



February 19, 2025

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

401 E. Capitol, Suite 200

Springfield, IL 62701-1711

Re: 2025 ICCTA Distinguished Alumnus Award

Dear ICCTA Awards Committee,

The Illinois Valley Community College Board of Trustees is pleased to recommend Walter Zukowski of Peru for the ICCTA Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Walt attended IVCC and graduated Summa Cum Laude with the designation of Thomas J. McCormack Scholar in May 1974. Upon completion of his degree at IVCC, Walt attended the University of Illinois Springfield (formerly Sangamon State University) on a full academic scholarship based on his success at IVCC before attending the University of Notre Dame for a combined MBA and JD program. Walt then returned to our community with a local law firm, before establishing his own practice in 1989. Walt first attended an IVCC Board Meeting in September 1981 and has attended every month's meeting since then, serving as the legal counsel for IVCC for 44 years and counting.

Walt's commitment to the College has been tremendous, especially when taking into consideration the other tremendous work he has done across the state and the local community. He has served on numerous boards and has been a leader in supporting community colleges through the formation of the Association for Community College Attorneys. He and his wife Nancy are among our strongest supporters of the IVCC Foundation, including sponsorships and membership in our 21st Century Scholar Society, which supports the top sophomore students each year.

The IVCC Board of Trustees wholeheartedly recommends Walter Zukowski for the 2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Sincerely,

Everett Solon

Board Chair, Illinois Valley Community College

Illinois Valley Community College is proud to nominate Walter (Walt) Zukowski for the 2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award. Walt has provided legal counsel to the College for over 40 years, in addition to his distinguished service to the local community, the state, and the profession as a whole.

**Criteria 1: Outstanding success and distinction in chosen field**

Walt attended IVCC and graduated in May 1974. During his time at IVCC, he was a photographer for the student newspaper and was selected to serve on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. Walt was the student speaker at this event as well. He graduated Summa Cum Laude and received the prestigious McCormack Scholar designation, as well as the Rabe Award. Upon completion of his degree at IVCC, Walt attended the University of Illinois Springfield (formerly Sangamon State University) on a full academic scholarship based on his success at IVCC before attending the University of Notre Dame for a combined MBA and JD program.

Upon graduating from law school, Walt was selected for a competitive clerkship position with the Illinois Supreme Court under Justice Howard Ryan. He has served on the Supreme Court Committee on Guardianship, the Illinois Valley Estate Planning Council, the Trust and Estate Section Council, and a number of other organizations outlined in this recommendation. Walt is looked to as a leader in our community and across the state, over his 40-year career in law. Walt has served on the Education Law Section Council, an arm of the Illinois State Bar Association. Annually the President of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) will appoint attorneys to serve on various subject matter committees. This committee is composed of approximately 20 attorneys from across the state who have experience in the subject area. Walt was first appointed to this group in 1984 and has been reappointed to the Board every year (except two) and has twice served as Chairperson. Walt is slated to be the Chairperson for the third time beginning in July 2025 and if chosen, he would become the first person in the 148 years of the ISBA to so serve.

Walt first attended an IVCC Board Meeting in September 1981 and has attended every month's meeting since then, serving as the legal counsel for IVCC for 44 years and counting. He and his wife Nancy are among our strongest supporters of the IVCC Foundation, including sponsorships and membership in our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholar Society, which supports the top sophomore students each

year. His commitment to the College has been tremendous, especially when taking into consideration the other tremendous work he has done across the state and the local community.

**Criteria 2: Humanitarian service that has proven greatly beneficial to society**

Walt has been active on advisory boards, including the Mendoza College of Business (University of Notre Dame) Graduate Alumni Board from 2013-2019, Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, Peru Catholic School Commission, LaSalle County Metropolitan Exposition and Civic Center Board, Parish Trustee, and Peru Little League. He was instrumental in developing a summer college baseball league in the early 2000's which allowed college players from multiple institutions who lived in the IVCC district to play in the Western Chicago Suburban Baseball league.

Some of the areas where Walt's legal expertise will have long-term impacts for our community are related to assisting schools in our area. Walt was a part of the education reform legislation that provided additional local control for school districts. In addition, he has provided counsel, support and service to 30 schools in our immediate areas and has supported schools in the areas of Tort funding and TIF districting and funding. The work in these areas will have a financial impact for decades of funding for schools, as Walt helped to develop the concept of utilizing Tort funding for risk care management and his work with over 50 unique TIF district projects. He has been a leader for supporting and training local attorneys in the areas of Elder Law. Walt served on the Elder Law Section Council, including as the Chairperson, and was part of the group that reviewed legislation, analyzed recent cases, and provided training to attorneys in the areas of powers of attorney, guardianship, nursing home issues, and related matters.

**Criteria 3: Continued interest in and support of education and community colleges**

Walt first attended an IVCC Board Meeting in September 1981 and has attended every month's meeting since then, serving as the legal counsel for IVCC for 44 years and counting. Walt was the Commencement Speaker in 1991 (which was the ceremony where current President Tracy Morris received her AA degree). His commitment to and connection with IVCC now spans five decades.

In addition, Walt's service to community colleges includes assisting with the inception of the Association for Community College Attorneys. As Walt became more engaged with representing School Districts, he came to appreciate that there were Associations of School Attorneys, which held

meetings to discuss common topics and problems, much in the same way that the Illinois State Bar Association has subject matter committees. Since there was no forum for a similar exchange as it related to Community College Attorneys, Walt took the initiative to contact attorneys across the state asking if they would be interested in an association. There was sufficient interest to form the organization and Walt served as its first Chair. The organization discussed a number of legal related topics at our meetings, frequently in conjunction with ICCTA events and would also sponsor continuing education events for Trustees at those meetings. The organization survived as an independent entity for a number of years before it was eventually subsumed under the umbrella of the ICCTA.

In addition, Walt has spoken at three National Conventions of the Community College Trustees Association, the Illinois Community College Trustees Association Annual Meeting, regional meetings of the Community College Trustees Association, and approximately 15 times at the Illinois Association of School Boards Annual Convention in Chicago, the largest gathering of School Board Members in the country. This is in addition to professional speaking engagements across the state to various constituents.

Finally, Walt is always willing to step up for the College community. He attends events, supports the Foundation, has presented for staff inservice events, and teaches continuing education courses. He can always be counted on to be a champion for IVCC.

**Criteria 5: Completion of a recognized program of instruction or attendance for at least 30 semesters hours at an ICCTA member college**

Walt attended IVCC and graduated in May 1974. During his time at IVCC, he was a photographer for the student newspaper and was selected to serve on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. Walt was the student speaker at this event as well. He graduated Summa Cum Laude and received the prestigious McCormack Scholar designation, as well as the Rabe Award. Upon completion of his degree at IVCC, Walt attended the University of Illinois Springfield (formerly Sangamon State University) on a full academic scholarship based on his success at IVCC before attending the University of Notre Dame for a combined MBA and JD program.

**Summary**

Illinois Valley Community College is proud to nominate Walter (Walt) Zukowski for the 2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award. His accomplishments over his 40+ year career, in addition to his tremendous dedication to IVCC and our local community, have been incredible. We thank you for considering him for this tremendous honor.