



President's Report

February 2026

Dr. Brian Knetl, President



Continuing to Make Our Campuses Welcoming “Spaces”

Last month, Student Life launched its semester theme of “Stellar Start,” with a focus on WCC serving as a launchpad for students’ successful lift-offs.

The space theme will continue this month as students are encouraged to “Chart Their Constellation” at the annual engagement fairs that take place at all four campuses.

As the event description reads, “Step into the galaxy of campus life and chart your own constellation! This engagement fair invites you to explore a universe of student clubs, campus departments, and community partners—each a shining star ready to help you connect, grow, and find your place among the campus community. Whether you’re just beginning your orbit or already navigating your journey, there’s a star waiting for you to discover.”

Clubs, organizations, events, and opportunities like these truly enable our students to connect, grow, and find their place in our community. Thanks to all who planned and will participate.

Advocating for Students While Learning About Legislative Policy and the National Talent Pipeline

I, along with trustees Daniel Jaquez and Tina Willson, Student Trustee Maria Santillan, and Dr. Toya Webb, recently attended the Association of Community College Trustees’ National Legislative Summit. The summit is the premier community college advocacy event in Washington, DC, shining a spotlight on the importance of our nation’s community colleges for elected officials.

In our meetings with Senators Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, along with U.S. Representatives Bill Foster and Lauren Underwood, we shared highlights of our RISE 2030 plan and other college initiatives, while also hearing about important federal policy issues that directly impact our community. This time also allows us to discuss any potential funding opportunities that can benefit both our students and the legislators’ districts.

Immediately after the summit, I was honored to attend an invite-only session from The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) called “Seeding America’s Workforce Talent Pipeline,” also in DC. The day explored the strengths and gaps of the country’s higher-education-to-workforce pipeline, with a focus on four major industries — advanced manufacturing, bioscience, cybersecurity/IT, and health care.

This session and these topics align well with the college’s current involvement in the Aspen Institute’s Unlocking Opportunity cohort. That cohort’s goal is to increase the number of students entering and completing high-value programs — that is, those that lead directly to jobs that pay a sustaining wage or to transfer and completion of a bachelor’s degree.





Honoring the Legacy of Dr. King While Recognizing Local Students

Late last month, Waubonsee celebrated the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at our “RISE as One: A Community Tribute.” The evening of reflection, learning, and recognition culminated in the presentation of the college’s first-ever RISE to the Dream Awards, recognizing 12 area students who embody Dr. King’s vision through leadership, service, and a commitment to equity.

I was honored to give words of welcome and share the stage with several WCC staff members, along with keynote speaker Clayton Muhammad, who delivered an inspiring message that bridged local history with the global civil rights movement.

Congratulations to all of our award winners.

RISE to the Dream Award Winners

- Kaylany Aburto, Rosary College Prep
- Taya Benson, Leland CUSD #1
- Malachi Boyd, Fred Rodgers Magnet Academy
- Iris Choi, Leland School CUSD #1
- Kelsey Corken, Batavia High School
- Emmanuel Diaz, East Aurora High School
- Evelyn Espinoza, Simmons Middle School
- ZaMya Fowler Barrett, West Aurora High School
- Aspen Grometer, Waubonsee
- Luke Hartsell, Somonauk High School
- Germaine Mwizerwa, Waubonsee
- Manuel Velasquez, East Aurora High School

Coming Up

February 26

- Sugar Grove State of the Region
- Biscuits with the Boss
- WCC Alumni Night at the Paramount Theater

March 2-5

Achieving the Dream (ATD) DREAM Conference