

**Heartland Region
Board of Control
Richland Community College
January 15, 2026**

Present:

Damian Jones – Argenta Oreana
Sacha Young – Central A&M
Emily Weidner – Cerro Gordo
Michael Curry – Decatur Public Schools
Michael Tresnak – DeLand Weldon
Adam Ibbotson – Maroa Forsyth
Shane Gordon – Meridian
Travis Roundcount – Mt Zion
Jonathan Field – Sangamon Valley
Cheryl Warner – Warrensburg-Latham
Bret Hitchings – Heartland Director

Absent:

None

The meeting was called to Order by Travis Roundcount at 9:04 a.m.

Adam Ibbotson moved to approve the minutes of the December meeting as presented. Michael Tresnak seconded the motion. Voice Vote: All in Favor. Motion Carried.

Finance Report

Damian Jones moved to approve the December purchases provided by the Regional Office. Adam Ibbotson seconded the motion. Roll call vote: 10 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent

Audit Report

Bret stated he received communication from ISBE asking about our audit process. Jill Reedy communicated with ISBE about this. Bret said we expectation to have three audits completed this spring, and the three remaining audits will need to be completed during the summer/fall.

Closed Session

Adam Ibbotson moved to call a Closed Session at 9:06 a.m. Emily Weidner seconded the motion. Roll call vote: 10 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent.

Michael Tresnak moved to return from Closed Session at 9:10 a.m. Cheryl Warner seconded the motion. Roll call vote: 10 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent.

Personnel

Sacha Young moved to accept the resignation of Heartland Tech's Clinical Nursing Assistant, Kathy Altherr. Jonathan Field seconded the motion. Roll call vote: 10 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent.

Director's Report

Bret advised that the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment has not been released by ISBE. When it does, he will be working with all district's principals to have it completed.

Bret asked all superintendents to forward copies of their 2026 – 2027 school calendars to him and Amanda as they are approved. We use this information to develop a proposed HTA calendar for FY 27.

Other Business

Bret provided information about communication he's received from RCC regarding new partnership RCC is entering with the Decatur Women's prison that would have 8 female inmates on campus for instruction. Bret stated that he invited RCC personnel to the meeting to provide more details about this program. RCC Police Chief Dean Hazen joined the meeting and shared some information about plans for this program and procedures that will be followed. Bret added some information about where HTA programs are located on the RCC campus in relation to this program being discussed and noted that Culinary and CDL are the only HTA programs that are on that end of the building. Bret shared that he has been informed that the initially communicated start date of February 2nd is no longer a hard start date and that the program now will likely be an 8 week program rather than a 12 week program. Chief Hazen agreed with that and said that they don't know what the start date is now. Members of the board asked about the rationale for the program to be offered on campus rather than at the prison and is there an obligation for RCC to communicate this program to students and families. Bret stated that it is important that RCC provide information about this program so the school districts and HTA have clear language to communicate to students and families. Bret also stressed the importance of having clear parameters in place on the location and times for this new program. Dean mentioned the presence of RCC Police on campus as well as additional security personnel. Members of the board stressed the importance of having communication come directly from RCC to students and parents. Also, the idea was presented that HTA include a statement on future enrollment materials communicating that we do not control who is on the property of Richland Community College and that people with criminal backgrounds could potentially be at the college. Bret pointed out that we have a strong partnership with RCC and have open lines of communication in place. He said that based on this discussion, he feels the next step is for him to communicate with Joe requesting that this program be held in a different building and that we need to know well in advance what the actual structure will look like. The board discussed having Bret write a letter communicating concerns that were brought up in the discussion, specifically concerns related to the program being held in the same building as HTA students and needing assurance that high school students would not cross paths with prisoners receiving instruction on campus. Bret thanked the board for their comments and said he would take them back to RCC leadership. He added that based on his experience working with the college he feels they will be responsive and noted that he knows RCC values our students and works hard on behalf of our students, including related to student safety and security. Bret said he believes the discussion raised valid, reasonable concerns and also presented achievable options. He added that he is optimistic that something can be designed that resolves our concerns but still lets RCC proceed to meet their goals. He said he will communicate with the board every step of the way as he receives information from RCC. Bret indicated that he would be working on an email as discussed and asked if the board liked the proposed language stating that we do not support the program in the way we have been told it has been set up for now, but let's have a conversation about what it could look like. Bret concluded this discussion by thanking the board again for their input and thanking Chief Hazen for attending and providing information. Bret also thanked Chief Hazen for the work he has done to establish a police department on campus which provides extra security for students.

Bret discussed current Cosmetology transportation procedures for Tech students and advised considering an alternate plan in the future. This would include each district's buses to drop Cosmetology students off at the Reflections campus prior to arriving at the HTA/RCC campus. No need for a decision at this time, he just wanted to make board members aware.

Next meeting will take place on February 19, 2026, at the Macon/Piatt Regional Office of Education #390, 3433 Rupp Parkways, Decatur, Illinois.

Michael Curry moved to adjourn the meeting. Emily Weidner seconded the motion. Voice vote, all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54.


Board of Control Chairperson

2-19-26
Date Approved


Board of Control Secretary Signature

2/19/26
Date Approved


Board of Control Recording Secretary Signature

2-19-2026
Date Approved