



Minutes of the February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535

The 818th meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 was conducted on February 17, 2026 at the Skokie campus of Oakton College, 7701 Lincoln Avenue, Skokie, Illinois.

Closed Session – Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Burns called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. in room A167. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Martha Burns	Chair	Present
Trustee Theresa Bashiri-Remetio	Vice Chair	Present
Trustee William Stafford	Secretary	Present
Trustee Micah Eimer		Present
Trustee Benjamin Salzberg		Absent
Trustee Marie Lynn Toussaint		Present
Trustee Wendy Yanow		Present
Trustee Chris AbiNader	Student Trustee	Present

Also present in room A167 were Dr. Joianne Smith, President; Johanna Fine, Chief Human Resources Officer; Dr. Bernard Little, Vice President for Student Affairs; Dr. Ileo Lott, Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Michele Roberts, Vice President for Administrative Affairs.

Chair Burns asked for a motion to go into closed session under the exceptions to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, with the purpose of reviewing closed session minutes of January 20, 2026; and considering the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees, collective negotiating matters, and pending litigation.

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio made the motion, seconded by Trustee Eimer. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye
Trustee AbiNader	Aye

At 6:05 p.m., Trustee Bashiri-Remetio made a motion to adjourn the closed session meeting which was seconded by Trustee Stafford. A voice vote was called and the closed session was adjourned.

Open Session – Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Burns called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at time p.m. in room P103-104.

Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Martha Burns	Chair	Present
Trustee Theresa Bashiri-Remetio	Vice Chair	Present
Trustee William Stafford	Secretary	Present
Trustee Micah Eimer		Present
Trustee Benjamin Salzberg		Absent
Trustee Marie Lynn Toussaint		Present
Trustee Wendy Yanow		Present
Trustee Chris AbiNader	Student Trustee	Present

Also present in room 1506:

Leadership: Dr. Joianne Smith, President; Dr. Kelly Iwanaga Becker, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning; Johanna Fine, Chief Human Resources Officer; Dr. Bernard Little, Vice

President for Student Affairs; Dr. Ileo Lott, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Michele Roberts, Vice President for Administrative Affairs; Katherine Sawyer, Chief Advancement Officer.

Administrators: May Alimboyoguen, Dean of Health Careers; Robyn Bailey, Dean of Skokie Campus; Marc Battista, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Matthew Boutilier, Director of Online Curriculum and Instruction; Steve Butera, Director of Communications and External Relations; Dr. Sebastian Contreras Jr., Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Student Success; Dr. Leana Cuellar, Dean of Access, Equity and Diversity; Dr. Rick Daniels, Director of Institutional Equity and Inclusion; Matt Huber, Dean of Enrollment Management; Lindsey Hunter, Director of Enrollment Services; Dr. Jesse Ivory, Assistant Vice President for Workforce Innovation and College Partnerships; Jacob Jeremiah, Dean of Library; Dr. Ashley Knight, Interim Dean of Liberal Arts; Dr. Kanchana Mendes, Dean of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Christine Paciero, Director of Athletics; Dr. James Rabchuk, Dean of STEM; Delia Rodriguez, Dean of Adult and Continuing Education; Dr. Emmanuel Sarris, Interim Dean of Business and Career Technologies; Jeff Spidle, Interim Director of IT Infrastructure; John Wade, Chief Information Officer; Dan Weber, Registrar/Director of Registrar Services; Aaron Wernick, Chief of Police and Emergency Management; Ella Whitehead, Director of Admission and Equity Outreach; Andy Williams, Controller.

Union Leaders: Jennifer Crowley, Classified Staff Association; Dr. Mary Hope Griffin, Adjunct Faculty Association; Patrick O'Donnell, Full-Time Faculty Association.

Faculty: Paul Bialek, Mathematics; Lisa Cherivtch, Business; Brittany Coleman, Library; Peter Hudis, Humanities and Philosophy; Michelle Oh, Library; Katherine Schuster, Education; Terrence Sinabajje, Psychology; Toni Surdo, Psychology; George Vail, Automotive Technology; Leslie Van Wolvelaar, Accounting.

Staff: Jason Arndt, Enrollment Services; Giacomo Cirrincione, Learning Center; Allison Conner, Learning Center; John Curtis, Media Services; Chris Dentamaro, Access and Disability Resource Center; John Donoghue, Facilities; Sali Esber, Access and Disability Resource Center; Dante Espejo Ramirez, Enrollment Services; Krissie Harris, Student Life and Campus Inclusion; Marcus Hayes, Auxiliary Services; Leah Kintner, Workforce Development; Ewa Lyczewska, Marketing and Communications; Grace McKemey, Enrollment Services; Caitlin Melzer, Enrollment Services; Steph Moreno, Facilities; Kristine Panopio, Access and Disability Resource Center; Jenna Roecker, Financial Assistance; Paul Sanburg, Advising and Transitions; Grantly Scott, Testing Center; Vinita Shah, Media Services; Jaime Smith, Administrative Affairs; Beatriz Sparks, President's Office; Kari Susens, Advising and Transitions; Lauren Waitt, Admission.

Students: Jaalen Banner, Rayyah Mohammed, Jose San Martin.

Pledge of Allegiance – Trustee Eimer led the pledge.

Land Acknowledgment –Trustee Bashiri-Remetio read the Land Acknowledgment.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Burns asked a motion for the approval of the minutes of the January 20, 2026 regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Bashiri-Remetio made the motion. Trustee Yanow seconded the motion. A voice vote was called and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Statement by the President

Condolences

- To Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, Melodie Graber on the passing of her father on Feb. 5.

Congratulations & Recognitions

- Oakton's Physical Therapist Assistant program is the only program in the state with an ultimate 100% pass rate of all graduates on the board's licensure exam for 10 years.
- Oakton's Pharmacy Technician Program received notification of accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education. Congratulations to Dean May Alimboyoguen, Dr. Nargis Wardak, Program director and our faculty and staff for working hard to demonstrate the quality of Oakton's

Program and going through the rigorous accreditation process. This is a new external accreditation for our program.

- Oakton College was recognized as a 2026 Davos Neurodiversity Summit Awardee for the 2026 Community College Leadership Impact Award. This award is reserved for a community college that has measurably expanded access and redesigned student support to better serve diverse learners at scale. Oakton's work stands out for the institutional and community impact it is making in advancing neuro-inclusion, expanding opportunity, and helping create environments where all kinds of minds can thrive.
- Congratulations to the Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees that were celebrated on Feb. 6, and our first annual hall of fame dinner:
 - Former student athletes: Tony Vodicka (Cross Country), Brenda O'Connor (Cross Country), Susan Rosenblum (Cross Country) and Thomas Smart (Baseball).
 - Former Cross Country and Track Coach Patrick Savage has been inducted into the Skyway Hall of Fame and NJCAA Regional Hall of Fame for his incredible coaching career at Oakton.

Happenings

- February is Black History Month. As part of Black History Month, The Oakton Library and the B.L.A.C.K. Student Success Program are hosting a compelling book discussion series featuring *Black Birds in the Sky: The Story and Legacy of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre* by award-winning author Brandy Colbert.
- Today we celebrated the Lunar New Year. Special thanks to the AAPI student development program for coordinating today's event.
- Exhibition at the Koehnline Museum: Jack H. Breslow: Visual Metaphysics in Black and White. Oakton's exhibition marks the first public presentation of Breslow's black-and-white works on paper, unveiling a series of fantastical, metaphysical imagery infused with botanical motifs and expressive rock formations. Feb. 5 - March 27.

Educational Foundation Liaison Report

The foundation's fundraising progress stands at 90% to their budgeted goal and 80% to their stretch goal with 4 months left in the fiscal year. Recent contributions of note include:

- A \$325,000 contribution from Rivers Casino to add support to their annual scholarship, the Oakton Caring Closet, Emergency Fund for Student Success and the Student Transportation fund in the next academic year.
- A \$100,000 gift from the Northfield Township to renew support for their annual scholarship in the next academic year.
- A \$50,000 gift from Oakton retiree David Hilquist and his wife Karen to add resources to the Hilquist Family Nursing Endowed Scholarship.
- A \$50,000 grant from Grow Your Own Illinois to support a project lead by Dr. Katherine Schuster focused on eliminating key institutional barriers and fast-track degree completion so that committee community members can more readily serve as certified teachers.
- A \$40,000 gift from the Stafford Family to launch a scholarship in memory of Clarice Stafford.
- A \$19,600 gift from Maine Township to renew support for their annual scholarship in the next academic year.

The Foundation's partnership with the Oakton's Ceramics Club to produce this year's Empty Bowls event was very successful, raising over \$25,000 with proceeds benefiting 7 area food pantries as well as Oakton's Caring Closet.

A delegation of Foundation Board Directors and Trustee Stafford attended the annual AGB Foundation Leadership Forum earlier this month along with 900 attendees from college and university foundation board from across the country. In addition to engaging plenary sessions, the group also participated in a number of peer group sessions and workshops focused on community college attendees.

The Foundation has formed a working group to develop their next strategic plan, aligning with and identifying areas of support for the College's plan pillars and goals. The Foundation Board's next quarterly meeting will take place on March 4.

Pathways to Opportunity Liaison Report

The Pathways to Opportunity task force met on February 6. Key updates were shared including:

- 1) Outreach to HS students in the BNAT programs to ensure they are aware of the Northwestern Medicine Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Opportunity.
- 2) An articulation agreement with Superior Ambulance that provides Superior Ambulance employees credit for prior learning on a pathway to an associate degree at Oakton.
- 3) Plans for a manufacturing roundtable in spring/summer in Partnership with the Trade Collective in Evanston.

The Task Force has two meetings scheduled with a leader from UVA Health regarding their Earn and Learn Program. The first is a meeting with Oakton stakeholders this Friday, February 20. The second is for our regional healthcare partners on Friday, April 10. We look forward to learning more about their model. The task force's next meeting is April 3.

Student Trustee Report

Student Trustee AbiNader traveled with the Board of Trustees to D.C. for the ACCT Legislative Summit. Over the course of the trip he learned valuable information, networked, and had the privilege of meeting many legislators, as well as college presidents, trustees and student trustees. He advocated for continued Pell funding and TRIO support through telling both his story as a Pell recipient and SGA President Ana's story as being a member of TRIO.

Happenings:

- The election cycle for the 2026-2027 SGA Team is underway. Packets can be picked up through April 2. On April 3, the elections will begin through online voting.
- The Oakton Leadership Summit will be held for student leaders on February 27 and includes 60+ individuals from community colleges and districts
- SGA President, Ana Adamaze is working to plan for Women's History Month events.

Student Spotlight

Jaalen Banner shared his experience at Oakton after he faced personal challenges after incarceration from 2018 to 2022. Jaalen said that period of his life forced him to sit with the consequences of his decisions; with time, isolation and reflection, he realized that he should take a different path, and that he wanted stability and a future he could be proud of. What ultimately led him back to Oakton was the encouragement of a good friend who invited him to return to school with him to obtain knowledge and education to create more opportunities for themselves. For Jaalen, education became a way to rewrite his story. Oakton gave him a place to start again with structure, accountability and support.

His time at Oakton has been transformative academically, professionally and personally. He has enjoyed learning alongside students from wide ranges of age and backgrounds. Many of his classmates are adults who returned to school after life took unexpected turns. Being in the classroom taught him that success does not follow one timeline, that growth is possible at any stage of life, and that perseverance matters more than perfection. Jaalen said that Oakton has fundamentally changed how he thinks and how he moves through life. In the beginning he was hesitant and uncertain, and learning how to hold himself accountable. Today he approaches his education with discipline and intention; he shows up consistently, plans ahead and asks for help when he needs it. He takes ownership of his progress and his setbacks, and knows that responsibility builds confidence.

Jaalen is actively involved in the Emory Williams Academy and the Black Student Success Program, both of which have been an important tool in his development. Through workshops, guest speakers, skill-building sessions and other opportunities such as field trips, these programs have supported his academic success and his mental and emotional growth. Throughout his time at Oakton, he has formed meaningful connections with faculty and staff who have encouraged him and held him accountable. He specifically thanked Terrance Stevenson, Steve Aguilar, and Janeen Jackson. Their guidance helped him develop resilience, discipline and confidence; because of their mentorship, Jaalen is no longer afraid of change, and he embraces opportunities to grow.

Looking ahead, his plan is to transfer to a 4-year institution to pursue a degree in accounting and pass the CPA exam. He wants a career that allows him to build a secure future and contribute meaningfully to society.

Chair and Trustee Comments

Chair Burns and Trustee Toussaint shared that the Board attended the ACCT Community College Legislative Summit in Washington, DC where they had the chance to meet with legislators and advocate on behalf Oakton.

Public Participation

Dante Espejo Ramirez, Enrollment Services
Rachel Birkner, Enrollment Services
Giacomo Cirrincione, Learning Center

Board Report: Early Access College and Career Options

Dr. Jesse Ivory, Assistant Vice President for Workforce Innovation and College Partnerships
Dr. Alauna McGee, Assistant Vice President for College Transitions

The presentation provided an overview of pathways to opportunity starting in elementary school through continuous coaching and engagement for career success. Dr. Ivory and Dr. McGee spoke about dual credit programs and early college, and presented a future forecast for early pipeline programs like STEAM Youth Camps, and college partnerships.

NEW BUSINESS

2/26-1a Approval of Consent Agenda

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves adoption of the Consent Agenda."

Trustee Stafford seconded the motion. A voice vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

2/26-1b Approval of Consent Agenda Items 2/26-2 through 2/26-7

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the following items 2/26-2 through 2/26-7 as listed in the Consent Agenda."

2/26-2 Ratification of Payment of Bills for January 2026

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 hereby ratifies expenditures and release of checks by the Treasurer of Community College District 535 in the amount of \$10,336,319.18 for all check amounts as listed and for all purposes as appearing on a report dated January 2026."

2/26-3 Acceptance of Treasurer's Report for January 2026

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 receives for filing as a part of the College's official records, the report of the Treasurer for the month of January 2026."

2/26-4 Acceptance of Quarterly Report on Investments

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 accepts the Quarterly Report on Investments for filing."

2/26-5 Ratification of Payment of Professional Personnel – Spring 2025

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 ratifies the payment of salaries for teaching on a part-time basis during the spring 2026 semester; the total payment amounting to \$3,399,244.34."

“Be it further resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 ratifies the payment of salaries for teaching on an overload basis during the spring 2026 semester; the total payment amounting to \$683,162.92.”

2/26-6 Approval of Clinical Practice Agreements

“Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the following cooperative agreements:

- Cancer Registry Management (1)
- Pharmacy Technician (2)
- Physical Therapy Assistant (1).”

2/26-7 Approval of Intergovernmental Agreements with High School District Partners

“Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 authorizes the approval of Intergovernmental Agreements between Oakton College and New Trier High School District 203, Maine Township High School District 207, and Niles Township High School District 219.”

Trustee Burns seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

- Trustee Bashiri-Remetio Aye
- Trustee Burns Aye
- Trustee Eimer Aye
- Trustee Stafford Aye
- Trustee Toussaint Aye
- Trustee Yanow Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-8 Authorization to Approve February Purchases

Trustee Stafford offered: “Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 authorizes the approval of the attached resolutions, as stipulated in the following agenda items, for the purchase of the following:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Vendor / Location</u>	<u>Amount</u>
2/26-8a	1	Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)	NAPA Auto Parts Des Plaines, IL	\$36,313.62
2/26-8b	1	RedHat Enterprise Linux Annual Maintenance and Software Assurance – One-Year Contract Renewal	Emergent, LLC Virginia Beach, VA	\$29,250.00
2/26-8c	1	Instructional Training for the Paramedic Program – Two-Year Contract	Advocate Lutheran General Hospital Park Ridge, IL	\$300,000.00
			Prime Saint Francis Hospital Evanston, IL	\$425,000.00
2/26-8d	1	Universal Robot System	Fluid Power Engineering Co., Inc., d/b/a FPE Automation, Inc. Elk Grove Village, IL	\$49,968.75

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Vendor / Location</u>	<u>Amount</u>
2/26-8e	1	Replacement Laptop Computers	JensenIT, Inc Des Plaines, IL	\$437,500.00
2/26-8f	1	Consulting Services for TargetX Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Violet Consulting, LLC Goose Creek, SC	\$50,000.00
GRAND TOTAL				\$1,328,032.37."

Trustee Yanow seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-9 Preview and Initial Discussion of Upcoming Purchases

The following purchases will be presented for approval at an upcoming Board of Trustees meeting:

- a. Natural Areas Maintenance
- b. Security Guard Services
- c. Yuja Panorama: Digital Accessibility Software Solution-Structure Remediations
- d. Replacement WiFi Access Points
- e. Parking Lot Security Camera Fiber Optic Cabling and Installation
- f. Construction Services for the Adjacencies Phase 2

2/26-10 Authorization to Hire Director of Grant Strategy and Development

Trustee Toussaint offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the appointment of Ms. Janet Nester Olszewski as Director of Grant Strategy and Development effective March 9, 2026 at an annual salary of \$108,267. That salary will be prorated for the period of March 9, 2026 through June 30, 2026."

Trustee Yanow seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-11 Authorization to Hire Director of IT Infrastructure

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the appointment of Mr. Jeffrey Spidle as Director of IT Infrastructure

effective February 23, 2026 at an annual salary of \$160,000. That salary will be prorated for the period of February 23, 2026 through June 30, 2026.”

Trustee Yanow seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-12 Authorization to Hire Full-Time, Tenure-Track Faculty Member

Trustee Yanow offered: “Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 hereby authorizes the employment of Dr. Sahnja Thom for the 2026-2027 academic year, beginning August 2026:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Academic Rank and Assignment</u>	<u>Lane-Step</u>	<u>Base Salary</u>
Dr. Sahnja Thom	Assistant Professor, Psychology	D-6	\$83,542.”

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-13 Approval of Award of Tenure

Trustee Stafford offered: “Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535, by the authority vested in it by the State of Illinois, hereby grants tenure, effective after the completion of the spring 2026 semester, to the following faculty:

- Brittany Coleman – Assistant Professor, Library
- Christine Hoang – Instructor, Medical Laboratory Technology
- Christopher Hirst – Assistant Professor, Air Conditioning Heating and Refrigeration
- Paul Bialek – Professor of Mathematics
- Terence Sinabajje – Assistant Professor, Psychology.”

Trustee Yanow seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-14 Approval of 2027-2028 Academic Calendar

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: “Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves and adopts the 2027-2028 Academic Calendar, attached hereto, as part of the office records of the College.”

Trustee Stafford seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-15 Authorization to Revise Board of Trustees Meeting Date

Trustee Eimer offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Oakton Community College District 535 hereby authorizes the March 17, 2026 regular Board meeting to be rescheduled for March 16, 2026, beginning at 6 p.m. in the boardroom (1506) at Oakton College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois, which time and place shall be published, and proper notice and agenda posted as required by law."

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio seconded the motion. Trustee Stafford called the roll:

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye
Trustee Stafford	Aye
Trustee Toussaint	Aye
Trustee Yanow	Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

2/26-16 Notification of Award of Grants

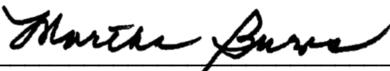
Funding has been made available to Oakton College:

a. ICCB Mental Health Early Action on Campus FY26.....	\$162,000.00
b. ICCB Innovative Bridge and Transitions FY26	\$270,704.59
TOTAL:	\$432,704.59

Adjournment

Chair Burns announced that the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees of Oakton Community College, District 535, will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 16, 2026 at the Des Plaines Campus.

Trustee Yanow made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Trustee Bashiri-Remetio. A voice vote was called and the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.



 Martha Burns, Chair



 William Stafford, Secretary

Minutes recorded by:
Beatriz Sparks
2/2026