

2025-2026 Issue No. 15

achieve.

REACH. EXCEED. **ACHIEVE.**

 **PARKLAND**
COLLEGE



**JERRED GRUSSING HONORED
WITH NEW APPRENTICES**

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A Message from Alicia Beck



Dear District Residents,

In-demand careers, a skilled workforce, and strong local businesses—these are the building blocks of a thriving community. Parkland College is committed to creating opportunities for individuals and businesses in our communities to grow their success.

If you are looking to start a career or gain new skills, we're here to support, every step of the way. Parkland's new Workforce Development division includes Adult Education and English-Language instruction, Support for Workforce Training (SWFT) scholarships, and Apprenticeships. These programs help individuals improve their foundational skills, offer financial assistance for short-term training in high-demand fields, and allow students to earn while they learn through hands-on experience in various industries.

If you are a business needing to grow the workforce pipeline, we can partner with you to develop the specific training solutions you need to meet your business goals through our Apprenticeships office. We welcome you to join the new Parkland Workforce Collaborative (parkland.edu/pwc) along with other future-focused businesses. This free monthly forum brings together local employers, educators, and development organizations to share innovative workforce solutions that benefit both individuals and businesses.

When district residents succeed, companies grow, and our communities thrive. If you're ready to take the next step, visit our website (parkland.edu/workforce) or stop by Parkland College Room D120 for more information about all our programs. Let's build a stronger future together.

Alicia Beck

Senior Director, Workforce Development
Parkland College

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Achieve is an annual publication for the residents of Parkland College District 505.

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**THE MISSION OF PARKLAND COLLEGE IS TO
ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN LEARNING.**

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New AGCO Training Center Opens at Parkland College

Parkland College opened its new AGCO Training Center in December.

Located between the Parkhill Applied Technology Center (ATC) and the Tony Noel Agricultural Technology Applications Center on the campus's west side, the \$6 million facility is the site for Parkland's new AGCO Service Technician associate's degree program, designed to help meet the demand for skilled technicians who can service AGCO's popular Fendt® and Massey Ferguson® brands of agricultural equipment.

Local AGCO dealers work in partnership with Parkland College to conduct training activities at the new facility and at dealerships. Students in the program, sponsored by AGCO dealers, take advantage of a work-based learning model that rotates between classwork and fieldwork.

Parkland's Board of Trustees approved the bid from Petry-Kuhne Co. of Champaign to construct the center in

2023. The new facility contains three classrooms, faculty offices, and 18,000 square feet of equipment laboratory space. Construction on the AGCO center was supported by a \$5 million donation from AGCO Corporation.

Parkland President Dr. Pamela Lau said the new facility will offer students training in high-demand careers, promising a solid foundation for continued employment and advancement in the agricultural equipment industry.

"Parkland College is recognized as a leader among peers in precision agriculture education and a responsive organization to the needs of our local and regional employers," she said. "We are excited for this new facility thanks to the generous gift from AGCO leadership. Together, we are expanding the agricultural workforce pipeline and building a better future."

To learn more about the AGCO Service Technician program, visit parkland.edu/AGCO. 



Voss Wins Distinguished Lecture Award

Parkland College alumnus Shannon Voss received the 2025 Edwin and Esther Prentke Augmentative and Alternative Communication Distinguished Lecture Award by the Assistive Technology Industry Association. He provided the 28th annual lecture at the 2025 ATIA Conference in Orlando.

"I met some great professionals at the conference who invited me to come speak in their cities: Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, New York, and many others," said Voss, a 2024 Parkland graduate in sociology. "I just set myself up for the future." While a third-year business administration major at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Chicago native suddenly contracted life-threatening illnesses that required him to relearn the necessary movements for everyday life. He then lost his mother due to illness. Despite these obstacles, Voss worked with Carle Therapy to regain mobility. He earned his Parkland College degree last May.

"I feel honored that a distinguished organization of that caliber is so invested in what I have to say," Voss said. "I find it amazing where life takes you." 



Parkland College Hosts Inaugural Apprenticeship Celebration

Parkland College hosted its first Apprenticeship Celebration in Fall 2024, honoring the achievements of apprenticeship completers and the contributions of employer partners who play a pivotal role in workforce development.

One of the completers, Le Roy, Illinois, native Jerred Grussing, is a service technician at Birkey's Farm Store in Gibson City. He has been with the company for almost four years.

"I grew up farming with my family and working for a neighbor who farmed, so operating and working on equipment was natural to me," Grussing said. "Going through the diesel program at Parkland, I was able to further my knowledge on how certain machines worked and learn the steps to better diagnose when there were issues with machines."

Other completers with Birkey's Farm Store include Jacob Kolb, Alex Myers, Nolan Regan, Blaze Rich, Benjamin Taylor, Gaven Vannoy, and Samuel Wheat.

Completers with Caterpillar Integrated Logistics include Argel Armea, George DePillars, Matt Elam, Reginant Galleta, Virginia Gannon, Jaymi Green, Brittany Gustafson, Arthur Luke, Diane Meneses, Kevin Mupay, Chelsy Murphy, Justin Olson, Gregory Porter, Elizabeth Robbins, David Ruhnow, Jason Smith, Ashley Snell, Kimberly Takeda, Terry Tester, and Theodis White.

Over the past year, Parkland College's apprenticeship offerings and enrollment have doubled, reflecting the



PRESIDENT PAMELA LAU POSES WITH GRUSSING AND HIS COMPLETION CERTIFICATE AT THE CEREMONY

institution's reinvigorated commitment to workforce development and partnerships with industry leaders. The celebration highlighted the college's commitment to preparing students for high-demand careers while strengthening ties with regional employers.

"Going through the diesel program at Parkland, I was able to further my knowledge on how certain machines worked..."

"This event showcases the power of apprenticeships to transform lives and build a skilled workforce," said Aimee Densmore, Parkland's director of apprenticeships. "We are proud to honor our newest journeyworkers and thank our employer partners for their dedication to supporting the next generation of talent."

Parkland College looks forward to expanding its apprenticeship programs and continuing to collaborate with industry leaders to create meaningful career pathways for students. Businesses in District 505 that wish to explore opportunities available within an apprenticeship program partnership may contact Aimee Densmore for more information, at adensmore@parkland.edu. 





New Transfer Partnerships with SIUC, Millikin

Parkland College has entered new transfer partnerships with Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Millikin University.

In October 2024, Parkland President Pamela Lau and SIU Chancellor Austin A. Lane signed an agreement for the Saluki Step Ahead program, enabling students who graduate with an associate's degree from partnering community colleges to complete their SIU bachelor's degrees online at a lower cost.

"Parkland welcomes its new partnership with SIU through the Saluki Step Ahead agreement," Lau said. "For many years, university partnerships have provided Parkland students with ever-broadening opportunities for seamless credit transfer and the attainment of baccalaureate and other advanced degrees."

Parkland students who have completed an associate degree with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 will be automatically accepted into a Millikin baccalaureate program and provided with a plan of study to complete their degree in two years.

"Through this seamless transfer process, Millikin is recognizing the quality of the faculty and courses offered at Parkland," said Nancy Sutton, Parkland's vice president for academic services. "We are confident our graduates have acquired the knowledge and demonstrated their commitment to education." 



PRESIDENT PAMELA LAU AND SIU CHANCELLOR AUSTIN LANE SIGN THE SALUKI STEP AHEAD PROGRAM AGREEMENT AT PARKLAND COLLEGE

Students Participate in Semiconductor Training

When researching the stock market, Parkland College student Jeslie Mounka found an article about the recent CHIPS Act for semiconductor manufacturing, which piqued her interest. Soon after, her physics professor, Robert Chamberlain, mentioned an opportunity in semiconductor training at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"I was so excited to learn more because I wanted to get hands-on experience on how semiconductor development worked," Mounka said. "Once I got into it, all I needed to do was follow directions to ensure we made a clean semiconductor."

Mounka was one of eight Parkland students in this program, which included one week in a Parkland classroom learning the importance of



TRAINEES AT THE GRAINGER COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN (COURTESY OF JACKSON BRUNNER)

semiconductors, the manufacturing process, safe cleanroom practices, and the industry job market. Students then spent another two weeks at the Grainger College of Engineering at UIUC. 

Lights! Camera! Action!

Parkland Expands Film Industry

Parkland College has partnered with Rantoul-based Flyover Film Studios and with Shatterglass Films and The Line Film Co. of Champaign to expand the pipeline of professionals in central Illinois entering the film industry.

Students pursuing the college's Entertainment Technology AAS degree now have an option to work as an intern with film and TV production professionals at these companies. Such opportunities enhance the real-world, hands-on experience the program currently provides, according to Parkland College Theatre Director Brian Morgan.

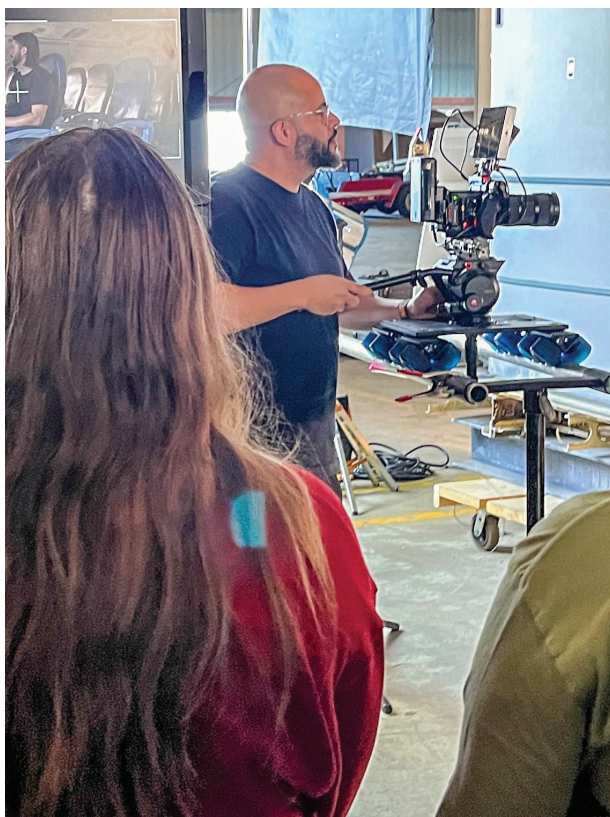
"Our new partnership brings a new layer of marketability for the area's entertainment-industry trainees," Morgan said.

Operating from the former Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul and backed by a \$1.1 million grant from the

Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program, Flyover Film Studios is currently building state-of-the-art sound stages and production facilities from the site, with the aim of creating a central Illinois hub for the country's film and television production industry.

The new program option provides foundational skills in wood and metal custom fabrication, lighting and sound technologies, management principles, basic automation operation and design, and industrial safety. Graduates of the AAS degree can work as union stagehands or in a commercial technology vendor company before pursuing other careers in the entertainment industry.

"We were taught the basics of film construction, along with the dos and don'ts of the industry," said Drew Bagby, a student who participated in the program at Flyover. "I felt very confident with the instruction I was given and could work comfortably in a film setting." 



PARKLAND STUDENTS WORK BEHIND THE SCENES AT FLYOVER STUDIOS, PART OF A NEW PARTNERSHIP TO EXPAND THE FILM INDUSTRY IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS



Parkland College Hosts Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence

Dr. Youssoupha Mane brought West African perspectives to instruction in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts at Parkland College this year.



DR. YOUSSEUPHA MANE IN PARKLAND'S GIERTZ ART GALLERY

An educator and researcher at Assane Seck University in Ziguinchor, Senegal, Mane specializes in African Studies and the traditional art of the peoples of West Africa, particularly Senegal.

Parkland's first Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence in many years, Mane taught History and African Studies and collaborated with the Giertz Gallery and the Spurlock Museum of World Cultures in Urbana.

"I am grateful to be a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at Parkland, which has deepened my empathy for international students and enhanced my appreciation for the value of diversity," Mane said. "I believe this has broadened my awareness of cultural differences and understanding. Being at Parkland as a Fulbright Scholar is a privilege, where I find a tranquil environment and warm, welcoming people, particularly my hosts. Parkland reflects the essence of Champaign."

Mane is one of 43 Fulbright Scholars-in-Residence for the 2024–25 academic year. 

Professor Sees Impact, Gives Back

For Dr. Yoon Pak, supporting the academic success she witnessed at Parkland College was an easy decision.

Pak, head of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois' College of Education, and her family recently established the Pak-Walch Endowed Scholarship Fund at Parkland. The gift will help students in the college's Humanities, Fine and Applied Arts, STEM, and Health Professions programs.

"We always knew the value of community colleges, especially for students who may be at a place where, financially or socially, they're just not ready for a big university," Pak said. "We always held that value really close."

Pak discovered the Parkland Pathway program through colleagues and students at UIUC, intrigued after hearing many of the program's benefits.

"The reputation is that Parkland is a hidden gem and really one of the best [community colleges] in the nation in so many ways," Pak said, "and that was solidified when my oldest child, Hana, was able to become a Pathway student too." The family's appreciation for Parkland's course instruction and



PAK-WALCH FAMILY PHOTO (L-R, RONIN, YOON, HANA, MATTHEW)

the program's university life preparation made the difference for Pak, her husband, Matthew Walch, and Hana. They wanted to give back.

"There's that immediate financial need students have, and while to us it may not seem like a big amount, it probably is significant to them," Pak said. "We want to help them get over that hurdle so they can focus on their studies."

Students can find the Pak-Walch Endowed Scholarship Fund at parkland.edu/scholarships to learn more. 



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About one million Illinois residents take credit and noncredit courses annually at the nearly 50 community colleges under the Illinois Community College System. Parkland College has served over 360,000 students since 1967.

plan ahead FOR THESE SUMMER AND FALL EVENTS

STAERKEL PLANETARIUM parkland.edu/planetarium

- **Spring Prairie Skies** *Fridays*
- **Unveiling the Invisible Universe** *May 2-31*
- **Dark Side of the Moon** *one show May-August*
- **Coyote Explores the Earth, Moon, & Sun** *Saturdays in May*
- **One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure** *Tuesdays, Thursdays, June 3-26*
- **Niyah & the Multiverse** *June 3-26*
- **The Little Star That Could** *Tuesdays, Thursdays, July 1-24*
- **Cosmic Colors** *Tuesdays, Thursdays, July 1-24*
- **The Sun, Our Living Star** *Fridays in July*

- **Mexica Archaeoastronomy** *Fridays, Saturdays in August*
- **Amazing Stargazing** *Saturdays in August*
- **Sensory-friendly programs** *May 3, July 26*

MUSIC ENSEMBLE CONCERTS parkland.edu/musicensembles

- **Parkland Concert Band, Lincoln Square Mall in Urbana** *Sunday, May 4*
- **Parkland Choir and Parkland Voice Students, Parkland's Second Stage Theatre** *Wednesday, May 7*
- **Parkland Orchestra, Centennial High School** *Sunday, May 11*

PARKLAND THEATRE parkland.edu/theatre

- **Out of Order (An Actors' Studio production)** *October 2-5*
- **Moon Over Buffalo** *November 6-16*
- **Romeo and Juliet** *February 26-March 8*
- **Anastasia** *April 9-26*

GIERTZ GALLERY parkland.edu/gallery

Around the Block V: Artists from our Neighborhood *June 9-July 24*

COMMUNITY EDUCATION parkland.edu/ceRegister

- **College for Kids** *June 16-26, July 7-17*
- **DiscoverU Camps** *June and July*

Parkland College ensures equal educational opportunities are offered to all students regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, gender expression, disability, sexual orientation, veteran/Vietnam veteran era, age, or religion, and is Section 504/ADA compliant. For additional information or accommodations, call 217/351-2551.