



# President's Report

March 2025

Dr. Brian Knetl, President



## Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream is a network of over 300 community colleges across 45 states, all united by a common goal: improving student success through innovative practices and data-driven decision-making. Waubonsee started its formal three-year journey with ATD in November. One recent highlight was having a team attend ATD's annual DREAM 2025 conference last month. Here's a bit of what we learned.

### The "DREAM" Team

- Mark Crawford (Faculty)
- Dr. Emily Heller (Faculty)
- Dr. Marjorie Hildebrand (Administrator)
- Megan Jones (Support Staff)
- Dr. Brian Knetl (Administrator)
- Jessica Moreno (Administrator)
- Emily Nicholson (Support Staff)
- Dr. Amy Powers (Faculty)
- Dr. Anthony Ramos (Administrator)
- Dr. Stacey Randall (Administrator)
- Dr. Lisa Richardson (Administrator)
- Dr. Toya Webb (Administrator)

### Key messages from ATD

#### *Student success*

Dr. Karen Stout, president of ATD, said "...amplifying our successes and coming together as a collective, is about developing 'waypower' — the waypower that turns hope into a strategic force." She also mentioned the need to reach disconnected populations who are "most skeptical of higher education and most in need of a pathway to a credential of value for them and their families."

#### *The [community vibrancy framework](#)*

Community vibrancy combines "outside-in" and "inside-out" strategies to unite college and community transformation and impact. The work we do in our processes and programs, including workforce and civic support for students, impacts individuals, which is where change happens for the larger community.

### What ATD will help Waubonsee do

- Focus our energy on future action; ask questions to understand how our work and others' work can support students.
- Challenge current processes, let go of what no longer works, and try something new.
- Re-think where we are spending our time and effort. What resources do we have at hand? What is the institutional appetite to take things on? Can we easily acquire the resources in the next few months to carry them out?
- Find more ways to highlight successes and celebrate accomplishments.
- Move from discovery and learning to action – our action plan, aligned with RISE 2030, will help us identify those actions and is due to be completed by early June.
- Look at our data differently to find gaps and ask questions.
- Shift from "I" metrics to "WE" metrics



## Adult Education Team Members Win Statewide Awards

Waubonsee's Adult Education Department had a great showing at the recent Illinois Adult and Continuing Education Association (IACEA) annual conference in Springfield. Known as the Voice of Adult Education in Illinois, IACEA presents four awards annually, recognizing an administrator, an instructor, a support services staff member, and an adult learner. This year, Waubonsee won half of them, with Adult Education Bridge and Transitions Advisor Amy Elston winning Instructor of the Year for her previous work as a bridge instructor and trainer, and Adult Education Data and Compliance Manager Megan Jones winning the Support Staff of the Year Award.



WCC employees Amy Elston (left) and Megan Jones

## Annual Signing Day Includes Members of the TEC's Inaugural Class

Designed to mimic the excitement around student-athlete commitments/signings, the college's annual Career and Technical Education Signing Day has become a highly anticipated and always well-attended event, with almost 450 area high school students participating this year. Of those, 105 made commitments to attend Waubonsee — many of whom will now be a key part of the Technical Education Center's inaugural class when it opens this fall semester.



## Hearing the Student Voice

Along with several other college leaders, I was pleased to be able to participate in the Student Senate Town Hall earlier this month. We all appreciated the thoughtful questions from, and the chance to engage directly with, students in this format. Topics included student safety, resources, and engagement, along with allocation of college funds and the optimization of campus spaces to enhance the student experience.

## Community Leaders Serve as Scholarship Judges

I was honored to join Dr. Melinda Tejada in welcoming the esteemed judges for the John J. Swalec, Jr. President's Achievement Award to the Sugar Grove Campus last week. The distinguished panel included Honorable Bianca Camargo, Circuit Judge, 16th Judicial Circuit Kane County; Ravi S. Jayaraman, Regional Manager-Water Division, HR Green; Jason Pesola, Commercial Real Estate Broker, Commercial Affiliated LLC; and Matt Tokarsky, President, Odin Industries. Their commitment to spending the day interviewing candidates for this prestigious scholarship award reflects their dedication to Waubonsee and our students.

## Biscuits with the Boss Continues

I continue to connect with college faculty and staff through my Biscuits with the Boss events. This most recent event featured the announcement of half-days on Fridays during June and July, along with a brief update on the changes to the Department of Education. Employees asked questions on a variety of topics, including campus spaces and grant funding, along with some lighter fare about my musical tastes and the office's SpringFest basket plan.

## Recognizing Behind-the-Scenes IT Work

The Information Technology Department was recognized at a recent lunch and with an appreciation video at the March board meeting.

# Coming Up

### March 20

"Rooted in Waubonsee" Alumni Dinner

### March 27

Spring Joint Honors Induction Ceremony and Student Life Awards

### March 28

Waubonsee SpringFest

### Throughout April

Waubonsee Open Houses  
- April 1 - Downtown (Tours)  
- April 5 - Fox Valley  
- April 16 - Plano  
- April 26 - Sugar Grove