

# Creating Heartland Community College

## Chapter 6: Decision Time

*“So it was pretty much just thrown into the fire...” (1)*

Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin), founding Board member

Decisions had to be made quickly. Now that the top leadership question had been resolved, Board members faced other pressing issues. Before the college was organized, high school graduates could, of course, attend other community colleges across the state. But local school boards had to pay for this cost with tuition dollars coming from a district’s educational fund. Now local districts did not have to face this expense; however, District #540 now faced chargeback costs, which are the difference between in-district and out-of-district tuition students pay to go to a community college.

The new college turned to its neighbors – nearby community colleges – for help. District #540 had received a \$250,000 “start up” grant from the state. But most of that grant money was needed for operating expenses. If area colleges demanded payment, District #540 would be forced to borrow money through tax anticipation warrants.

Fortunately, nearby community college officials at Illinois Central in East Peoria and Parkland in Champaign agreed that they would exercise some flexibility in handling the chargeback question. This issue was a two-way street problem as neighboring colleges faced the prospect of losing significant revenue. As an example Parkland said that 436 students from District #540 attended classes enrolling in approximately 4,500 credit hours. The chargebacks equaled \$68.00 plus an additional \$33.00 in fees for each credit hour. Parkland stood to lose over \$900,000 over the span of a year. However, these colleges were hopeful to continue to offer classes to District #540 students on a contract basis. (2)

The new “home” for the fledging college that Perley found was located at 1540 E. College Avenue, Suite 5 in Normal. However, temporary quarters located in Suite 10B served as the office until remodeling work could be completed on Suite 5. (3) Rental costs for Suite B amounted to \$550 monthly until February 1, 1991. The lease on Suite B would cost \$7.25 per square foot plus utilities for a one year lease. Owner Bill Mullins had agreed to pay 50% of the approximately \$3,000 remodeling expense to prepare the office for use. (4)

The location on College Avenue was attractive for many reasons: good visibility, good parking, easy access to students from Veterans Parkway, and outside signage would be permitted at a reasonable cost. Next the Board approved an expenditure of up to \$30,000 for the purchase of furniture and equipment for the new offices. (5)

Now that the college had a temporary “home” it needed a permanent name. Up to this point it was known generically as Community College District #540. But Board members decided to conduct a contest to name the new community college and elicited assistance from local media to promote the contest. (6)

In promoting the contest, residents were invited to submit a name along with a description of 100 words or less of why a particular name would best serve the district. Suggestions had to be sent by January 31, 1991 to Dr. Leon Perley, Chief Administrative Office. If multiple residents submitted the winning name, all would be recognized with a cash award of \$100 determined by a lottery drawing.

The contest drew 67 entrants. Forty-four different names were submitted. The top five names included: Heartland Community College, Golden Prairie Community College, Prairie View Community College, Mackinaw Valley Community College and The Corridor Community College.

Nine residents had selected the same name. The following individuals were recognized: Hazel Bliss, Doris Dicken, Susan Dodson, Fred Drake, Louis Hansen, Marlene Holcomb, Carol Jackson, David Rademacher, and Fran Rehm.

Here are some of the reasons mentioned in their letters to the Board: *It is the “Heart of Illinois”. We are in the bountiful Heartland of America. Any educational institution is at the heart of any community. Speaks of the importance of the agriculture (land) here and most importantly of the warmth (heart) of the people of the District. “Heart” is the core or center; “land” is the country or ground. Heartland has a nice, proud ring to it. This District cares for the education and well-being of its citizens and the community, as from the Heart suggests. This part of Illinois is the breadbasket of this great State. The community colleges in Illinois serve from the heart, and serve the “heartland” of America in doing so.*

Marlene Holcomb received the \$100 cash award as the lottery winner and the college now had a permanent name. (7) Henceforth, the school would be known as Heartland Community College.

The next priority facing the Board included finding classroom facilities to offer classes. Classes would be offered to students at a cost of \$32.00 per semester hour beginning with the Fall 1991 classes. (8) Curriculum Committee Chairperson, Margaret Esposito reported that finding space during the daytime had been difficult due to classroom size, parking, and handicapped accessibility. The Committee recommended the use of three churches: St. John’s Lutheran, Unitarian, and Eastview Christian for daytime classrooms. Evening classes would be held at the high schools at either Normal Unit 5 or Bloomington Unit 87. (9)

Board members continued to discuss the need for space in Pontiac and Lincoln. Board member Jim Pemberton believed that the college needed a more permanent location and that location should be explored with remodeling and moving costs being a factor to consider. However, newly employed president Jon Astroth told the Board that it should “save investment dollars” and continue to use church classroom space on a temporary basis. (10)

As Board members discussed the need for more space, Dr. Leon Perley distributed a new class schedule from ICC/Parkland for Fall 1991. Advertisements for HCC faculty being hired through ICC/Parkland were scheduled to be placed in area newspapers. Perley also alerted Board members to the need for additional office space in Landmark Mall. Space was available for \$8.25 per square foot and could be added to the lease. (11)

In March 1991, at a Committee of the Whole meeting, Board members discussed their vision for the college in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What did they foresee? First, a president who served as the leader, guiding and steering the college. Second, a college that provided affordable, high quality, accessible programs. Third, a citizenry that required the college to be unique and progressive. Fourth, a school that provided state of the art equipment with far reaching goals. Fifth, a strong agri-business program. Sixth, an institution that offered a family-center concept. Seventh, a plan that would provide for an international component at the appropriate time. Eighth, a college that provided students/community what they needed even when they did not recognize the need. Ninth, a curriculum that encouraged unique opportunities with area employers. Tenth, a need for a campus earlier than believed. (12) All things considered their vision for the future looked very much like the college of today.

## Chapter 6

### Notes

1. Oral history interview with Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin) on October 1, 2004.
2. Daniel Dighton, "Area community colleges won't press new district on issue of chargebacks," The Pantagraph, Saturday, December 1, 1990, p. A 3.
3. Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees, January 8, 1991, held at the Health and Education Building at 310 East Torrence Avenue, in Pontiac, Illinois, p. 2.
4. Ibid. p. 4.
5. Ibid. p. 5
6. Ibid.
7. Sharon Tarvin collection, newspaper collection of Margaret Esposito and news article appearing in the Normalite, "A Walk Down Memory Lane," Also "Archival Anecdotes," Spectator, May 2009, Vol. 12, Issue 9. Also Board minutes, March 12, 1991, p. 5.
8. Board minutes, Committee of the Whole, May 9, 1991, p. 1.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid. p. 2
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

## Chapter 7: Getting Started

“Heartland Community College invites applications for the following founding positions: Vice President, Instruction; Vice President, Business Services and Director of Admissions. Anticipated starting dates of July 1, 1991” (1)

advertisement from The Pantagraph

Since the Board of Trustees employed its first president, (2) the search was now on for other top ranking administrators to guide the college in its formative years. Dr. Perley was instructed by the Board to work with the new president in drawing up the job requirements for these key positions. (3)

The Board selected Girard Weber as first vice president of instruction. Weber was a graduate of the University of Iowa. He earned a master’s in educational measurement and statistics. In addition he had a master’s degree in linguistics and English literature from Northern Illinois University. At the time he was employed at the college, he was completing a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Iowa. (4)

Weber had served as dean of academic support programs at Triton College in River Grove, Illinois, and was employed ten years at John Wood Community College in Quincy, Illinois, where he was coordinator of the Pittsfield Open Learning Center and director of the Open Learning Program. He also served as director of Computer Based Instruction. (5)

Robert Hilgenbrink was selected as vice president of business services. He earned a master’s in economics from Western Illinois University and was a graduate of the Central Association of College and University Business Officers, Management Institute at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. His experience included 15 years with John Wood Community College. He acted as registrar, assistant business manager, business manager and treasurer. He had also served as dean of business services for nine years. (6)

Christine Riley was hired to fill the position of Coordinator of Academic Advising and Extension. Previously, she had been employed by Lincoln College as an academic advisor and instructor in psychology and speech. She brought to the new community college experience that included ten years at Illinois Central College working in a variety of jobs including Coordinator of the Job Training Center and Employment Development Counselor. She also played a role in the establishment of career awareness workshops. Hence she brought to Heartland experience in career planning, admissions, procedures, diagnostic testing, financial application, and personal counseling. (7)

In an oral history interview, Riley recalls those early days as the college started out on an uncharted path. *“I had my first meeting with Dr. Perley and I came out of his office and I bet you I looked like a deer in the headlights. We had so many things we had to do in such a short amount of time. I recently found my notes from my first meeting with him and there were 25 things on it including we need to have some computers because we have to register students in two weeks’ time. You have to hire*

*some staff, we need to figure out how we're going to do books, we got to have some space to teach classes, things that were so huge and encompassing...And it was two weeks before the administration started. So I was there before Dr. Astroth, Dr. Weber, and our first VP of Business, which was Rob Hilgenbrink. They had been hired, they just hadn't started. So Jerry was going to be my supervisor and I called him and I said, 'Oh my gosh, I just met with Perley and I have 25 things to do....' He kind of helped me narrow down and focus how to get started, so on day two I got to work at 6 AM because I realized we had a lot to do in a very short period of time. It was exhilarating and the adrenaline was pumping and it hasn't stopped since." (8)*

Now that the key administrative leaders were in place the college could really get down to the business of welcoming students by providing strong, traditional, and innovative programs. Creating a basic yet flexible curriculum fell to Heartland's new Vice President of Instruction, Girard Weber.

The new administrative team proposed weaving together traditional classes with non-traditional approaches. Envisioned was a plan to create learning centers that offered individual instruction that would over time branch out across the district to include Pontiac and Lincoln. (9)

"We will offer open learning. At any time, a student can come in and start a course, and when they're finished start another. With learning centers, students can set their own schedules, meet with their teacher at any time and take up where they left off – all at their own pace," said Weber. (10)

Administrators turned to neighboring schools for assistance as well. Illinois State University was approached to lend a helping hand. Heartland secured the use of Milner Library for students to undertake research and check out books. At the same time, a unique program envisioned using ISU interns for part-time instructors. Heartland would pay ISU an amount equal to what the university would have to pay graduate students for assistantships. Another singular approach planned for a special program for minority students who found themselves in academic trouble. These students would work with ISU's high-potential students program and would receive tutoring assistance from the University Center for Learning Assistance. (11)

Cooperation became a key element for early survival according to Chris Riley. *"We needed so much support for everything from Illinois Central in Peoria and Parkland in Champaign...[As an example] We needed to get rosters to faculty so they know who's really enrolled in their classes. There weren't faxes easily available in those days, maybe they were but we didn't have them accessible to us. There was a point person at Illinois Central because the computer system was through them, so that produced the rosters and the grades and those kinds of things. So I spent a lot of time traveling to the Busy Corner which was about a halfway mark restaurant between East Peoria and Bloomington. So I would meet a gal named Julie. We would exchange the rosters...This was the time of the giant computer, big giant computer rooms, key punch cards. It's hard to even imagine that we were living in those days and those great big giant printouts that came out of the old dot matrix...I would give her the forms, she would take them to her computer center and she'd bring them back to me the next day." (12)*

After the initial rush of students registering for class, Heartland offered educational programs to 811 students. Classes were offered in leased facilities that included nine daytime classrooms at

Eastview Christian Church, night classes met at the Area Vocational Center on the Bloomington High School campus. In the outlying areas, Pontiac students experienced daytime classes at the Boys and Girls Club and evening classes at Pontiac High School. First time Lincoln students took daytime classes at First United Methodist Church and evening classes at Lincoln High School. Throughout the district the college offered 100 sections of general education courses taught through a contract agreement with Illinois Central College and Parkland Community College. (13)

Administrators in August of 1991 moved to gain approval for proposed associate of arts and associate of science degrees from the Illinois Community College Board. This curriculum, viewed as one of the most rigorous in the state, required four humanities and four social science courses or an A. A. degree and a similar math and science requirement for an A. S. Each degree required 60 course hours and had to be transferable to a four year college. (14)

Greeting students on the first day of class outside of Eastview Christian Church, president Astroth referred to them as pioneers. There was an air of excitement and anticipation as the college opened its doors for the first time. Outside classroom walls, students said that the fun of making history lightened the load of getting back to the books. One student liked the idea of being among the first to earn a degree from Heartland. "It's nice being in at the grassroots," he said. (15)

Even the local newspaper in an editorial got caught up in the euphoria of Heartland's strong start with a headline that read: "Community college start deserves an 'A'." Editors said, "Members of Heartland Community College Board have served less than a year but have accomplished much in that time. Even optimistic candidates in last November's election predicted the college would be able to offer only a small schedule this fall. Nine months later, nearly 800 students have started classes offered through Heartland after selecting from 100 sections of general education courses. The relative ease with which this transpired belies the hard groundwork that went into it. The board and its staff did their homework. President Jonathan Astroth was close to his target with an estimate of 750 students in the inaugural class. No students had to be turned away. Some course sections were dropped because of low enrollment, but at least one section of every class offered remained on the schedule. That showed good attention paid to the needs of the district. The Heartland trustees and pioneering staff deserve an 'A' for this assignment." (16)

## Chapter 7

### Notes

1. Advertisement appearing in The Pantagraph, on Sunday, April 21, 1991.
2. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, May 14, 1991, 7:00 P.M. At this meeting the Employment Contract (4 pages in length) provided for the President to be appointed for a two year term beginning at 12:01 A. M. on July 1, 1991 and ending at midnight on June 30, 1993.
3. Minutes of the Committee of the Whole, April 9, 1991, p. 4.
4. Pantagraph staff, "Heartland's VP's Named," The Pantagraph (no date available)
5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. Mini biographies of Weber and Hilgenbrink also appeared in Business to Business, August 1991 along with recognition of Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin) who served as Heartland's Board Chair for her appointment to a state wide committee to review the funding plan by which Heartland and 38 other community college districts received state grants.
7. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, June 11, 1991.
8. Oral history interview with Chris Riley on Thursday, April 23, 2009, p. 2.
9. "Learning Centers to tie Heartland communities into cohesive district," The Pantagraph, July 1991.
10. Ibid.
11. Brad Gerung, "Heartland college getting feet wet quickly with help from ISU," The Pantagraph, July 10, 1991.
12. Oral history interview with Chris Riley on Thursday, April 23, 2009, p. 5.
13. Brad Gerung, "Heartland secures Twin City 'campus,'" The Pantagraph, July 10, 1991.
14. Brad Gerung, "Heartland enrollment tops 600 for 1<sup>st</sup> classes," The Pantagraph, August 27, 1991.
15. Susan Marquardt, "Students make history as Heartland opens year," The Pantagraph, August 27, 1991.
16. Editorial staff, "Community College start deserves 'A'," The Pantagraph, Thursday, August 29, 1991.

## Chapter 8: Challenges Galore

“Slow down, Heartland” (1)

Viewpoint of a Pantagraph editorial

The college seemed to be getting off to a strong, positive start earning praise throughout the community. Board member Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin) described this first year as a “honeymoon period.” In an oral history interview she said, *“The local media thought we could do no wrong. Dr. Astroth was seen as a good choice. We were able to start classes in the fall of 1991. We got off to a great start.”* (2) Yet, the pent up demand for a community college type of education caused the Board of Trustees to make decisions that were not well received in some quarters within the college’s territory.

By denying the creation of the college for so long, residents had unwittingly created an extraordinary demand for this new educational opportunity. As an example, by the spring semester of 1993 enrollment reached a total of 1,835 students. (3) This prompted calls for a change in zoning requirements to permit the school to offer classes in business zones without asking for a special use permit. The Pantagraph editorialized that, “Downtown Bloomington would be a good location for classes. There are buildings with vacancies. It would be convenient for downtown workers who might be interested in night classes.” (4)

Meanwhile the college experienced financial strains because of higher than anticipated chargeback fees, money Heartland had to pay to other institutions with enrollees from the Heartland district when no comparable program was offered by the college. Heartland faced \$1.3 million in chargeback expenses. (5)

Board members soon realized that the college needed additional dollars to operate in the black. By November 1991 the Board approved a resolution to increase the tax levy from \$2.2 million in 1990 to \$3.5 million which would take the tax rate to its maximum allowed by law without a voter referendum. This action required a public hearing as the new tax levy represented a 60.8% increase over the previous year. (6)

Board member Jim White from Lincoln in an oral history interview reflected on that decision. He said, *“A couple of things [brought about a change in attitude]. We initially rented some space at Landmark Mall on College Avenue. And then we rented space at Towanda Plaza, which was more space and then we rented churches... We had classrooms all over the place. There are still people that are still convinced that we should be in a storefront. As ironic as it might seem and you try to explain it, you guys said you would never build anything. Well, things have changed and we got 5,500 students and we were involved with 12,000 people a year now. You can’t do that in a storefront in a Kroger store or something. There’s some of that attitude still prevailing, but we kept renting these spaces... We had classrooms here, and classrooms there and we had students running here and there. Our rent receipts were getting pretty expensive. It was getting up close to a million dollars a year. And you start looking at numbers like that and I’m pretty conservative and I’m thinking gee, 10 years you’re looking at 10 million dollars of rent receipts and how can we justify that to our constituency. So finally the decision was made that we*

*need to think about building something permanent. Not only as a business decision but as an identity. It's nothing like having a campus sitting here as we see it today to convey this identity. Those were the three motivating factors: growth, the escalating rent expense and the institutional identity. (7)*

President Astroth echoed White's logic as reported by The Pantagraph. "Astroth said the decision to seek a permanent campus and ask for the maximum levy (8) increase was made because of high enrollment projections and the short supply of daytime classroom space...Astroth's first choice for a campus would be the old Soldiers' and Sailor's Children's School on Normal's northeast edge....The 55-acre site would give Heartland room to grow, but it has pit falls, such as poor roads and deteriorating buildings," (9)

The decision to raise the tax rate to 22.5 cents per \$100 assessed value triggered a strong and spirited reaction from some members of the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal area. Some voices were raised reminding Astroth that college board candidates who were now board members told the public that the college wouldn't need 22.5 cents for several years. (10) In response Astroth warned that "we will outgrow Landmark Mall and church basements (for classes) in a hurry." While the college searched for more usable space, if it could be located, administrators reserved the option to recommend acquiring land and building a permanent campus. (11)

That sentiment did not sit well with the McLean County Farm Bureau. Jerry Singley in comments made at the Bureau's annual meeting urged members to voice their opposition to the rate increase. He also expressed opposition to the accumulation of any money for use to construct a permanent campus in the future. He believed that resources needed to be used for the implementation of program development. (12)

But a permanent campus was still a far off dream. Reality meant teaching under challenging circumstances. In an oral history interview with Ed Carroll, who was at this time employed as an adjunct instructor, he describes the early teaching environment.

*"When I started at Heartland, it was still under Parkland's administration. They processed the grades; we taught courses based on Parkland's syllabus. So it was a 4-hour class in history and did the standard things. However, it was a fascinating experience to be in the founding of a community college. My first class was in the old Eastview Christian Church which is now gone. It was on Towanda Avenue now Country Companies. I came in a half hour before class and helped other faculty members carry chairs to their classrooms. Got to my classroom and found out that we had three rows of children's desks and in the back a stack of adult chairs. So I scrambled and piled all the kiddies' seats over to one side and spread all the chairs. And as students arrived, I would send them back down the hallway to bring their own chair. This was obviously a Sunday school for under 10 year olds and the blackboard was 18 inches by 28. It was tiny. Fortunately, they were able to bring a larger chalkboard in two weeks into the class. We then got chairs that had folding desktops on them. Had a fascinating time. The other classroom I taught in was a classroom that you could put 40 students in and I had nearly that many. The problem with that classroom was not hat it was cramped...it was also at the church, just down and*

*across the hall. It was that it had windows. Tall, narrow windows with stained glass, plain glass and glass block. And right outside was the childcare area. So my first class there had to compete with a 3 year old that stood in the little space inside the window frame crying after his mother went and he went on about 10 minutes. So everybody in class had a big laugh out of that.” (13)*

Administrators realized that teaching in temporary facilities widely scattered throughout the Twin Cities, was far from ideal. Hence, the college explored the possibility of constructing a new building at Towanda Plaza. The building they were investigating required far greater expenditures than originally projected. A fire that had damaged buildings at Towanda Plaza allowed its owner, Robert Carbery, to use insurance money to replace a 20,000-square-foot building. A new building would meet both parties’ requirements. It would provide Carbery with a reliable renter and Heartland with useable space. The building would combine central administration offices, a learning center, traditional classrooms, and labs. It also offered the college use of 900 shared parking spaces. (14)

Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin) in an oral history interview added some additional light on this decision. She said, *“Through an ironic twist, one of the buildings in Towanda Plaza was destroyed by fire and we were able to contract with the owner to rebuild the building to our needs. This was our first ‘campus’ in the fall of 1992 and the first of several leases in that plaza.” (15)*

Although the Board now had a temporary or interim campus, some members felt disappointed that they could not negotiate a better deal for taxpayers. The trustees looked at a million dollar price tag over the term of a five year lease agreement. The facilities committee reviewed the following sites: Towanda Plaza, Bloomington Junior High School, Heritage Plaza, Ensenberger Building, Montgomery Ward Building, Champion Federal West, and Landmark Mall. Each presented problems as none of them were constructed for school purposes, with the exception of BJHS, which was outdated. (16) Board member James Pemberton expressed the frustration of the entire Board, *“A storefront operation isn’t what we thought a storefront operation could be when we considered it.” (17)*

Additional frustration was voiced by the McLean County Farm Bureau when in an article appearing in the McLean County Farm Bureau News the organization believed that it now had a right to claim *“we told you so.”* The Bureau worried that the Heartland vision had grown beyond what was originally intended. The Bureau pointed to the rejection of Bloomington Junior High School building as a suitable home, the move to Towanda, and talk of a permanent campus, and the hiring of additional administrative staff as clear signs of an inflated vision. (18)

Trustees had not overlooked the ends of the college’s district – Pontiac to the north and Lincoln to the south. In Pontiac a number of facility sites were under consideration that offered anywhere from 25,000 to 150,000 square feet of space. In Lincoln the high school expressed an interest in having Heartland take over their adult education program, which implied that useable space within the Lincoln community would have to be located to accomplish the objective. (18)

By October 1992, an adult education center opened in Lincoln at Lincoln High School where night classes were taught. Plans progressed in Pontiac for a center to be opened by the fall of 1993. In the meantime Pontiac High School was utilized for evening classes. (19)

Meanwhile, Heartland officials conducted a student survey to learn what areas of study they wanted introduced in order to broaden the curriculum and attract additional students. The survey convinced administrators to add eleven extra degree and certificate programs. Those programs included manufacturing technology, computer-aided design, and office technology and secretarial service. Nursing courses were given consideration as well. (20)

As additional classes were added, it became apparent that additional employees would be needed. Fred Peterson, Dean of Student Services, relates his decision to apply to Heartland. *"It was 1991 and I had been at Blackhawk College in Moline for 21 years, fourteen as Dean of Student Services....We [Fred's wife Janet] thought if there was going to be a time that we would move into something different, then this was probably a good as time as any. I received several calls from people saying, 'Fred, you ought to consider this position at Heartland. It's kind of a once in a lifetime opportunity.' So Janet and I talked about it and I decided what the heck. I'll go ahead and at least submit an application...in the fall of 1991. Got a call for an interview after a long kind of wait...I think it was December of 1991 that I had an interview. And then about a month and a half later, I got a call from Dr. Weber that I had been selected as the Dean of Student Services."* (21)

A little later in the oral history interview, Peterson describes his concept for Student Services. *"Well, I have always felt that colleges exist for students....We've always said when our students are successful, then we're successful. So the focal point of everything we did was what's good for the student...that carried over, not so much at Landmark because we were very limited in terms of the space we had. But it certainly is true when we planned Towanda Plaza....We...made sure that we had a one stop center where students could get all of that done. They could get their advisement done. They could get their registration done. They could pay their bill just right across the hall. Financial aid was a little problem because we were so cramped for space even at Towanda, but it was just 20 to 25 feet down the hallway....I wanted them to know they could come take care of what they needed to take care of and be out the door."* (22)

By July 1992 Heartland officials added more administrative positions. Daniel McKenzie was named the coordinator of purchasing with responsibilities for all aspects of purchasing and ensuring that state policies were followed. Thomas Maxwell was hired as the college's coordinator of financial aid. He had formerly worked as director of financial aid at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby. Kent Karraker, who had served as a member of the Normal City Council was selected as the part-time coordinator of community relations. He also had the task of coordinating the development of the college's foundation and directing alumni affairs. Barbara Hellman was hired as the interim coordinator of human resources. (23)

Another major milestone Heartland faced during the summer of 1992 included gaining North Central accreditation. Accreditation had to be earned through a number of steps. The first was candidacy status. This meant that the college affiliated with North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and that Heartland's credits could be transferred to other community colleges and four year schools. College employees completed a 110 page report that examined how well the school met

candidacy requirements. The study was reviewed by an outside educational team that visited the college earlier in the year. (24)

Near the same time, the college received word that it had earned approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education for a unique nursing program. The program was different because it created a career ladder that permitted students to move from one level of nursing training to another without duplicating work. (25)

Nearing the end of 1992, unlike the end of 1991, Heartland won editorial praise from the local newspaper. In an editorial, The Pantagraph said, "Heartland Community College is moving in the right direction. The college will offer studio art courses in the former Bloomington Junior High School during spring semester. It is good to see the college making use of an area close to downtown Bloomington....The College is making fine use of its Towanda Plaza facilities, but it needs to reach out to the community and make use of the area's resources. These include unused classrooms in elementary and high schools after regular school hours and vacant office space that could be easily converted into classrooms." (26)

## Chapter 8

### Notes

1. Editorial staff, "Heartland moving too fast on campus," The Pantagraph, Friday, November 22, 1991.
2. Oral history interview with Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin) on October 1, 2004, p. 4.
3. "A Brief Timeline of the History of Heartland Community College, no date provided on publication.
4. Editorial staff, "Change Zoning to help colleges," The Pantagraph, Sunday, September 29, 1991.
5. Brad Genung, "Heartland chargeback totals higher than expected," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, September 18, 1991.
6. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Tuesday, November 19, 1991.
7. Oral history interview with Jim White on May 5, 2010, p. 8.
8. Heartland taxed voters initially at 15 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. The new 22.5 cent rate was the maximum the college was permitted to levy without voter approval.
9. Brad Genung, "Heartland to pursue tax increase." The Pantagraph, Wednesday, November 20, 1991.
10. This continues to be a controversy as to what candidates actually said about the need to increase the tax rate. Was a promise made verbally to maintain the 15 cent rate and for how long? As a candidate, I remember attending and speaking at a number of public forums. Nowhere did I (the author) ever hear this promise made. However, because of the large field of candidates and the fact that forums occurred in different locations on the same night, it is virtually impossible to speak definitively on this issue. Obviously all candidates wanted to win election and there was a general sense that the 15 cents rate could work initially. I also recall that at one forum when asked how I felt about the 15 cent tax rate, I read off a list of tax rates of neighboring community colleges. No school was even close to 15 cents. My point was if they

couldn't do it, how could we? But in all my research I have never come across this alleged promise in print.

11. Paul Swiech, "Heartland head questioned over need for tax increase," The Pantagraph, December 1991.
12. Chris Anderson, "Farm Bureau opposed college's tax rate hit," The Pantagraph, Thursday, January 23, 1992.
13. Oral history interview with Ed Carroll on October 10, 2010, p. 3.
14. Brad Genung, "Renovation tab puts Heartland in new market," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, January 29, 1992, p. A2.
15. Oral history interview with Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin), p. 3.
16. Minutes of the Committee of the Whole, January 7, 1992, p. 2.
17. Brad Genung, "Heartland settles on plaza site," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, February 5, 1992.
18. "Heartland Community College update," McLean County Farm Bureau News, June 1992, p. 1.
19. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, February 18, 1992, p. 2.
20. "Heartland looks at space usage," The Normalite, February 18, 1992, p. 2.
21. Oral history interview with Fred Peterson on Thursday, May 7, 2009, p. 1.
22. Ibid. p. 3.
23. Pantagraph staff, "Heartland hires administrators in time for fall," The Pantagraph, July 9, 1992, p. A4.
24. Randy Gleason, "Heartland candidate for accreditation," The Pantagraph, August 25, 1992, p. C 8. See also: "Heartland Moves toward Accreditation," in Happenings column from Business to Business, September 1992.
25. "Heartland given go-ahead to offer nursing degrees," The Pantagraph, Friday, September 4, 1992. This innovative program was developed by Sheila Sorrentino, Heartland's director of career education and training.
26. "Heartland moves in right direction," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, November 25, 1992, p. A 8.

## Chapter 9: A Number of Firsts – People, Programs, and Promises

*“It was a fascinating experience to be in the founding of a community college,” (1)*

Ed Carroll, Adjunct faculty member

By the fall semester of 1992, Heartland appointed its first ten full-time faculty members, severing all contracted teaching arrangements with its neighboring community colleges. Enrollment now reached 1,703 students.

Clearly the immediate need was for faculty. After conducting national searches, the college in the summer of 1992 had hired a core cadre of seven full-time instructors. They included: Ricardo Cortez Cruz, teaching English; Edith Wallace, biology; Najmuddin Shaik, computer information systems; Mark Finley, science; Betty Pilchard, accounting; Vanessa Miller, math; and Kathryn Gillespie, math. (2)

Additionally the college finished the hiring of its leadership team. David Bathe was chosen as department chair for Social and Behavior Sciences; Valerie Roberson was selected as the director of Adult Education Programs; Keith Dunham became head of the math and science department; Stephen Herald was hired as head of the English and humanities department; Nancy Evans became head of the business and computer science areas; and Sheila Sorrentino served as director of Career Education and Training. (3)

By September three additional faculty members had been employed completing the hiring process for the year. They included: Kenneth Seib, English; John Frisenda, art; and David Brown, sociology. (4)

In some ways the whirlwind of activities could be compared to a three ring circus. The college was dealing with adding new programs, adding new administrators and faculty, and moving to a new building. Everything was occurring simultaneously.

Chris Riley captures that whirlwind of activity as she remembers events, *“...So many things on the fly but everybody was just so excited to be a part of it....nobody ever was disgruntled....There was so much cooperation. Everybody just really knew that this was something new and there were going to be bumps in the road and everybody rolled with it with a laugh and a smile. It was just incredible.” (5)*

Everything was happening so fast. Steve Herald, Dean of Instruction, recalls the move to Towanda Plaza. *“[The move] was physically exhausting. We didn’t load the boxes into vehicles and bring them over but we did everything else. We did all of the packing, all of the unpacking. We did it on fairly short notice....We spent a lot of time trying to decide what was the best allocation of space. And of course again, there wasn’t enough of it. The building was too small for our needs before our move....We made the best with what we could do.” (6)*

There was the spirit of cooperation and a willingness to just get the job done in whatever manner would work best. Employees were eager to help each other. History teacher Ed Carroll recounts this story, *“The person I spent the most time talking with was Chris Riley. Chris Riley was doing*

*everything. I went to her with the problem about the chalkboard. I went to her to ask her to order a set of history maps. The history maps came with a 60 pound weight at the bottom of the metal stand so it wouldn't fall over. I had to get a cart so that I could move it from one classroom to another without seriously injuring myself....Chris was the gatekeeper.” (7)*

While to some the move may have appeared somewhat chaotic, there actually was a plan for the move from Landmark Mall located at 1540 E. College Avenue in Normal to Towanda Plaza at 1226 Towanda Avenue in Bloomington. The move was conducted in two phases. The first phase witnessed the staff doing the packing to save moving expenses. Moving first was the main administrative offices, instructional staff, faculty and a computer lab were moved on July 31, 1992. That move was followed by the office of student services relocating after classes had begun on August 24, 1992. The delay was planned to guarantee that classes for the fall semester would not be disrupted. (8)

Dean of Students Fred Peterson reflected on the day of the move by comparing his former office space at Landmark Mall to the new office space at Towanda Plaza. *“It was very different in terms of the room because Landmark Mall we had maybe one main office where Jon, Jerry, and Rob were....Then across the hall was a large open area but divided by dividers where each of us had a table and a chair and a computer. And then we had one classroom which was a computer lab. Our first classes at Heartland offered were computer courses....So we were really cramped. So when we were shown the floor design at Towanda Plaza and told design what you wanted to do, that was heaven for us. We knew that we could get some things that we really needed that we didn't have at Landmark. My office, which it just kind of worked out this way, I don't think it was by design but it worked out this way. But to the dismay of Jon and Jerry and some of the others, I ended up with probably the largest office on campus....” (9)*

At every turn Heartland planned a curriculum centered around its core philosophy, which stated that the college “exists to serve students of all ages who can benefit from its programs...Education is a lifelong process and every individual should have high quality, affordable educational opportunities. The college is committed to student success, and teaching and learning are its focus.” (10) Reflecting that commitment, the college received approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education to offer five occupational programs ranging from the fields of manufacturing to office technologies. (11)

“The IBHE approved Heartland's request to provide an A.A.S. (Associate in Applied Science) degree in Manufacturing Technology; a 31 semester credit hour certificate program in Materials and Logistics Management; an A.A.S. degree in Computer Aided Design Technology; a 34 semester credit hour certificate program in Computer Aided Design Technology; and a 30 semester credit hour certificate program in Office Technology. (12)

Soon thereafter the college received approval from the IBHE for a singular nursing program. Sheila Sorrentino, the college's director of career education and training had developed the nursing program. The program created a career ladder that permitted students to move from one level of nursing training to another without duplicating work. (13)

In the summer of 1992, the college received news that it would be considered a candidate for accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Candidacy status was a big step for the young college as it meant that Heartland would receive certification from the Federal Department of Education and would be permitted to award student financial aid. It also meant that the college's credits could be transferred to other community colleges and to four-year schools.

In order to attain this status, officials had to complete a 110 page report that carefully examined how well the school met candidacy requirements, which meant that the school had clear and publicly stated purposes concerning its educational mission, that it assembled the resources to accomplish that mission, and that it had the potential to achieve accreditation within a six-year period. (14)

This was a major milestone for a number of reasons. Dean of Students Fred Peterson addressed one of those reasons as he recalls the following. *"There were some major decisions made that we were involved with. Probably, to me, the most important one was when we went to apply for financial aid eligibility. And this was even before Tom Maxwell had started. One of our advisors, Jim Bohanan, worked a little bit on the financial part of it, and I put together the submission of the application to Washington and then Tom came on board and Washington moved slowly. They didn't seem to want to move but with a great help from Paul Simon, who was at that time our Jr. Senator. Because his chief of staff was a man who had been at ISU, so Tom knows him. He was in the financial aid office. We were able to get him to move that process along, although it didn't move quickly. But it came at a time when students had submitted their application for financial aid, but we weren't recognized as a school that they could use it at. So that created some problems. We didn't want to leave the students left out there having their tuition as such thinking they were being paid by financial aid. So we presented to the Board a proposal to issue credit to all of these students. I think it was \$88,000 on the hope that the federal government would approve our application, thus making us eligible and then using federal money to pay the students.... Luckily, I think it was December 28th, (1992) we got our letter from the government and we were able to pay the students back in essence; they hadn't taken any money out of pocket. We did it on a credit basis. We were very relieved."* (15)

That relief was shared by Heartland's president. "We only had a couple days left, so it was getting a little nerve wracking. But we got the job done." (16) Astroth credited the work of Senator Paul Simon (D. - Ill.) and Representative Thomas Ewing (R. - Ill) for assisting the college in seeing that the legislation was rewritten. (17)

New programs came with a unique "money back" guarantee for new students. In a Pantagraph editorial, the newspaper praised this innovative approach. The college had pledged to refund tuition for any course not accepted when students transferred to a four year college providing they had received the approval of an academic adviser. The guarantee also applied to technical programs. The college would provide up to 12 tuition free credit hours of additional training in the original program if an employer thought they lacked required skills. The Pantagraph said, "The guarantee should boost the confidence of students. It also will keep Heartland officials on their toes to ensure the school is meeting its obligations in educating students." (18)

The Board of Trustees in March 1993 decided to reward Heartland's founding faculty members by granting tenure upon offering an unconditional contract for a third consecutive year of teaching. This was an unusual action as the normal tenure process required faculty to enter their fourth year of continuous teaching. But the Illinois Community College Act did stipulate that period could be shortened by a local board. The following founding faculty benefitted from this one-time policy revision: Ricardo Cruz, Mark Finley, John Frisenda, Kathryn Gillespie, Ann Lazzaretti, Vanessa Miller, Betty Pilchard, Ken Seib, Naj Shaik, and Edie Wallace. (19)

## Chapter 9

### Notes

1. Oral history interview with Ed Carroll on October 10, 2010, p. 3.
2. Pantagraph staff, "Heartland hires administrators in time for fall," The Pantagraph, Tuesday, July 9, 1992, p. A 4.
3. Ibid.
4. "Heartland hires faculty in English, art, sociology," The Pantagraph, September (no date given), 1992.
5. Oral history interview with Chris Riley on Thursday, April 23, 2009, p. 4.
6. Oral history interview with Steve Herald, Dean of Instruction, on Thursday, June 18, 2009, p. 6.
7. Oral history interview with Ed Carroll, history instructor, on December 10, 2010, p. 4.
8. Mary Ann Flick, "Heartland's plaza move underway," The Pantagraph, July 31, 1992, p. A 3.
9. Oral history interview with Fred Peterson on Thursday, May 7, 2009, pp. 4 and 5.
10. Brochure Heartland Community College, 1992 -1993 Academic Calendar.
11. "Happenings," Business to Business, August 1992, (no page given)
12. Brochure, op. cit.
13. Staff, "Heartland given go ahead to offer nursing degrees," The Pantagraph, Friday, September 4, 1992, p. A 2.
14. "Heartland Receives Program Approval," Business to Business, August 1992.
15. Oral history interview with Fred Peterson on Thursday, May 7, 2009, pp. 7 – 8.
16. "Heartland attains power to grant financial aid," The Pantagraph, Tuesday, December 15, 1992, p. A 5.
17. Ibid.
18. "Heartland's promise boosts confidence," The Pantagraph, Friday, January, 22, 1993, p. A 6.
19. Heartland Community College Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees from Board Minutes of March 16, 1993, p. 21.