



Press Release  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Illinois Central College Celebrates Community College Month, Highlighting Regional Impact and Student Opportunity**

East Peoria, IL (04/01/2026) – Illinois Central College (ICC) is proud to join community colleges nationwide this April in celebrating Community College Month, an annual campaign led by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to improve awareness of the economic, academic, and equity advantages of attending community colleges.

The 2026 theme, *“The Smartest First Step. The Strongest Next Step,”* reflects the full scope of what community colleges deliver. For many students, ICC is the most affordable and effective place to begin their higher education journey and successfully transfer. For working adults, it is a place to gain new skills and remain competitive in a changing economy. For others, it is the direct path to a credential that leads to a high-demand, higher-wage career in fields such as healthcare, welding, HVAC, IT, and advanced manufacturing.

Community colleges are where meaningful careers start, grow, and evolve.

“ICC is proud to serve as a workforce partner for Central Illinois,” said ICC Interim President Bruce Budde. “During Community College Month, we recognize the role community colleges play in advancing student success and supporting regional economic growth. Our programs are aligned with employer needs, and our students are prepared to contribute on day one.”

Public community colleges are a uniquely American model designed to expand access to affordable, high-quality higher education. They serve as a primary pathway to bachelor’s and advanced degrees and play a critical role in supporting students from diverse and underserved backgrounds. In Illinois, community colleges serve more than half of all undergraduate students, underscoring their essential role in the state’s higher education system.

ICC also provides comprehensive support beyond the classroom. In partnership with community-based organizations and the state of Illinois, the College offers services including a food pantry, childcare assistance, and transportation support. These resources remove barriers and make higher education accessible for more students across the region.

During Community College Month, ICC will host the Experience ICC Open House on Tuesday, April 14, from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. on the East Peoria campus. Attendees can explore over 150 programs of study, learn about scholarships and financial aid, meet with faculty and staff, and discover student life. Community members can also attend a Program Exploration Visit Day on Saturday, April 18, from 9:00 a.m. – noon on the East Peoria campus. This event offers an overview of programs, services, and campus life at ICC. Register at [icc.edu/visit](http://icc.edu/visit).

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Illinois Central College is a two-year community college with campuses in East Peoria, Peoria, and Pekin, Illinois, providing a high-quality, affordable education to prepare students to enter the workforce or to transfer to a four-year institution. ICC is the 2020 awardee of the National Community College Charles Kennedy Equity Award from ACCT, a 2022 and 2025 EDA Good Job Challenge Institution, and the Lead College for the state of Illinois' Workforce Equity Initiative. ICC also conducts original research in agricultural fields, including water quality and soil conservation. For more information, visit [icc.edu](http://icc.edu).