Stacy Kosier	Carl Sandburg College
Dan Hrozencik	Chicago State University
Marie Donovan	DePaul University
Shawn Schumacher	DeVry University
Allison Douglas	Elgin Community College
Nicole Zeller	Eastern Illinois University
Shaalein Lopez	Governors State University
Andy Howard	Illinois Institute of Technology
Greg Ferrence	Illinois State University
Mike Phillips	Illinois Valley Community College (at-large)
Jack Haines	Joliet Junior College
Sarah Hill	Lake Land College
Cynthia Boyce	Lincoln Trail College (at-large)
Lara Hernandez Corkrey	Moraine Valley Community College
Jason Edgar	Morton College
Juan Martinez	Northeastern Illinois University
James Marshall	Rockford University
Kristine Burgess	Rosalind Franklin University
Sarah Garber	Rosalind Franklin University (MS)
Lichang Wang	Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Sue Wiediger	Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
Tyrone Forman	University of Illinois-Chicago
Tena Helton	University of Illinois- Springfield
Tosha Baker	Wabash Valley College
Amy Carr	Western Illinois University

**Absent:**

Jessica McDonald	Olney Central College
Tiffany Puckett	Northern Illinois University
Mary Ellen Schiller	Roosevelt University
Gay Miller	University of Illinois- Urbana Champaign

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

9:05 **Alison Douglas (ECC)** gave the FAC some housekeeping notes. She introduced Carla Jiminez for setting up the presentation, and Dr. Schopen the first speaker.

9:08 Welcome and College Overview, **Dr. Annamarie Schopen, Vice President of Teaching, Learning, and Student Development, Elgin Community College**

She discussed the institution's mission, improving lives through learning, and how it guides their work in promoting student success across the region. She explained how this mission connects with local employers and community partners present at the meeting. She also reviewed the college's degree programs, the structure of the Board of Trustees, and the institution's primary revenue streams, noting that funding is largely derived from local taxes. She compared tuition rates with those of other community colleges and provided annual enrollment updates, reporting positive trends in the fall term with a decline in the spring, which she attributed in part to the current political climate. She noted that a significant portion of students attend part-time while maintaining employment. She also reviewed student demographics, highlighting that 52% of the student population identifies as Latinx, the highest represented group. Finally, she discussed the institution's strong one-year graduation rate and identified the ten institutions to which students most frequently transfer.

**Dr. Schopen (ECC)** discussed the Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Strategic Plan and emphasized the importance of ensuring the community understands that ECC is a safe and welcoming environment. She highlighted several recent awards earned by the institution. She also reviewed the Manufacturing and Technology Center (MTC), describing it as a future-focused project of which the College is particularly proud, accompanied by a brief video presentation. She outlined the range of wellness services offered by the College, including the Spartan Food Pantry which they offer fresh produce, veggies, greens, and mangos, and discussed co-curricular activities at ECC, emphasizing their critical role in fulfilling the institution's mission. She concluded by previewing the Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC), offering as an example the "Fur the Vote" initiative, a voter registration event that incorporated a petting zoo to promote student engagement.

9:31 **Alison Douglas (ECC)** then introduced the following for their presentation.

**Dr. Marisol Rivera**, Associate Professor of History, Director of the Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC)

**Sarah Bass**, Associate Dean of Communications and Behavioral Sciences, CURIC Mentor

**Ryan Sliwa**, ECC Student and CURIC Fellow

**Dr. Vince Gaddis**, Professor of History, CURIC Mentor

**Dr. Rick Jesik**, Associate Professor of Physics, CURIC Mentor

- 9:35 Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC)  
**Dr. Rivera (ECC)** began the presentation by discussing how the Center for Undergraduate Research, Innovation, and Creativity (CURIC) helps level the playing field for students engaged in academic research. She described how CURIC-supported projects have been presented at conferences and conventions across the country. She noted that the program is currently in its fourth year and that she has served as its leader since the second year.
- 9:38 **Dr. Rivera (ECC)** explained that CURIC originated from a women's group known as SWAG and has since expanded into its current form. She discussed the program's wide range of outcomes, which allow students to pursue projects aligned with their individual interests. She highlighted both completed and ongoing research projects, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the work and the relationships fostered among participants. She also noted that several projects have been accepted for presentation at academic conferences. CURIC mentors additionally discussed specific projects and panels in which students have participated, including work in astronomy and political communication.
- 9:51 **Dr. Alison Douglas (ECC)** asked how participation in CURIC supports students' long-term academic and professional development. **Sarah Bass (ECC)** responded by explaining how research projects help students find their voice, sharing an example of a previously timid student who became one of the most engaged and vocal students on campus through her involvement with CURIC. **Rick Jesik (ECC)** emphasized the importance of research as a process that builds upon prior scholarship and highlighted the role of confidence in effective research and inquiry.
- 9:57 **Dr. Alison Douglas (ECC)** posed a broader question regarding the importance of research within CURIC. **Rick Jesik (ECC)** explained that students are now engaging in foundational research experiences at ECC prior to transferring to four-year institutions. He noted that early exposure to higher levels of research reduces intimidation and fosters student confidence. **Sarah Bass (ECC)** affirmed that CURIC at ECC helps level the research playing field for students.
- 10:05 **Ryan Sliwa**, an ECC student and CURIC Fellow, discussed his research on queer rhetoric during World War II and noted that he was accepted into the Johns Hopkins Institute for Undergraduate Research. He emphasized the importance of CURIC in his development as a researcher and in helping him better understand his scholarly interests and personal identity. **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** asked how CURIC staff recruit faculty mentors and student participants. **Dr. Rivera (ECC)** responded that research ideas often originate with students and that faculty are typically willing to support projects when approached, noting that sustained commitment from both students and faculty is a key factor in the program's success.
- 10:12 **Greg Ferrence (ISU)** posed two questions. First, he asked about a previous research consortium and whether CURIC would be interested in hosting research events. **Sarah Bass (ECC)** responded that initiatives of this nature are currently in development. Second, he inquired about whether prior learning, such as research experience, appears on student transcripts. Sara Bass explained that specific transcript indicators are used to reflect student participation in research projects.

- 10:15 **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** asked how CURIC receives support from the college. **Sarah Bass (ECC)** explained that while the program receives some institutional funding, it also secures support through research grants and the broader institutional budget. She noted that administrative support is provided as well, with executives and staff holding specific roles to assist with CURIC operations.
- 10:18 **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** asked about the number of students participating in CURIC, and **Sarah Bass (ECC)** responded that there are approximately 23 fellows. **Jack Haines (JCC)** inquired about library use, and Bass noted that dedicated library sessions are available to CURIC fellows. **Jason Edgar (Morton)** asked about a speaker series, and the CURIC team confirmed that one exists, even if it does not always directly connect with the students' research. **Shaalein Lopez (GSU)** asked about projects beyond traditional research, and Bass provided an example involving performative art. **Juan Martinez (NIU)** reiterated the value of programs like CURIC, citing research that supports their benefits. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** asked about the time commitment for student participants, and Bass noted it is approximately six cumulative hours per semester. **Cynthia Boyce (LTC)** expressed appreciation for the program, emphasizing its importance at the community college level. **Tena Helton (UIS)** highlighted the significance of such research programs and inquired about training; Bass responded that formal training is limited, as the program has been fortunate to attract highly capable students. Boyce also asked about collaboration, and Bass confirmed that CURIC fosters collaboration both within departments & with other colleges.
- 10:35 **Break**
- 10:45 **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** introduced John Miller, Local President at University Professionals of Illinois Local 4100 to discuss ideas in Illinois Higher Education.
- 10:47 John Miller, Local President at University Professionals of Illinois Local 4100  
**John Miller (UPI)** discussed the UPI and its campaign for the semester, noting challenges posed by federal and state Department of Education issues. He clarified that while the IBHE does not control the state budget, it must advocate for faculty and support the Equity Funding Bill, expressing frustration that the bill has not been endorsed despite being created by the legislature. Miller credited the Governor for doubling the MAP budget but emphasized the need for further increases, noting that chronic underfunding at all levels negatively impacts students. He addressed declining enrollment, citing assumptions that downward trends are tied to College Bound students and student outmigration to other states, and criticized political lip service to higher education funding that fails to produce action. He noted the impact on adjunct faculty and stated that the higher education "funding cliff" is already occurring, with layoffs and cuts underway. He observed that legislators often delay action while waiting for stability in Washington, though instability remains ongoing. Miller also discussed upcoming events, including a teach-out on April 16 at the State Capitol, and raised concerns about the state retirement system, noting that perceived weaknesses lead some near retirement to leave Illinois. He concluded with short- and long-term solutions, including consideration of a millionaire's tax. He noted that this year more students will be affected by the loss of health care subsidies, increased food insecurity, and rising homelessness. He emphasized the critical role of the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) in urging the IBHE to fulfill its mission and fund its priorities, stressing that support for higher education is essential to civil society, not just long-term growth. He added that at regional

public universities, the return on investment exceeds \$2.50 for every \$1 spent. Miller also raised concerns about AI, citing its potential to strip and appropriate intellectual property from Illinois professors. Additionally, he addressed fear among students related to ICE enforcement and ongoing pressure from parents for expanded dual credit offerings. He noted that dual credit emerged as a lower-cost response to higher education underfunding but diminishes the cultural experience, social change, and personal growth that occur after high school, while also limiting the ability of high school students to fully be high school students. He expressed concerns about academic freedom protections for those teaching dual credit courses. Miller stated his support for four-year degrees at community colleges in applied sciences where such programs are not currently offered, but noted that only three Illinois community colleges may be able to afford the necessary costs. Because community colleges can increase junior- and senior-level course costs by only 50%, institutions would need to raise tuition broadly or increase property taxes, as the state bill authorizing selected baccalaureate degrees provides no additional state funding.

- 11:26 **John Miller** noted that the transit budget shortfall—exceeding one billion dollars and likely to result in service cuts, increased costs, and layoffs—was addressed by the legislature during a special session. He suggested that the same approach could be applied to higher education, questioning why a comparable legislative response has not been pursued to address funding shortfalls in that sector.
- 11:28 **Daniel Coles (Aurora)** said he appreciated Miller’s speech and asked a question about lawsuits about tier II, which violated the Social Security act and safe harbor act. Miller said that there has to be one-on-one lawsuits because each case is different. He added that there are no cases historically of Safe Harbor Act violations; this year there will be retirees in Illinois experiencing them for the first time.
- 11:32 **Andy Howard (IIT)** said Miller needs to add AI environmental issues to his discussion and asked for clarification; Andy, along with **Greg Ferrence (ISU)**, provided an explanation. Ferrence also raised questions about AI data-mining and intellectual property.
- 11:38 **Jack Haines (JJC)** asked Miller to make a strong argument for dual credit. Miller talked about matching dual credit with skill level.
- 11:39 **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** asked about other states who have done a millionaire’s tax besides Massachusetts, and he said there are none, mainly because of laws and amendments.
- 11:42 **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** asked for more information about the teach out, and Miller provided that information: raising awareness for underfunding education by shutting down the Capitol on April 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 11:45 **Patricia Saleeby (Bradley)** discussed the emergency funds program and its benefits. Miller agreed with the sentiment and added that students who rely on food pantries should also be enrolled in SNAP benefits.
- 11:46 **Lunch**

- 12:30 **Chair Dan Hrozencik, CSU**, discussed the next IBHE board meeting, which he will attend. He also discussed the June meeting date (June 17) because the FAC will also meet near the same location and hopefully mingle with the IBHE for lunch. He said that the meeting in February will be on Zoom and he has a guest lined up. He said that Loyola University Chicago has been invited to the FAC, as well as an individual from College of DuPage.
- 12:37 **Shawn Schumacher (DeVry)** said he spoke with a representative in his district about the two-year baccalaureate degree. He said that it doesn't look like Faculty had any say in the forming of the bill, because it has lots of issues. He also discussed HLC reps speaking at the April meeting at Morton College and for us to brainstorm and collect questions during caucus time to ask them.
- 12:40 **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** discussed IBHE representation at meetings, noting that Jill Gebke was handling other duties today and that Trish Aumann will join the group in February. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** requested moving his January 2027 meeting date from the 15th to the 22nd; this was noted and will be discussed later.
- 12:43 **Vice Chair Jack Haines (JJC)** discussed the meeting dates next year including the new IVCC date. He also asked Rockford if they were OK with March, which they said yes. He also said thanks to Alison Douglas for her hosting duties.
- 12:46 **Secretary Jason Edgar, Morton College**, said the minutes have been updated including people who were left off the attendance and Amy's questions with IBHE Chair Kothari which have been updated and sent to the website.
- 12:50 **Legislative Liaison Mike Phillips, IVCC**, said that there has not been any movement on any of the bills including the funding bills.
- 12:56 **Dan Hrozencik (CSU)** moved to business meetings and asked for a motion to accept the December minutes with changes. **Marie Donovan (DePaul)** made the motion and **Jack Haines (JJC)** seconded. All those were in favor with two abstaining, JM and NZ abstained.
- 1:00 Working Groups
- 1:30 Caucus Meetings
- 2:05 Caucus and Working Group Reports
- 2:06 **Technology working group- Greg Ferrence (ISU)** reported on AI issues and how the tech is so broad they are focusing on more specific issues.
- 2:08 **Equity working group- Tyrone Foreman (UIC)** reported they are still discussing how to support Faculty from an inclusive standpoint for students with accommodations.
- 2:10 **Early College working group- Amy Carr (WIU)** reported on NACEP reports and hopes to improve/revise it with other colleagues in the working group and share it by March.

- 2:12 **Mental Health Group- Sue Wiediger (SIUE)** said they are working on an IRB application.
- 2:14 **Student Needs Group- Juan Martinez (NIEU)** discussed the basic needs survey and focusing on target populations. **Tena Helton (UIS)** said that she had to find the information on her campus and that she had to find the pathway, but it was available.
- 2:16 **Two-Year Caucus- Jason Edgar (Morton)** said that the community colleges worked on Higher Learning Commission questions.

**Independent Schools Caucus- Shawn Schumacher (DeVry)** discussed the questions they are going to ask the legislator about the funding bill, including a rep in his home district.

**Public Institutions Caucus- Amy Carr (WIU)** discussed advocating for increased funding with a short position paper about adequate resources. **Mike Phillips (IVCC)** then explained why John Miller takes such an oppositional approach to the IBHE, and its because they aren't advocating enough for funding.

- 2:30 **Chair Dan Hrozencik, CSU,** sought a motion to adjourn. **Shawn Schumacher (DeVry)** made the motion, **Patrick Crawford (Augustus)** with the second. So moved.

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