



# President's Report

May 2026

Dr. Brian Knetl, President



## Inaugural Summit Helps Employees RISE Higher as Waubonsee Together

A little over a year since officially launching our RISE 2030 plan with our employees, we held our inaugural RISE Summit on April 30. The goals were to have employees connect with and celebrate all that has been done so far, along with getting some motivation and tools to help us keep moving forward.

After hearing from RISE action team members from across the four priorities, keynote speaker Lee Rubin inspired with his talk, 'Five Components of an Extraordinary Team.'

### Action Team Highlights

#### Redefine —

- Launching Salesforce system to better track partner info
- Placed 16 wastewater students into internships

#### Invest —

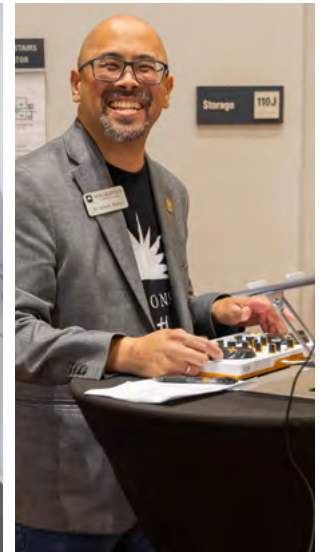
- Developing a prototype undergraduate research model
- Goal of having 15% of new faculty engage in high-impact practices

#### Strengthen —

- Created 16 student personas to help employees better understand and decide from students' point of view
- Survey to illustrate how employees engage with students facing barriers

#### Enrich —

- Defined recognitions vs incentives and compared WCC to other local colleges
- Launching professional development day for staff this fall



## Celebrating Students at "Cultivando el Futuro"

All end-of-the-year celebrations are special, but the annual Latinx Resource Center celebration is always a highlight for its energy and dance floor. This year, 22 graduating students were honored, along with staff awards and remarks from special guest speakers Adriana Cervantes and Saúl Olivas, along with student speaker Sophia Martinez Devaldivielso. A graduate of Waubonsee and current educator, Olivas talked about experiences where students may be in rooms where no one else looks like them. When that happens he said, "Don't shrink; stand taller. You are not the only, you are the beginning."



## Students Solving Problems, Leading Engagement Efforts

Each semester, a group of Waubonsee students participate in a Social Leaders program through Student Life. In it, they work on projects they think could improve life on campus and/or in the community. This semester, nine students worked on projects meant to improve campus engagement and communication, raise awareness and improve access to student resources and programs, and address environmental issues. Student Faith Essenburg was specifically honored for her “Nourish Waubonsee” proposal, which calls for the renovation of the formal dining room into a fully functional campus food pantry and triage center.

Student Life also celebrated this year’s outstanding leaders and organizations at its annual awards night. Among the winners were PRIDE Dragucation for Outstanding Student Organization Event, the Student Nurse Association for Outstanding Student Organization, Maria Santillan for Outstanding Student Leader, and Professor of Psychology Dr. Heather LaCost for Outstanding Advisor.

## Grow Your Own Diversifies the Teaching Profession

The Grow Your Own (GYO) program supports under-represented populations interested in pursuing careers in teaching, education, and CTE pathways and is funded with a \$50,000 grant from the State of Illinois.



We were pleased to celebrate our cohort of 15 male students recently, all of whom attended six sessions throughout the semester where professional educators, including many Waubonsee faculty and staff, shared their struggles and successes, and answered questions. Each student also had the opportunity for an individual mentoring and career coaching session with higher education leaders from across the state and nation, as well as receiving a laptop and \$1,000 stipend to support their educational journey.

Dean for Business and Social Science Dr. Tamekia Smith and student Jameon Wright were interviewed on [Fox 32](#) and the program was featured on [ABC 7](#), thanks to the efforts of Vice President of Community Engagement and External Affairs Clayton Muhammad.



## Cougars Stadium Game Relocated But Won!

Originally scheduled to be played at the home of the Kane County Cougars, the May 2 WCC vs Sauk Valley baseball game moved to Sugar Grove, with a nice crowd on hand and 14-7 win. Thanks to all who attended.

*Coming Up*

**May 14**  
Nursing Pinning Ceremony

**May 16**  
Commencement

**May 21**  
Athletic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Student-Athlete Recognition

**May 30**  
Foundation Trail Run

**June 5**  
ICCTA Annual Convention

**June 14**  
City of Aurora PRIDE Parade