

Building the Campus

Chapter 11: Laying the Groundwork and Fulfilling a Dream

“I am proud to be a professor at Heartland Community College. I teach 20 adults in a Sunday school classroom at Eastview Christian Church ...designed to house 14 fourth graders.” (1)

Susan Q. Johnson

As enrollment continued to steadily climb, Heartland required additional classroom space. Fred Peterson, dean of students, noted that 600 students in the fall 1995 semester were enrolled in courses at the college’s Fell Avenue Center (FAC) in Normal -- formerly the First Presbyterian Church. The facility had just opened as a way to reduce student crowding at Towanda Plaza in Bloomington. (2)

Heartland now had nearly 3,000 students who registered for classes. The college’s growth rate continued to exceed projections made by an earlier master plan, which called for 1,589 full time equivalent students. President Jon Astroth wondered what enrollment figures would look like if the college had the space to accommodate the demand. (3)

It is not surprising that the Board of Trustees decided to fast track plans for a new campus. The Board invited representatives from engineering and architectural firms to meet with college officials.

Firms from across the state – Chicago, Springfield, Peoria, and Champaign – were in attendance to hear college officials discuss their vision for a new school. But the firms were not offered many specific plans beyond the 250,000 square-foot guideline. Board member Roger Tuttle encouraged the firms to “come back and tell us how we can fulfill those dreams.” (4)

A meeting was held on September 19, 1995 in the gymnasium at Eastview Christian Church in Bloomington to provide vital information to architectural firms who had expressed interest in building the new campus. (5) The Selection Committee was introduced whose members included: Sharon Sullivan (Tarvin), Margaret Esposito, Roger Tuttle, Jon Astroth, Jerry Weber, and Leon Perley. Farnsworth and Wylie were introduced as the civil engineers for the project.

Each member of the committee covered specific topics that included history, community, local match; mission, values, students, overview of Phase I; facility issues; programs and program development; selection criteria; and Capital Development Board (CDB) forms.

The following schedule/timeline was established: Proposals due by 4 p.m. on October 6, short list of architects by October 20, interview of architects by mid-November, Board approval of architect by November 21, CDB contract negotiation by December, and project completion by the fall of 1998. (6)

By October 17, 1995, the Board learned that 22 firms were interested in the project. But Farnsworth and Wylie reduced that number to ten. (7) By October 23, 1995 the committee had decided to contact the top three architectural firms. Interviews with representatives from those firms began on Monday, November 13 at 8:30 a.m. and continued throughout the day ending at 5:00 p.m. The interviews took place at Jumers. (8)

This was an ambitious schedule. However, by December 1995, college trustees had selected BLDD Architects, a firm based in Decatur. \$250,000 would pay for design work and blueprints. The Illinois Capital Development Board also had to approve BLDD as it provided 75% of the cost for community colleges capital projects. For Heartland that represented around \$18 million. Heartland planned to contribute \$7 million of its own money.

BLDD was selected because of its experience and success in designing other educational facilities. Heartland officials were impressed by the firm's attention to educational priorities like distance learning providing fiber optics and video systems to outlying buildings in Pontiac and Lincoln.

However, Heartland still could not begin immediately as it had to get on a list of projects recommended by the Board of Higher Education. Plans called for nearly 200,000 square feet of space more than doubling what the college was renting at various locations. (9) The scope of work provided for planning the construction of the facility, site improvements, parking lots, and driveways. The facility included classrooms, laboratories, academic and administrative offices, a library and a tele-conference center.”(10)

Complicating matters more was inaction by the state of Illinois. Phase I plans were dependent upon final approval and release of Illinois General Assembly appropriated funds. However, President Astroth remained optimistic about the release of those funds. “We can and will continue to progress with our plans up and until the point where the requirement for additional funds impedes any further movement...I have been assured that Heartland Community College continues to top the list of Capital Development projects needing attention from both Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.” (11)

But as a precaution, the college decided to work out an agreement to lease 7000 square feet of additional space in Towanda Plaza and move its Academic Support Center and Corporate Community Education programs from existing buildings, freeing up space for other uses. The idea was to gain valuable space to tide the college over until the year 2000 when the new campus would be completed. (12)

Unfortunately, remodeling the space came at a higher than anticipated cost. The space had been a fitness center. The HCC board thought they could remodel the space for \$100,000 but bids came in at \$185,000. What the college had not expected was the fact that the carpet attached to the walls of the fitness center could not be removed without damaging the walls. Consequently, the college was forced to construct a false wall over the carpeting, which added expense. (13)

Furthermore, administrators while anticipating a permanent campus home still developed a number of unique educational programs that required little or no additional space while reaching out to area schools. One example was a contract with Lincoln College permitting those residents to attend selected classes at Lincoln College. Students would buy some of the empty seats and enable students to register through Heartland but actually attend classes at Lincoln College in Lincoln. The reverse would also be true. Lincoln College students could enroll in classes broadcast over the Instructional Television Network at Heartland's extension center on Broadway across from the Logan County courthouse. (14)

In another example of creative outreach, a new project provided local high school students the opportunity of enrollment in college-prep classes starting in the fall semester of 1996. Heartland classes would be taught in area high schools using Heartland instructors and through Interactive Television. Classes were available in the early morning or early evening on weekdays and on Saturdays from 9:00 a. m. until 11:50 a.m. Students could select from the following courses: communications, humanities, political science, psychology, and sociology. (15)

By August, the cabinet had met with representatives from BLDD to discuss the permanent campus and to "develop a process to gain full input in the needs of the program parameters...and then take that information...to come up with a program design." (16) To enhance trustees' ability to understand what type of programs could be offered of a contemporary community college, a decision was made to take a field trip to visit Rock Valley College and later to visit Maricopa County in Arizona to collect ideas for a permanent campus.

In recalling the trip out to Maricopa County, Margaret Esposito described the visit this way: *"The community college system came in waves across the country...We were looking at Maricopa County as big and spread out as it is there with some of the newest community colleges. So we could see a variety of them in one visit....It was very worthwhile because we saw diversity being attended to there, and we saw some very new community college buildings so when we were in the process of thinking about having our own campus all of that frame of reference was built in. We saw what the curriculum development was like...so we could look at the kinds of needs they were addressing and what they were doing as examples of newer colleges, as contemporary with us. That's my interpretation of why we went."* (17)

In further preparation for a permanent home, the college decided to hire a physical plant director and a vice-president of institutional advancement. College officials argued that it was important to have a physical plant director while the college made plans to build a facility. President Astroth said, "As you begin thinking about a permanent campus, everyone's suggestion is to hire a director so you have someone familiar with the blueprints, documents, and the guts of the building...Hiring a director now will ensure that when the facility is completed sometime in the next five years, Heartland will have someone familiar with this structure." (18)

Chapter 11

Notes

1. Letter to the Editor, The Pantagraph, Tuesday, September 19, 1995.
2. In the Board of Trustees minutes for September 19, 1995, p 2, a report said that there were five designated classrooms at the center. The maximum is 75 students per room with 120 people using the facility at one time. The parking issue was being addressed.
3. Randy Gleason, "Heartland enrollment booms," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, September 13, 1995, p. A1.
4. David Wickert, "Heartland seeks campus designs," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, September 20, 1995, p. A2.
5. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees Minutes, October 17, 1995 Heartland Community College, Informational meeting, September 19, 1995, pp. 1-4.
6. Ibid.
7. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees Minutes, November 14, 1995. Heartland Community College A & F. Selection Committee meeting October 17 & 23, 1995, pp. 7-9
8. Randy Gleason, "Well-known educational architect to design Heartland campus, the Pantagraph, Thursday, January 11, 1996, p. A3.
9. Ibid.
10. Business to Business, "Business Watch" column, "Architect chosen for Heartland project," February 1996, p. 14.
11. Twin City Community News, "Heartland plans for next century," March 27, 1996, p.B6.
12. Derek Bridges, The Pantagraph, "Heartland space now O.K. until 2000," Thursday, April 18, 1996, p. A4.
13. Randy Gleason, The Pantagraph, "Heartland OK's renovation at main site," Wednesday, May 22, 1996, p. A8.
14. Bridges, op. cit.

15. Twin City Community News, "HCC to offer college-prep courses," April 17, 1996, p. 14. See also Randy Gleason, The Pantagraph, "High schools to host Heartland, Friday, April 5, 1996, p. 11.
16. Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees Minutes, August 20, 1996, p 4.
17. Oral history interview with Margaret Esposito, August 10, 2004, p. 14. The trip included board members, several administrators and a number of architects and planners. The trip cost \$4,500 or \$346 per person. The group spent two days with tight schedules visiting four community colleges: Scottsdale, Glendale, Estrella Mountain and Chandler-Gilbert. As reported by Randy Gleason, The Pantagraph, "Just desert in Heartland tour of Arizona campuses, Friday, October 4, 1996, p. A6.
18. Randy Gleason, The Pantagraph, "Heartland board approves \$9.25 million budget," Wednesday, June 19, 1996. P. A8.

Chapter 12: Completion of Phase I and the Move to a New Home

“Seven years ago, I knew that there were changes in nursing and that I needed to continue my education. Well, two hours and thirty minutes in a car when you have a preschooler and work full-time for one class become more of a discouragement.” (1)

Beth Ripley, a Heartland student

Before there was a ground breaking or ribbon cutting ceremony at Raab Road in Normal, Heartland celebrated its extension/satellite facility in Pontiac with a ribbon cutting ceremony unique to its Pontiac site above the Pontiac Public Library. The second floor interior renovation featured a 7,000-square-foot area with a design that included a reception area, a workroom, seminar room, a student/faculty lounge, administrative and adjunct offices, an ITV classroom, restrooms, and a number of standard classrooms. The college had agreed to remodel the space at its expense in exchange for a five year lease with an option for three additional years for \$1 per year. (2)

While Pontiac residents could now take advantage of the new location, events were moving along with plans and designs for a permanent campus in north Normal. In December, 1996, Heartland officials met with representatives from Sasaki Associates of Watertown, Massachusetts.

Rick Dumont, senior associate of urban design and campus planning, anticipated a college that reflected its natural environment while meeting the educational needs of its staff and students. Dumont’s plans revolved around Phase I, which was projected to cost \$25 million and included nearly 110,000 net assignable square feet that could accommodate close to 5,000 students. (3)

Plans called for several buildings to line a campus quadrangle measuring 200 by 800 feet that leads to a 10-acre pond created by a small stream in the area. The buildings, two and half stories tall, would be connected so students could avoid inclement weather. The college would concentrate on building seven or eight parking lots that could accommodate between 80 to 120 cars. Lots would be adjacent or close to primary buildings. Students would only have to walk about 600 feet on average to reach their classes.

President Jonathon Astroth commented that the quadrangle/building arrangement would create a more intimate space comparable to a small liberal arts college. In addition, the design further called for landscaping to reflect the surrounding prairie and agricultural landscape. Rows of trees would line the north and west perimeters of the campus to provide a wind barrier.

Another feature and asset for the new college would be its flexibility. There was ample room to expand close to Phase I structures. The college could accommodate additional students with plenty of room to grow. (4)

Although Heartland now had a scale model campus plan, what it did not have is \$21 million in state funds. Rob Widmer, HCC's vice president of business services, told reporters that "recommendations indicate that Heartland is considered a very high priority. That certainly is no surprise. We have consistently communicated Heartland's needs to ensure that our campus remained a major contender for these funds." (5)

The delay was caused by political infighting at the state level with the state failing to grant bonding authority for capital projects for all of 1996. The college anticipated receiving money from the state that would be used to complement the \$7.5 million the college had saved and the \$2.5 million it had already received from the state for planning the campus.(6)

As the college patiently waited for state funds, it still faced increased costs at its rental facilities. That issue was addressed when board members voted to approve a \$1.69 million bond issue that increased homeowner's tax liability by \$9 a year on a \$100,000 home. The additional revenue was targeted to pay \$450,000 a year to lease the Towanda Plaza campus and other rented facilities. This action freed up money in the operations fund for other pressing needs. It was expected that this new revenue stream would provide funds to lease facilities for the next three years or until the new campus would be constructed. (7)

In gaining support for Phase I, the college turned to the student body. Faculty members and administrators had pushed for a permanent home for five years. Now students were given an opportunity to do the same. Students were encouraged to write state representatives about the need for a permanent campus.

Students responded. Under the guidance of Bill Yount, head of student activities and an academic adviser, nearly 250 students corresponded with legislative leaders. Taking the initiative was John Smith III, who served as vice president of the Student Government Association. Smith pointed out that students lacked study areas, classrooms, and informal gathering spots in order to discuss their studies or just hang out together.

"You have to leave campus to find a place to do that. And when you leave campus, you leave the school behind," said Smith. He also stressed that a permanent campus would be an asset to the Twin Cities. Students also felt a need for a cafeteria and a child-care center. (8)

In anticipation of a new campus and continuing enrollment growth, the college added new positions: a Vice President for Business Services who oversaw financial matters; next a Director of Physical Plant, who provided oversight in the design and construction of a permanent campus along with directing operation and maintenance functions at leased facilities; and a Vice President of Institutional Advancement, who was responsible for supervising the operation of

alumni affairs, corporate and community education, institutional research, grants and special programs, along with marketing and public information. (9)

While there still was some uncertainty about the state providing full funding for the permanent campus, work continued in anticipation that the college would eventually receive funding. As an example of that optimistic spirit, Richard Shelton, Heartland's Physical Plant director, turned to Jim Demarest, ISU's Director for Guidance, in assisting Heartland with building design and maintenance.

ISU offered Heartland a service relationship to share supplies and resources needed to maintain both campuses. Furthermore, both men envisioned a cooperative arrangement on remodeling and maintenance projects once the campus was completed. ISU could share its large purchasing power with its smaller neighbor to the north. (10)

While there was plenty to be encouraged by, there remained one issue that potentially had serious ramifications for the college. All local taxing bodies faced a referendum on a tax-cap limitation initiative. One organization that identified itself as TRIM (Tax Reform in McLean County) actively worked to limit the taxing authority of local governmental units. Similar efforts had been successful in some neighboring counties.

Tax caps were designed to limit the amount of increased taxes governmental bodies could collect to five percent or the rate of inflation, whichever was less. Voters in McLean County during the April 1997 election rejected the caps permitting local governments the freedom to spend revenues wisely without tying their hands to an arbitrary number. (11)

Having won on one front, the college suffered a temporary set-back on another. By June 1997 administrators received news that the Illinois General Assembly had decided to place a freeze on new building projects. (12) The consequences of this freeze meant that Heartland faced the possibility of limiting enrollment at a time when numbers were showing an impressive nine percent growth rate during the summer session. (13) The college was running out of creative ways to provide needed classrooms for students. In assessing the situation, President Astroth concluded that the college had been a victim of politics. (14) The college would have to wait patiently another year for funding while campus blue prints and other documents would sit on a shelf as the state figured out a way to raise funds. Another troubling aspect was that the college ran the risk of actually dropping down on the IBHE and ICC project list. (15) Potentially college officials would have to argue Heartland's case all over again.

Yet, at the same time, the college received some good news from the state as the annual budget received an increase in grant money. The college received \$1.978 million in basic operating grants -- money used to pay salaries, purchase equipment and material -- all items necessary for the day-to-day functioning of the college. (16)

However, while college officials waited for the big prize of \$21 million from the state, improvements still had to be made on the rented facilities. Board members approved spending \$275,000 on protection, health, and safety projects at the main Towanda Plaza location and another \$130,000 for required work at the Fell Avenue site. Fortunately, the college received permission to levy a special tax in order to comply with the Americans for Disabilities Act. Nevertheless, several board members were reluctant to undertake this work especially since owners of the Fell Avenue site would tear it down and replace it with student housing. In the end, trustees agreed to undertake the necessary work. (17)

By November 1997 the news broke that the college would receive \$21 million as promised. College leaders could once again focus on construction of a new campus on the 160 acres in north Normal. (18) However, that good news, only a few days later, turned into bittersweet reality as the Illinois General Assembly had not approved the appropriation bill necessary to release the funds. It had fallen short in the House. But there still was an ember of hope as the General Assembly was scheduled to go into special session in early December and Heartland's funding could be reconsidered. (19)

Although the college did not have its fair share of state money in its bank account, officials remained optimistic. That optimism was demonstrated by a symbolic tree planting ceremony that took place at 2:30 p.m. on November 7, 1997. The Greenspace Team, organized in October 1996 set out to plant 84 seedlings that would serve as a wind break and tree nursery for the future campus. Long range plans for this environmental group included the development of a natural prairie environment to serve as an outdoor classroom while enhancing the beauty and uniqueness of the new campus. President Jon Astroth and Board Trustee Margaret Esposito turned the first spade of earth on the permanent campus site in this ceremony. (20)

However, this feel-good ceremony was quickly overshadowed by a Pantagraph editorial criticizing college leaders. The editorial stated:

“Since classes began in fall 1991, the college has grown steadily – to nearly 3,500 students – demonstrating an untapped need that many had not recognized. However, that hasn't erased the lingering resentment of people who see the institution as something that was forced upon this area by the state after voters repeatedly rejected creation of a community college district. Then the board added insult to injury by devising a method to squirrel away extra money so a permanent campus could be built without going to the voters for approval...Heartland board members and administrators have oversold the public in the need for a permanent campus by pointing to the \$5000, 000 a year spent to lease its primary site at Towanda Plaza in Bloomington. A permanent campus would be more cost –effective taxpayers were told. But, at the rate Heartland is growing – about 10 percent a year – it looks like the college will continue leasing Towanda Plaza even after a Phase I of the permanent campus is built. And escalating costs may force college officials to scale back Phase I. The original estimate of \$25 million has grown to \$37 million. (21)

Christmas arrived early for college leaders as by December 3rd it was reported that Heartland had been awarded \$31.3 for a permanent campus by the General Assembly. But because expenses and costs had escalated the college was now looking at a \$5.5 million shortfall of money. Administrators and board members would have to address options for reducing costs on the project as well as seeking sources for additional income. (22)

By this time the editorials emanating from the local newspaper became even more pointed and critical. The Pantagraph in a December 7th editorial listed ten areas of concern that ranged from upping taxes without seeking voter approval to reminding board members that the people in McLean, Livingston, and Logan counties formed the district in 1990 with the distinct impression that their tax dollars would not be spent on bricks and mortar. (23)

Furthermore, board members heard from TRIM (Tax Reform in McLean County) members who complained that Heartland offered a “smorgasbord” of courses that contradicted the college’s original purpose back in 1990. Additionally TRIM proposed reviewing programs at the college while examining ways to limit the growth of the institution and the tax burden it was placing on area residents. (24)

Trustees realized that for Heartland to be more than a storefront community college, the tax rate would have to increase in order to offer students a comprehensive education that neighboring colleges were providing their students. Trustees voted to raise the tax rate to 29 cents per \$100 of assessed value. Heartland’s 1997 levy of \$7.3 million was \$1.3 million or 21.5 percent higher than the previous year. Trustees believed that they had to balance the growth of the district while meeting a fiduciary responsibility. (25)

Although college officials had considered alternate sites for a permanent campus, it came as somewhat of a last minute surprise when in January 1998 the idea of Heartland locating in downtown Bloomington surfaced. A group of downtown business leaders approached President Astroth with a plan to locate the campus in the heart of Bloomington. Businessmen suggested that their plan could save the college money. While trustees were willing to review the proposal, years earlier the college had considered using the old Bloomington Junior High School and a variety of other facilities but had ruled these buildings as too impractical to meet the needs of the school. (26)

There was a sense of mystery surrounding this proposal as city manager Tom Hamilton, mayor Judy Markowitz, along with Thom DelForge who served as president of the Downtown Bloomington Association were all caught by surprise at the latest initiative. Nevertheless, collectively they agreed it would be an economic incentive for the downtown. (27)

Was the downtown plan simply a trial balloon or a smokescreen for other options? Clearly it was a late inning play in an attempt to convince board members to change direction. But there were numerous unanswered questions. Wouldn’t parking be a serious issue? Could the city of Bloomington build a parking deck to handle more vehicles? Would the city pay for

expanded parking facilities? What buildings would be available to the college? How functional would these buildings be to house programs and students? Would there be adequate space for an influx of new students? How much would this plan cost the college? (28)

The Pantagraph urged trustees not to reject the downtown option out-of-hand. The newspaper said, “Although a new campus may be the best deal, trustees should detail all of the options to the public and get feedback before charging ahead with a plan just because there are promises of state money and they have a timetable.” (29)

But there remained a high level of skepticism on the part of board members. Sharon Tarvin recalls:

We also had a lot of pressure/encouragement to go to downtown Bloomington. There were definite proponents of downtown Bloomington. It was sort of interesting because I had worked in downtown Bloomington for over 20 years. I loved it...Yet I knew that the community college did not fit in that location, that our traffic patterns and our parking would very quickly make a lot of new enemies for us that we didn't have going into it. So it didn't fit, but as I was digging through some of my old memorabilia I actually found how many letters I had gotten from downtown community residents and leaders that had tried to encourage us. (30)

In a matter of only weeks, the Heartland Board of Trustees announced that it had rejected the downtown proposal. It cited several reasons: 1) security and safety concerns, 2) traffic and parking, 3) expansion and growth, and 4) cost. The downtown was left with one glimmer of hope -- the location for a future satellite campus. (31) Now the move to Raab Road was on.

The Capital Development Board would soon release funds to the college. As the construction project was 75 percent state funded, this board managed and provided oversight for the project. Final construction documents had to be completed, bids submitted and awarded, and a ground breaking ceremony planned for the new campus. (32)

To make sure construction proceeded smoothly, the college negotiated a labor agreement that “stipulated all contractors working on the project agree to the same rules and regulations covering wages, overtime, holidays, start and stop time and other conditions.” (33) It was explained that projects without such an agreement could run into unexpected problems and delays. Heartland administrators wanted to avoid that scenario if possible. Plans were already underway for a ground breaking ceremony on June 15, 1998. (34)

The ceremony took place under clear skies with sunlight brightly shining down over the weed-choked field where dignitaries -- from former governor Jim Edgar, Congressman Thomas Ewing, State Senator John Maitland, and State Representative Dan Rutherford – turned over a shovelful of dirt symbolically breaking ground for a new campus, which would be constructed over the next fifteen months. Finally, Heartland would have a permanent home.

Capturing the enthusiasm of the moment, Valerie Roberson, director of institutional advancement, announced a unique plan to raise \$200,000 that could be used to help furnish the new campus or purchase other equipment and enhancements for new buildings. How? By selling bricks with a donor's name engraved on them. Donors could choose either a \$100 or \$150 donation level. The engraved bricks would be placed in the entryways of the student commons, community commons, or instructional commons buildings. Projections called for 2000 bricks to be sold. Furthermore the college would sell 300 trees to be planted on campus which would generate an additional \$150,000. These donations ranged from \$500 to \$1,000. Donors would have their names engraved on a plaque. (36)

The lack of a permanent campus did not prevent the college from receiving accreditation from the North Central Association for a maximum ten year period. Much effort and work went into the "Self-Study Report" in preparation for the visiting North Central team to review. Preparation for the report began in the fall of 1997. (37) The administration saw this report as a "validation of the quality of Heartland's programs and services." (38)

Construction projects, no matter how carefully planned, are always subject to the possibility of unexpected problems. By June 1999 contractors had fallen four weeks behind schedule when they realized that there were problems with the roof. Rob Widmer, vice-president of business services, explained to board members that gaps had been found in the intricate steel underlay which if not corrected would give the roof a wavy appearance. The problem was a combination of fabrication and design. The solution did not come easily but the extra cost for the extra work was being absorbed by the contractors involved. (39)

Construction got back on track and by January 2000 college officials were predicting that the Instructional Commons Building would open for fall classes followed by the Student Commons Building that would house the library, distance-learning classes and an open computer/technology space. Projection called for the completion of the Community Commons, site of administrative offices, a month later.

The first building to be occupied would be the Facilities Building with Facilities Director Ralph Niemeyer and his staff moving in by February 2000. But construction work was not limited to the new campus as the Board of Trustees approved a \$26,616 bid from Basic Construction of Lincoln to remodel the college's downtown Lincoln facility located at 628 Broadway Street. (40)

Although no new building was complete, the college was looking ahead to the construction of the Workforce Development Center. The 62,350 square foot center would be built north of the Instructional Commons. It would integrate technical education and training customized to meet the requirements of local industries and businesses. The proposal called for the state of Illinois to contribute 75 percent of the price leaving Heartland to pick up the

remaining \$5 million of the cost. This amount would be split with local businesses and industry partners. (41)

By July the actual physical move to the new campus was on. Excitement was in the air as faculty members prepared to move from their old offices at Towanda Plaza over to the now completed Instructional Commons Building. Faculty member Ed Carroll recalled his experience. *“I suppose the word crazy has been used enough. Actually it was pretty methodical. We packed up our things, labeled them, and they ended up in our offices with the furniture. It was a big weekend move but all furniture was there in the offices and we just needed to put our things in there”.* (42) Forty faculty and staff members settled into their new offices. “Many praised the architecture, reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright’s prairie style, for its spaciousness and abundant natural light.” (43)

By August students showed up at Heartland’s new doorstep. Gone were the crowded hallways, and limited study space -- replaced by spacious classrooms with high tech features like ceiling mounted projectors, document cameras, and ample computers. (44) Administrators were in a celebratory mood. After all they had weathered stinging criticism over years leading up to this point. Now the campus -- while not yet fully complete – was a reality, a long anticipated dream finally come true. (44)

Chapter 12

Notes

1. Jeff Ruskin, “Pontiac becomes a college town,” The Daily Leader, January 1996.
2. Ibid.
3. Randy Gleason, “Heartland future on drawing board,” The Pantagraph, Wednesday, December 11, 1996, p.A5.
4. Ibid.
5. Randy Gleason, “Heartland, ISU pleased with budget recommendations,” The Pantagraph, Saturday, January 4, 1997, p. A5. Information also found in the following sources: “Heartland’s Phase I campus: Planning in action,” Twin City Community News Special Supplement, March 26, 1997 p. B-3 and “Illinois Board of Higher Education recommends full funding in ’98 of Heartland’s Phase I campus,” Business to Business, February 1997.
6. Ibid. See also “IBHE recommends full funding of Heartland’s Phase I campus,” Twin City Community News, February 5, 1997, p. 10.
7. Randy Gleason, “Heartland passes rent costs on to taxpayers,” The Pantagraph. Wednesday, March 19, 1997, p. A5.
8. Randy Gleason, “Building referendum will offer Heartland College a place to call home,” The Pantagraph, Friday, April 4, 1997, p. A6. In the Art Adams Heartland Archives is a

binder entitled Letters of Support for a Campus for Heartland Community College. It contains copies of each letter written by supporters that were sent to government officials.

9. "New positions deal with new tasks at Heartland," Twin City Community News Special Supplement, March 26, 1997. P B4. Individuals moved to those positions included Robert D. Widmer, Dick Shelton, and Valerie Rose Roberson.
10. Randy Gleason, "Heartland, ISU to cooperate," The Pantagraph, Tuesday, April 29, 1997, p. A6.
11. Editorial staff, "Voters needed escape route from county wide tax caps," The Pantagraph, Sunday, January 12, 1997, p. A12.
12. Randy Gleason, "Heartland comes up short," The Pantagraph, Thursday, June 5, 1997, p. A1.
13. Randy Gleason, "Heartland enrollment up 9 percent," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, June 18, 1997, p. A8.
14. Randy Gleason, "Legislators: Heartland has to wait," The Pantagraph, Friday, June 6, 1997, p. A5.
15. "Heartland enrollment"
16. Randy Gleason, "Heartland pleased overall despite campus shortfall," The Pantagraph, June 13, 1997.
17. Randy Gleason, "Heartland plans some improvements," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, August 20, 1997, p. A7.
18. Kurt Erickson, "Heartland money OK'd," The Pantagraph, Saturday, November 15, 1997, p. A20.
19. Randy Gleason, "Heartland m money held up by House vote," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, November 19, 1997, p. A9.
20. Notice to Heartland employees, "Heartland Community College Tree-planting 2:30 p.m. November 7, 1997". Also Pantagraph staff, "Heartland site will begin to take life with trees," The Pantagraph, Friday, November 7, 1997, p. A10.
21. Editorial, "Heartland's increased costs leave residents out of loop," The Pantagraph. Sunday, November 23, 1997, p. A14.
22. Randy Gleason, "Heartland campus money cleared," The Pantagraph, Wednesday, December 3, 1997.
23. Editorial, "Time for Heartland to stop, take another look at options," The Pantagraph, Sunday, December 7, 1997, p. A10. Note: This editorial prompted one writer in a "Letters to the Editor" column to ask why the newspaper was obsessed with opposing Heartland. Letter from Richard Erzen on Sunday December 21, 1997.
24. Randy Gleason, "Heartland board approves increased levy, new taxes," The Pantagraph, no date given.
25. Ibid.
26. Randy Gleason, "Downtown Bloomington campus for Heartland proposed," The Pantagraph, Saturday, January 17, 1998, p. A1.

27. Randy Gleason, "Heartland offer welcome surprise to downtown business leaders," The Pantagraph, Tuesday, January 20, 1998, p. A5.
28. Randy Gleason, City making college try," The Pantagraph, Thursday, January 22, 1998, p. A5.
29. Editorial, "Heartland trustees need to share downtown proposals," The Pantagraph, Saturday, January 24, 1998, p. A16.
30. Oral history interview with Sharon Tarvin, October 1, 2004, p. 10.
31. Randy Gleason, "Heartland rules out downtown," The Pantagraph, Tuesday, January 27, 1998, p. A1.
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Chapter 13: The Child Development Lab and Learning Center (CDLLC)

“If you build it...” (1)

The Voice from the motion picture Field of Dreams (1989)

The bricks and mortar of new buildings, while presenting a very attractive and inviting appearance to new students and the public, were no substitute for the quality of educational programs that occur inside the walls. As the campus neared completion, administrators and board members turned their attention to how the available space could be constructively used. Arguments were made for a child development lab to serve as a child care facility and a learning laboratory for students. The question became should space be allocated for a program like this and if so how large should the space be and for how many children?

Some board members like Margaret Esposito were passionate about the need and desirability for a lab and learning center. She said, *“Family relations was one of my major areas within my discipline. I was always very interested in that, so when we were talking about the new campus, I kept saying we need to have child care facilities... We need to educate the family. So I did take some time out and draw up ... a proposal that I could speak my little piece from and said that we should have a child care facility for our students and our students would have the opportunity to being close to their children, could come by and see them between classes if that’s what they wanted...”* (2)

Board members voted to construct a child care facility in a limited space designed for approximately 40 children in the southwest corner of the Student Commons Building. A small playground area for children was added later. The college launched a job search looking for a child development specialist who would be responsible for “the care and education of a group of children as part of a teaching team and functions as a team leader or co-leader. The Child Development Specialist plans and implements the curriculum and, with active participation of other members of the teaching team, works with parents and assesses the needs of individual children.” (3) The college hired Maureen “Mo” Miller for this newly created position.

In September 2000 Miller communicated with families in her first newsletter entitled “CDLLC Moments” that outlined the philosophy behind the new center. The program offered parents highly experienced, educated teachers, mixed-age grouping of children, co-teaching relationships, primary caregiving, play-based, child centered curriculum, self-serve snacks and a family-style lunch. Finally it was pointed out to parents that the CDLLC served as a lab school for Heartland students where they could learn more about child development and the children could benefit from the enthusiasm and expertise of the students. (4)

In a promotional brochure highlighting the opening of the CDLCC, it was pointed out that there would be two classrooms of mixed age infant/toddler rooms with two teachers supervising a group of eight children, ages six weeks to 35 months. In another two classrooms there would be housed two teachers with 14 children ages three to five years old.

The CDLLC provided for evening care, a resource library, extended periods of play time, a central reception area, an observation space, and walls covered with interesting textures, colors, and objects to discover. (5)

The planning, programming, and promotion paid off as after only one year of operation the facility became a centerpiece of innovation and excitement. However, young children were placed on waiting lists because of space limitations. Ironically, the CDLLC had as one of its objectives to erase the barriers that keep parents from completing their education by offering a place for their children – a place where parents could feel secure in the knowledge that their children were being cared for in a stimulating learning environment. The CDLLC was now built, but it was already too small. (6)

Fast forward to the summer of 2004. There were now over 80 families on a waiting list. College officials initiated plans to construct a \$5 million child-care center. This new facility called for 100 slots. More than one child could fill a slot with one child attending in the morning and another in the afternoon. The Board of Trustees approved applying for state dollars to construct a new stand-alone building to replace the now overcrowded lab.

Realistically, while applying for the state's Resource Allocation and Management Plan funds, the college could not expect to receive any state assistance until 2006. However, President Jonathan Astroth, although believing the request would not be a high priority, also believed that the request should be made just to get into the official pipeline. (7)

A continuing concern of the personnel at the CDLLC was providing grant dollars to assist parents to meet child-care expenses. The center received money from a federal grant providing \$10,000 every year for four years. Other support came from the Heartland Foundation through fund raising projects. (8)

By the summer of 2008, a steel skeleton for the Child Care Center had been erected. The Center was one of six buildings planned for what was initially referred to as Phase II later to be known as Beyond Buildings.

Heavy spring rains delayed work but the goal to have the Child Center completed by 2010 remained on target. The new stand-alone building featured differing roof angles, exposed structural roof timbers and in-floor radiant heat tubes. Construction crews drilled wells for the geothermal heating and cooling of the building. (9)

Darlene Wills, the center's new director, anticipated spots for 72 children. Among those, 70 percent would be children of Heartland students. Plans provided for two additional infant/toddler rooms, offices and classrooms for early childhood education, faculty and staff, a kitchen, laundry room, and outdoor classroom areas. (10)

When the Child Development Lab first opened in February 2009, it contained 19,600 square-feet of space with a unique large sunroom outfitted with padded floors and toys. (11) The vision that Margaret Esposito dreamed about years earlier had now been realized.

Chapter 13 Notes

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Chapter 14: Beyond Buildings

“The WDC is beautifully designed, well equipped, environmentally friendly and will provide a healthful working, learning and meeting environment.” (1)

From Legacy, a publication of the HCC Foundation

In the early months of 2001, college leaders thought that state funding for the Workforce Development Center (WDC) would be at least four years away. However, Governor George Ryan asked the General Assembly to provide funding for his \$250 million, two-year capital improvement program for community colleges, which meant that the four year wait would be cut by two years.

The \$16 million WDC would house the college’s technical/vocational and corporate education programs which were being housed in rented space in Towanda Plaza in Bloomington and at the Bloomington-Normal Factory Outlet Stores along Wylie Drive. (2) However, by May the General Assembly was embroiled in yet another budget battle which threatened to put the WDC in limbo. Legislative leaders reduced funding that would have placed the 80,000 square-foot WDC on a fast track to completion sooner than originally projected. (3)

By December 2001 the WDC had made the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s list of capital improvement projects but projections called for funding to be delayed three or four years. Administrators were pleased to have the WDC on the approved list but it ranked 39 out of 42. (4)

While college officials were anticipating a new WDC for some unspecified future date, they were also dealing with the immediate need for additional classroom space even though the permanent campus was less than 18 months old. In February 2002 President Jon Astroth asked the Board of Trustees to approve a proposal for a \$3.5 to \$4.0 million addition for more classrooms and faculty offices. The new addition was planned for the east end of the Instructional Commons Building (ICB). The project called for 10 to 12 classrooms and would serve as a temporary solution to the space problem until the planned WDC was constructed. (5) Trustees approved a special tax levy to fund the addition. (6)

It was not surprising that this addition was needed as initial plans for the campus called for a 400,000 square-foot facility. But the state reduced funding to provide only enough money to construct a 220,000 square-foot capacity campus for 5000 students. The new addition was projected to be completed by the fall 2003 semester. (7)

By December 2003 attention once again focused on the Workforce Development Center (WDC) as the college received word that the state of Illinois intended to authorize \$12 million to help build the 80,000 square-foot building. “This is kind of the jewel in the crown for Heartland Community College. It has an incredibly important function in the region for work force training, particularly technical training that almost no one else can do,” said Mike Kelleher, a spokesman for the governor. The construction

timeline projected work to begin in the spring of 2004 with a target completion date set for the fall of 2006. (8)

In the fall of 2004, state officials announced that the WDC would be the first state-funded building in Illinois certified by the U. S. Green Building Council. Adjusting the plan to comply with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification added \$1.1 million to the construction cost. Administrators were hopeful that future energy savings would more than compensate for any additional costs. LEED certification was based on five environmental categories: site suitability; water efficiency; energy and atmosphere; materials and resources; and indoor environmental quality. (9)

On Friday, October 8, 2004, Heartland held a ground breaking ceremony featuring college officials, local donors, city officials, legislators and other guests that the new WDC would offer the training and technical assistance required for workers to quickly adapt to rapid changes in the economy. Construction was now projected to start in January or February 2005 and be completed in May 2006. The center would be ready for classes in August 2006. The center would offer students, for the first time, a manufacturing processes lab, a facilities and construction lab, and an industrial maintenance automation lab. (10)

Yet again a new construction project got caught up in a tug-of-war between the governor and the General Assembly. It wasn't until a lengthy wait that college administrators received word that the project could be officially put out for bids by mid-February 2005. One state representative called the wait frustrating, but finally word came from Springfield that the state had intended to pay for the project with bond funds that were not subject to legislative approval. (11)

By June 2005 the WDC started to take shape, but not until trustees learned that the structure would cost more (now \$23.2 million) and the 110,000-square-foot building would not open to students until the fall of 2007. Work began only after the college received \$14 million from the state after a yearlong delay.

Residents, students and faculty could view construction progress on the college's 24-hour WEB-cam of the site. Viewers could see slow-motion video and follow the project as the building rose from a hole-in-the-ground to its final appearance. Plans were underway to drill 180 holes, 300 feet deep to provide geothermal heating and cooling systems designed to standards for green building recognition. (12)

By July 2006 the WDC was really taking shape. The structure stood four stories tall as workers systemically covered its steel beam frame and installed the roof. Also the mechanical and electrical systems were beginning to be roughed in. The project did not come without some complications as steel shipments were delayed and there was a problem with soil settlement. (13) Correcting soil settlement problems came with a large \$732,635 correction plan -- a plan that no one wanted to pay for. Consequently, a lawsuit was filed by English Brothers Company against the building designer, BLDD Architects, and the soil testing company, Testing Service Corporation.

The construction schedule was not impacted by the lawsuit as, in fact, the problem had been solved. The primary cause of the problem was backfill near the basement. But workers had removed damaged slabs, and then installed structural slabs and repaired plumbing and electric systems around the problem area. (14)

As the WDC approached completion, college officials laid out an ambitious expansion plan that called for \$60 million in new construction thereby doubling the size of the campus. Envisioned was the erection of five new buildings, the renovation of several existing facilities, the creation of three athletic fields, and adding 500 to 600 parking spaces. New buildings would include a student center, fitness center, classroom building, multipurpose auditorium/business conference center, child-care center, and receiving building. (15)

However, the reality of the state of Illinois funding this plan was dim. It would be up to the college to find funding and resources to undertake any construction work. Heartland's 16 year tax rate had been held relatively steady and the rate was at the low end of the scale compared to other community colleges. (16)

Leaders within the Twin Cities reacted to the news with a measured and mixed response. While some saw an expanded campus as a positive for Heartland students and the community, some expressed caution and questioned the timing of the plan.

Heartland's Vice President and chief financial officer proposed that the college's board approve issuing general obligation bonds that would increase property tax rates about 3.5 cents per \$100 equalized assessed valuation. (17) By February, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to accept campus expansion plans calling for a \$60 million in six new buildings, improvements in existing buildings, adding nearly 500 parking spaces and laying out three athletic fields. The plan initially became known as the Phase II Campus Locally Funded Project. (18)

This decision triggered a public response by the editors of The Pantagraph in an editorial criticizing the Heartland Board for being "among the least responsive public bodies in the area." (19) While admitting that the college needed to grow to meet real and projected increases in enrollment, the editors took issue with any "need for a sports program and other frills" while admonishing the board and administration to be more responsive and open to the public. The editors also prompted the public to hold college officials more accountable by attending meetings and voting in elections. (20)

While new construction plans became the subject of a vigorous discussion in the press, the WDC project continued on schedule. In January 2007 a small group of twenty people were given a sneak preview of the building's interior. They witnessed work crews installing a glass elevator, with a stair case encircling it, and an atrium ceiling crisscrossed by large steel beams.

Administrators pointed out that the WDC would be a classroom as the building could be used in the learning process. One example was a classroom fitted with a heat pump that students could work on to learn the mechanics of the system. (21)

The college turned to the federal government for financial assistance sending its top administrators to Washington D. C. hoping to secure funds for a green-construction program at the WDC. With or without federal money the college intended to pursue this green curriculum and the green-friendly design of the building. (22)

Suddenly and somewhat surprisingly Heartland became the place to relocate the Challenger Learning Center. The Prairie Aviation Museum that housed and oversaw the space mission simulation center faced a daunting financial dilemma. The center had become very popular for summer camps, school field trips, teamwork training exercises, and private parties, but it faced closing its doors because of a large, burdensome, almost million-dollar debt.

The museum board, after much intense discussion, saw Heartland as an ideal location to carry on the Challenger Learning Center's mission. But Heartland's trustees, while receptive to the idea, did not want to assume any of the indebtedness. The proposal would remain under review and study. (23)

Meanwhile the debate swirling around the \$60 million Phase II expansion plan was heating up. The Pantagraph ran a series of articles examining the history, growth, and need for additional buildings. In trying to convince skeptical critics, college officials pointed to the fact that Heartland taxpayers by creating a stand-alone college years earlier and not annexing to neighboring districts actually saved tax dollars. Bonds would be issued to pay for the new Phase II construction and even with the indebtedness the colleges' tax rate would remain lower than nearby schools. (24)

By issuing bonds, college leaders would avoid a referendum. But for some vocal critics that was the primary problem – avoiding going directly to the taxpayers for their approval. Consequently, a conscientious effort was made to place the question before voters by putting it on the ballot. However, to do that required a citizen initiative or a “back-door referendum.” Proponents for the referendum needed at least ten percent or 12,626 registered voters from the district. Petitions had to be circulated by going door-to-door to collect signatures of registered voters. Circulators faced a daunting task as they had only one month to gather the signatures to place the issue on the ballot. (25)

Confronted with that deadline, the effort to force a referendum fell short. By the deadline date (May 21, 2007), the drive had failed. Petitioners could collect only 8,468 signatures. The result of the failed drive was interpreted differently by those who supported the Phase II plan and those who opposed. Heartland leaders saw it as a vindication to go ahead and issue the bonds while critics saw it as a sign that voters wanted a referendum but time ran out just as the effort was gathering increasing support. (26)

The Pantagraph, in an editorial, placed the blame squarely on the Heartland Board of Trustees. “...it is even more unfortunate that the Heartland Community College Board of Trustees chose a questionable portion of the state law on bonds to avoid having a referendum.” (27) But by June, after delaying a vote by a month to review the final results of the petition drive, trustees opted to authorize selling \$59 million in general obligation bonds. Projections called for all construction to be completed by 2010. (28)

In July the college planned to showcase the new Workforce Development Center. A grand-opening brought into the building hundreds of visitors who were greeted by the dramatic mural made of small mosaic tiles embedded in the floor of the soaring four-story atrium. Touring the building, they saw first-hand the unique environmental (green) features built into the structure: geothermal heating, translucent windows in the atrium to access natural light, automated fluorescent lights, and bathroom water faucets automated to turn on and off. (29) The “green” features of the structure promised “increased awareness of environmental issues and sustainable design while reducing the college’s environmental footprint and trim its energy costs by about 15 percent.” (30)

After the WDC open house/grand opening event, college leaders once again focused on the Phase II plan. In September trustees were informed that expansion (to include six new buildings and an athletic field) remained on schedule. The college would select one general contractor who would handle all buildings and athletic fields as one project because the college would gain cost efficiency using this approach. (31)

Just as administrators started to focus on Phase II, the Challenger center issue once again appeared on the horizon. The space learning center, at that time, housed at the former Central Illinois Regional Airport, was facing serious money problems. The center struggled with a \$900,000 debt. While Heartland trustees continued to praise the educational programs for children, they were unwilling to take on any of the center’s debt. The college appeared willing to save this valuable community resource, but needed additional support from local governmental leaders.

The Challenger center seemed to be an ideal fit for the college especially if it could be incorporated into the Heartland Youth Enrichment Program. Projections indicated that the Challenger center could someday be self-sufficient. The question yet to be answered was if space could be found somewhere in Phase II design plans. (32)

By late June 2007, the college agreed to oversee the Challenger’s finances and fund raising activities, while still maintaining that it would not be obligated for its large debt. The purpose was to maintain its financial stability and its educational programs in the short term while local leaders addressed the debt problems. (33)

At the same time, the trustees gave approval to issue \$59 million in general obligation bonds. The bonds carried an average interest rate of 4.6 percent over their 20-year life. The trustees also received good news from Moody’s Investor Services as the firm maintained Heartland’s A1 rating citing the college’s strong financial performance. (34)

In November 2007 the trustees decided to cement and formalize the college’s connection with the Challenger center. Trustees approved a management contract that placed Heartland in charge of the center’s day-to-day operations. In addition, the college would acquire Challenger center equipment with a plan to relocate it to the newly designed Community Education Center in 2010, which was one part of the Phase II expansion. (35)

By May 2009 construction dust was flying as contractors worked to keep Phase II on schedule. Two buildings were already opened – the storage and receiving building and the childcare center and education lab – while work continued in various stages on the other four buildings with projections for opening in the summer of 2010. (36)

In April 2010, the Jonathan M. Astroth Community Education Center opened its doors to the public and to a relocated Challenger Space Center. This building and others in the project (part of Phase II) were now called “Beyond Buildings” the term used by Heartland’s marketing department to describe the expansion. The Center was dedicated to HCC’s first president. Speakers at the opening day ceremony praised Astroth, who led the college since its inception in 1991, as “a man of humility, a dedicated educator, and a persistent steward for the community’s lifelong students.” (37)

Phase II construction was drawing closer to completion as each new building was finished or older buildings remodeled. In June 2010, students walked through doors into a new bookstore “more than twice the size of its predecessor, and a café triple the size of the old dining area.” (38) The original bookstore, while undersized, was all the college could initially afford. It was apparent that the Phase II planning had to address space limitations of both the bookstore and the café. The new bookstore, owned by Follet Higher Education, offered students in excess of 4,000 square feet of space instead of the 1,400 square feet provided in the first bookstore. (39)

In September 2010 the marketing department scheduled a unique program to showcase new and remodeled buildings. It was labeled “Beyond Buildings Community Day” and featured an open house tour of the facilities coupled with a program class sampler. Visitors could see the finished construction work while enrolling in one day classes to get a better understanding of course content. Trolley tours provided views of new buildings while making stops along the way where staff, faculty, and students illustrated how the college was a community resource. (40)

Trustees were already looking beyond Phase II work as discussion centered around purchasing 96 additional acres adjacent to the campus on its western edge. While this property would cost \$2.7 million, administrators convinced trustees that it was a timely real estate purchase as land values had declined because of recessionary forces within the general economy. Actually this land had been considered as a natural fit earlier, but the timing was just not right. Now it was. (41)

Editors of The Pantagraph recognized the wisdom in buying this undeveloped farm property. “Expansion of the college campus is blocked on the north by the interstate highway. Busy Fort Jesse Road (*Sic. Raab*) forms a practical barrier to expanding south. The east side of the campus is bordered by Northmeadow Village. Therefore, the logical direction for future expansion is the undeveloped property directly west of the campus. With the owners of three parcels willing to sell and interest rates at historic lows, this is a great time to make the purchase.” (42)

As Phase II (Beyond Buildings) approached the finish line with the completion of the fitness and recreation center, college leaders looked back and enjoyed a sense of accomplishment. While there were speed bumps and even road blocks along the way, Phase II was the last step in the college’s long-range master plan. (43)

In review, the following is a list of the entire Phase II (Beyond Buildings) construction timeline:

September 2009:	Receiving and storage building completed.
January 2010:	Child Development Lab building completed.
January 2010:	Astroth Community Education Center, lower level with Challenger Learning Center.
April 2010:	Astroth Community Education Center, main building completed.
May 2010:	Instructional Commons North, classroom building completed.
May 2010:	Student Commons Building extension completed.
November 2010:	Old Student Commons Building wing renovations completed.
January 2011:	Student Fitness and Recreation Center opened.

Chapter 14

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