



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Central Illinois Community Colleges Generate \$799.6 Million in Economic Impact, Support More Than 10,000 Jobs

A new study finds Illinois Central, Heartland, Carl Sandburg, and Spoon River colleges account for one in every 47 jobs across a 20-county region.

East Peoria, IL (04/16/2026) – Illinois Central College, Heartland Community College, Carl Sandburg College, and Spoon River College together generate **\$799.6 million in economic impact** and support **10,464 jobs** across the West Central Illinois Community College Region, according to a new study.

The largest share of that impact, \$645.6 million, comes from former students now working in the regional economy, earning more than they would without their credentials, and spending those wages locally. The colleges' own operations and capital spending account for another \$130 million, while current students contribute \$22.9 million through housing, food, transportation, and other living expenses.

Returns for Students

Students who complete credentials at these colleges see an average 14.6 percent annual return on their educational investment compared to workers with only a high school diploma, after accounting for tuition and foregone wages. Those higher earnings add up over a career, and because most graduates stay in the area, that money goes right back into local businesses and communities.

“Our colleges demonstrate the real, measurable value of investing in community colleges,” said Bruce Budde, Interim President of Illinois Central College. “We are preparing a skilled workforce, supporting regional growth, and expanding long-term opportunities for the students and communities we serve. The impact extends beyond our campuses; our graduates strengthen the broader economy by living and working right here in our region.”

Regional Workforce Impact

The four colleges support one out of every 47 jobs in the region. Their day-to-day payroll and purchasing flow directly to local businesses, vendors, and contractors, while capital projects put construction and infrastructure dollars to work across the 20-county area.

“Illinois community colleges serve as economic drivers for our communities, generating value not only with our operations but furthering the investment in the students we serve,” said Heartland Community College President Keith Cornille. “Our institutions bring jobs and growth to the community, but most importantly, our students generate higher earnings, which in turn helps our neighborhoods thrive.”

About the Study

The economic impact analysis was conducted by Lightcast and commissioned by the Illinois Community College Board. It covers a 20-county region served by the four colleges, including Bureau, DeWitt, Ford, Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, Livingston, Logan, Marshall, Mason, McDonough, McLean, Mercer, Peoria, Schuyler, Stark, Tazewell, Warren, and Woodford counties.

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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.