



**Minutes of the March 16, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535**

The 819<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 was conducted on March 16, 2026 at the Des Plaines campus of Oakton College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois.

**Closed Session – Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Burns called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m. in room 1502. 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		Present
Trustee Marie Lynn Toussaint		Present
Trustee Wendy Yanow		Present
Trustee Chris AbiNader	Student Trustee	Present

Also present in room 1502 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 February 17, 2026; and considering the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees, collective negotiating matters, and pending litigation.

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

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

At 6:05 p.m., Trustee Salzberg made a motion to adjourn the closed session meeting which was seconded by Trustee Bashiri-Remetio. 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 6:14 p.m. in room 1506. 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		Present
Trustee Marie Lynn Toussaint		Present
Trustee Wendy Yanow		Present
Trustee Chris AbiNader	Student Trustee	Present

Trustee Burns led the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

Trustee Toussaint read the **Land Acknowledgement**.

Also present in room 1506:

Leadership: Dr. Joianne Smith, President; Dr. Kelly 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; and Katherine Sawyer, Chief Advancement Officer.

Administrators: May Alimboyoguen, Dean of Health Careers; 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; Kathleen Dunne Balducci, Assistant Vice President for Operations; Julia Gray, Interim Director of User Support Services; Tom Hicks Jr., Director of Student Success and Academic Interventions; Matt Huber, Dean of Enrollment Management; Jake Jeremiah, Dean of Library; Dr. Ashley Knight, Interim Dean of Liberal Arts; Dr. Andrea Lehmacher, Director of Marketing; Dr. Kanchana Mendes, Dean of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Janet Nester Olszewski, Director of Grant Strategy and Development; Nathan Norman, Senior Director of Workforce Development; Dr. James Rabchuk, Dean of STEM; John Wade, Chief Information Officer; Dan Weber, Registrar/Director of Registrar Services; Aaron Wernick, Chief of Campus Police and Emergency Management; Ella Whitehead, Director of Admission and Equity Outreach; and Andy Williams, Controller.

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

Faculty: Maria Antonopoulos, Mathematics; Christy Carter, Speech and Theater; Mary Obernesser, Biology; and Phil Prale, Education.

Staff: Giacomo Cirrincione, Learning Center; John Donoghue, Facilities; Krissie Harris, Student Life and Campus Inclusion; Marcus Hayes, Auxiliary Services; Tamara Laws, Accounting Services; Ewa Lyczewska, Marketing and Communications; Caitlin Meltzer, Enrollment Services; Esperanza Salgado-Rodriguez, TRIO Student Support Services; Vinita Shah, Media Services; Francisco Sosa, Information Technology; and Beatriz Sparks, Office of the President.

Students: Ana Adamadze, Rayyan Muhammad, Jose San Martin, and Tekecia Smith-Means.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Burns asked a motion for the approval of the minutes of the February 17, 2026 regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Eimer made the motion. Trustee Bashiri-Remetio seconded the motion. A voice vote was called and the minutes were unanimously approved.

## **Statement by the President**

### Condolences

- To Distinguished Professor of Physics, John Carzoli on the passing of his father Richard on March 10.

### Congratulations & Recognitions

- Oakton College's designation as an Achieving the Dream Leader College has been extended for the 2026–2029 term. The ATD network recognizes institutions that have demonstrated sustained, evidence-based improvements in student outcomes.
- Dean of STEM, Dr. James Rabchuk; Dean of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Dr. Kanchana Mendes; and TRIO Manager, Esperanza Salgado-Rodriguez have been selected to participate in the AACU New Leadership Academy Fellows Program. This is a six-month leadership program designed to provide experienced professionals with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to navigate the complexities of today's evolving academic landscape.
- Our Marketing and Communications team earned 14 awards at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Educational Advertising Awards. This competition includes more than 1,000 universities, colleges, and secondary schools from all 50 states and several countries, with over 2,000 submissions received. Oakton earned 9 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze awards.

- 10 Oakton students participated in the Skyway Art Competition that was held at Elgin Community College on March 11. The Skyway Art Competition is an annual juried exhibition that brings together outstanding student artwork from community colleges across the region.
- The women's basketball team finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the conference. They won the first round of the Region 4 District B tournament vs Milwaukee Area Technical College, and lost in the semi-final vs Madison College.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All Skyway conference: Jaylen Zachary, sophomore.
  - Honorable Mention: Arianna Labeau, Daphne Brown, Cassie Krause, Ashlie Riley, Ari Milam-Pryor (these ladies are all freshmen).

### Happenings

- Eid Al-Fitr celebration on March 30 in Des Plaines, and April 6 in Skokie.
- On March 24, the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies Dept and the International Students Club are hosting a panel in honor of International Women's Day featuring voices and perspectives of female identifying international students and on March 25, the pop-up library will center the voices, leadership and contributions of women throughout history.
- The All-College Open House takes place Saturday April 18 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This is an opportunity to showcase our programs and campus to our community and to prospective students and their families.
- The Six piano Ensemble will take place on April 26 and features the following works: *Samba triste from Four Piece Suite* by Richard Rodney Bennett; *Suite in C Minor for Two Keyboards* by Handel; *Sonata in D Major, K.381* by Mozart; *Ain't Misbehavin'* by Thomas Waller; *The Strenuous Life Rag* by Scott Joplin as well as other selections. A reception will follow the concert.

### **Educational Foundation Liaison Report**

Fundraising momentum continues to grow in the second half of the fiscal year with a number of recent contributions of note:

- A \$10,000 pledge from Dr. Joan DiLeonardi, Trustee Emerita, to grow the endowments of the Michael J. Wall Memorial Scholarship and the Emory Williams Scholarship.
- An \$54,000 gift from Learning Center Tutor Jan Abramowitz to launch the Learning Opportunity and Value in Education Scholarship.
- A \$1,000 from the Oakton Community College Faculty Association to provide annual support to the Faculty Memorial Scholarship.
- A \$6,000 gift from the Seabury Foundation to renew their annual scholarship support.
- A \$6,000 gift from Foundation Director Murray Sprung and his wife Arla to grow the endowments of the scholarships in their parent's names.
- A \$10,000 gift from tennis coach David Kaufman and his wife Connie to launch an endowed scholarship for student athletes in the tennis program.
- A \$5,000 gift from Alan and Claudia Kooperman to build the endowment of the Jo Anne D. Waltman Nursing Scholarship.

The Foundation Board reviewed and affirmed their mission, vision and values during their March 4 board meeting. This re-affirmation is a stepstone in building their next strategic plan.

They also approved their budget and endowment spend rate for the next fiscal year. Given current gift commitments and strong financial performance, the Foundation expects to make more than \$2 million available to support scholarships and college initiatives in the coming fiscal year.

The Foundation has recently added a new Board Director. Mark Harris currently serves as the Director of Pritzker Tech Talent Labs at the Discovery Partners Institute for the University of Illinois. His professional work focuses on building inclusive education-to-career pathways that connect learners to high-demand industries. As a Park Ridge resident, he is motivated to contribute to an institution that serves our local community. With the addition of Mark Harris, the Foundation Board stands at 24 voting members.

The Foundation Board's next quarterly meeting will take place on June 3.

## Student Trustee Report

- The Oakton Leadership Summit was attended by more than 60 student leaders from different colleges. It was facilitated by the SGA, and it touched on subjects like board-level representation, governance structures and regional advocacy. The summit provided a networking opportunity between Oakton College, Northeastern Illinois University, McHenry County College, College of Lake County, Waubesa Community College, and College of DuPage.
- Information about the SGA election is being broadly shared with the student community, and candidates have had opportunities to display their goals across campus. Results will be announced on April 6.
- The Annual Student Leadership Banquet will take place on April 16. This event recognizes the achievement of students and advisors, and their contribution to student life.
- Events: Spirit Week, March 30 – April 3; Eid Party on March 30 at Des Plaines, and April 6 at Skokie.

## Student Spotlight

Tekecia Smith-Means is a first-generation student pursuing her associate's degree in Human Services with a concentration in Social Work. She shared that she has faced and overcome adversity with the support of people who saw her potential. Oakton staff Janeen Jackson (Coordinator of the Black Student Success Program), Krissie Harris, Princess Escudero and Gabby O'Connor (Student Life) have been instrumental with their constant encouragement, investing in students' growth. Professors Nicholas Larkin and Anika Jones have gone above and beyond offering guidance, accommodations and genuine interactions. Tekecia said these individuals have helped her strengthen her ethics, boundaries and ability to listen without judgement which are essential skills in human services.

Tekecia's involvement on campus have shaped her into an accountable, confident and prepared leader. She currently serves as a senator in the Student Government Association, she is a committee member of the Instructional Materials Affordability Taskforce (IMAT), and she serves as an event director for CAB. She became a RICE fellow in fall 2025 researching "African Americans, Mindfulness, Therapy and Spirituality," which later led her to become a RICE Fellow Ambassador and being inducted into Phi Theta Kappa in spring 2026. These experiences deepened her commitment to advocacy, expanded her professional skills, and taught her how to show up fully in academic and community settings.

Her main concern is the excessive cost of instructional materials. This is why she joined IMAT where she works with faculty to bring forward the students' perspective and push for real solutions. She has worked closely with Michele Oh (library faculty) to gather data in order to advocating for change.

Tekecia said: *"As I move forward, I am committed to growing, learning, and serving with purpose. Oakton has given me the foundation, confidence, and community I needed to step boldly into my future, and I intend to carry these lessons with me as I work to uplift others. I am determined to leave every space I enter better than I found and to use my education, my voice, and my lived experiences to create meaningful change. My journey is far from over, and I am ready for the next chapter ready to lead, to serve, and to shine."*

## Public Participation

Jennifer Crowley, Health Careers Advisor

## Board Report: Information Technology at Oakton

John Wade, Chief Information Officer, and Julia Gray, Interim Director of User Support Services provided an overview of the current state of information technology resources at Oakton, plans for reorganization in the IT infrastructure, strategic direction, and challenges.

IT's goals are maintaining state-of-the-art facilities by being mindful of budgeting and financial resources, creating operational efficiencies and improvements to technology, and fostering a culture of thoughtful planning and accountability.

The proposed Oakton IT Governance Model incorporates effective governance principles with structure and processes that include:

- Executive decisions (President's Council) on strategic IT initiatives and priorities.

- High-level oversight from a central cross-functional technology committee (Oakton College Technology Advisory Council) working in collaboration, to make consolidated IT decisions based on institutional strategic and operational needs and IT technology plans

## NEW BUSINESS

### 3/26-1a **Approval of Consent Agenda**

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

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio seconded the motion. A voice vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

### 3/26-1b **Approval of Consent Agenda Items**

Trustee Salzberg offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the following items 3/26-2 through 3/26-6 as listed in the Consent Agenda."

### 3/26-2 **Ratification of Payment of Bills for February 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 \$9,117,236.32 for all check amounts as listed and for all purposes as appearing on a report dated February 2026."

### 3/26-3 **Acceptance of Treasurer's Report for February 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 February 2026."

### 3/26-4 **Supplemental Authorization to Pay Professional Personnel – Spring 2026**

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves an adjustment of \$620,167.72 to the total amount of part-time teaching salaries paid during the spring 2026 semester; the revised total payment amount is \$4,019,412.06."

"Be it further resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves an adjustment of \$127,547.17 to the total amount of faculty overload salaries paid during the spring 2026 semester; the revised total payment amount is \$808,710.09."

### 3/26-5 **Approval of Clinical Practice Agreements**

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

Basic Nursing Assistant (2)  
Physical Therapy Assistant (1)."

### 3/26-6 **Approval of Rock Salt Contract Joint Participation Agreement with the Illinois Department of Central Management Services**

"Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the Rock Salt Contract Joint Participation Agreement between Oakton College and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services."

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

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio	Aye
Trustee Burns	Aye
Trustee Eimer	Aye

Trustee Salzberg                   Aye  
 Trustee Stafford                   Aye  
 Trustee Toussaint                Aye  
 Trustee Yanow                     Aye

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

**3/26-7           Authorization to Approve March 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>
3/26-7a	1	Construction Services for the Adjacencies Phase 2 – Des Plaines Campus	Osman Construction Company Arlington Heights, IL	\$1,219,900.00
3/26-7b	1	Fiber Optic Cabling and Safety Equipment Installation for the Pedestrian Lighting Project	Powerlink Electric, LLC Vernon Hills, IL	\$234,588.38
3/26-7c	1	YuJa Panorama: Digital Accessibility Software Solution-Structured Remediation	YuJa, Inc. San Jose, CA	\$30,000.00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>\$1,484,488.38.”</b>

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

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

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

**3/26-8           Preview and Initial Discussion of Upcoming Purchases**

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

- a. Leica Microscopes
- b. Digital and Traditional Marketing Services
- c. Reimbursement to Educational Foundation for Blackbaud Awards Management Essentials Software Renewal
- d. Multifactor Authentication (MFA) Services Renewal
- e. Replacement Classroom Multimedia Projectors
- f. Information Technology Consultant Services

**3/26-9 Authorization to Approve Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Oakton College Board of Trustees and the Oakton College Classified Staff Association (OCCCSA)**

Trustee Toussaint offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the tentative agreement with the Oakton Community College Classified Staff Association, effective for the period from January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028."

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

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

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

**3/26-10 Authorization to Hire Dean of Liberal Arts**

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the appointment of Dr. Mary Hope Griffin as Dean of Liberal Arts effective July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 at an annual salary of \$145,000."

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

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

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

**3/26-11 Approval of Administrative Title and Salary Adjustments**

Trustee Bashiri-Remetio offered: "Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 approves the following administrative title and salary adjustments effective January 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026:

Dr. Kelly Iwanaga Becker: Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at an annual salary of \$152,366.94;

Mr. Stephen Butera: Director of Communications and External Relations at an annual salary of \$119,667.70; and

Dr. Andrea Lehmacher: Chief Marketing Officer at an annual salary of \$146,210.70.

Salary adjustments will be retroactive to January 1, 2026."

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

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

The motion carried. Student Trustee AbiNader favored the resolution.

**3/26-12 Notification of Award of Grants**

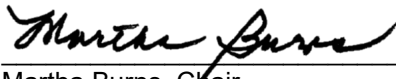
Funding has been made available to Oakton College:

a. ICCB FY26 Perkins Leadership Grant .....	\$100,000.00
b. ICCB FY26 Digital Instruction for Adult Education Grant.....	\$25,000.00
<b>TOTAL:</b> .....	<b>\$125,000.00</b>

**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 Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at the Des Plaines Campus.

Trustee Eimer made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Trustee Bashiri-Remetio. A voice vote was called and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.



Martha Burns, Chair



William Stafford, Secretary

Minutes recorded by:  
Beatriz Sparks  
3/2026