



HEARTLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2035



SHAPING TOMORROW
Together



“

“This strategic plan looks ahead to the next decade while staying grounded in what has always mattered most at Heartland: **access, quality education, and a genuine commitment to helping people succeed.**”

Dr. Keith Cornille
President, Heartland Community College



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KEITH CORNILLE

Heartland Community College has always been shaped by the people who care about it: our students, employees, alumni, trustees, and community partners. Our new strategic plan, “Shaping Tomorrow Together 2035” reflects that spirit. As we look toward the next decade, this plan remains grounded in what has always mattered most at Heartland: access, quality education, and a genuine commitment to helping people succeed.

This plan is not the work of one individual or one group. Rather it is the result of countless conversations and contributions from across the College and throughout our community. It reflects the important role that Heartland plays in strengthening our communities by advancing the knowledge, skills, and talents of individuals that contribute to individual success, economic opportunity, and community vibrancy.

Over the past year, students, faculty, staff, community members, business partners, and local leaders shared their ideas, experiences, and hopes for Heartland’s future. Through surveys, meetings, interviews, town halls, and planning sessions, we listened carefully and learned a great deal. I am truly grateful to everyone who took the time to be part of this effort.

What emerged is a clear and shared sense of where we want to go and how we can work together to foster vibrant communities across the district and region. This plan provides direction without being prescriptive. It establishes common priorities while maintaining the flexibility needed to adapt to changing needs and emerging opportunities. It also reminds us of our responsibility to be thoughtful stewards of our resources and remain focused on the work that will make the greatest difference for our students and our community.

Most importantly, Shaping Tomorrow Together belongs to all of us. Its success will depend on continued collaboration and partnerships, leadership at every level, and a collective commitment to turning ideas into action. I invite you to read this plan, see yourself in it, and join us as we continue working together to strengthen Heartland Community College and the community we serve.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Keith Cornille". The signature is stylized with a large "K" and a cursive "C".

Dr. Keith Cornille, Ed.D.

President, Heartland Community College

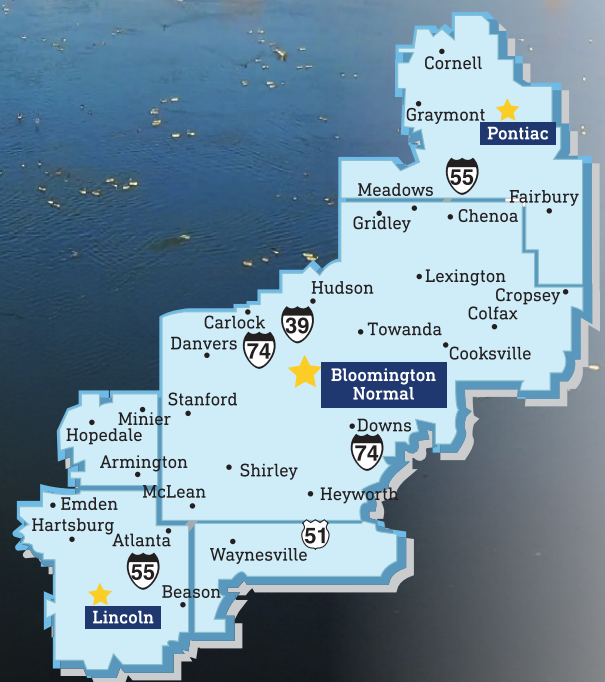
INTRODUCTION

Heartland Community College is uniquely positioned to build upon the strengths and accomplishments of its history while responding thoughtfully to the evolving needs of future students and the broader community. The College remains committed to preserving the accessible, student-centered culture and high-quality learning experiences that define its identity.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Heartland Community College is a two-year, fully accredited institution of higher education serving a district population of over 230,000 people at its **Normal, Pontiac, and Lincoln** campuses. Heartland offers a wide range of programs of study including 15 degrees and 63 certificates.

Heartland Community College exists so that District 540 residents are empowered to continually fulfill current and future educational, career, and community-enrichment needs at an affordable cost while responsibly managing the district's resources. Heartland's eight-member Board of Trustees and leadership team have adopted this end goal to drive the strategic planning process.



District #540 | Normal • Pontiac • Lincoln

Strategic planning is an effective means of confirming a vision for the future and establishing clear organizational purpose and direction through defined priorities and measurable goals.

This strategic plan builds on the success of the College's 2017 strategic plan, which was reviewed and updated in 2021. That effort advanced key institutional priorities, including student access and success, equity, resource stewardship, community partnerships, and transparent communication. Shaping Tomorrow Together represents the next step in this ongoing journey, building upon a strong foundation established through collaborative planning and shared commitment to continuous improvement.

In October 2024, the College engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) to facilitate a comprehensive strategic planning process and chart the institution's path for the next decade. The value of this type of structured process continues to be recognized by governing boards and executive leadership across both public and private sectors.



Framework for Future Growth and Impact

This strategic plan represents the next phase in the College's continued growth and institutional maturation. It is designed to serve as a guiding framework for all divisions, departments, and functional areas, while remaining dynamic and adaptable as conditions evolve and goals are achieved. Although the strategic directions and objectives are intentionally broad to allow flexibility in implementation, specific action steps and measurable outcomes will be developed to ensure accountability and track progress.

At the same time, careful stewardship of the College's resources remains essential. Only a limited number of goals and initiatives can be effectively advanced at any given time. Clear, stable priorities must therefore be maintained to ensure that resources are aligned strategically to support long-term institutional success.

VISION

Leading our community to lifelong learning and success.

MISSION

Heartland provides accessible, equitable, innovative learning opportunities and resources that enrich our community.

WE VALUE

VALUE STATEMENTS

Learners

We are learner-centered, focused on creating a personalized path to success for each individual.

Community

We are all partners in the success of the organization, boldly embracing current and future opportunities that will empower our students and communities to fully actualize their potential.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We create a collegial and welcoming culture by taking collective responsibility in the creation, protection, and enhancement of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus community.

Ethical Practices

We practice ethical decision-making, professionalism, transparency, and responsible stewardship of environmental, financial, and community resources to promote a sustainable future.

Continuous Improvements

We cultivate College quality through continuous improvement and professional development.

BOARD END STATEMENTS

Heartland Community College exists so District 540 residents are empowered to continually fulfill current and future educational, career, and community-enrichment needs, at an affordable cost, while responsibly managing the district's resources.

- Current and future learners will have the flexible, leading-edge educational offerings and technologies required for successful transitions into the District 540 workforce or continued learning, while maintaining fiscal viability and diversifying funding.
- Current and future members of the College community will experience a welcoming and accessible environment and an equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture by prioritizing resource allocations for underserved and underrepresented students and employees.
- The District 540 community will be enriched through integrated collaborative partnerships and engaged citizens, while mitigating administrative and financial risks.
- The College will continue to strengthen its culture, organizational capacity, and recognition of success.



CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND VALIDATION

Community engagement was central to shaping Heartland Community College's strategic priorities and goals. By actively soliciting input from students, faculty, staff, alumni, local partners, and regional stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and town hall forums, the College ensured that diverse perspectives were heard and considered.

This process not only informed the development of strategic goals but also allowed for ongoing validation, providing stakeholders with the opportunity to review, refine, and confirm that the proposed priorities accurately reflect community needs and aspirations. Sharing the strategic

priorities and goals in this way strengthens transparency, builds public trust, and fosters a sense of collective ownership, ensuring that the College's direction is both responsive and aligned with the community it serves. To this end, in addition to the work of NIU-CGS, HCC staff conducted:



- Ten Town Halls, five in spring 2025 and five in spring 2026, including sessions in Lincoln and Pontiac
- A Campus Conversation in spring 2026
- Monthly College Forum updates
- Board Retreats in summer 2024 and 2025, with the Strategic Plan as a main topic
- Board Workshops to update progress



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Four strategic priorities ultimately emerged in Heartland Community College's strategic plan, Shaping Tomorrow Together 2035. Each strategic priority includes a set of specific strategic goals supported by the important stakeholder input collected. These strategic directions are of equal importance to the College and are in no specific order.

Academic Responsiveness and Innovation



Equity, Inclusion and Access



Community Vibrancy and Workforce Development



Organizational Development, Leadership, and Culture



PRIORITY AREAS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Board End Statement

Current and future learners will have the flexible, leading-edge educational offerings and technologies required for successful transitions into the District 540 workforce or continued learning, while maintaining fiscal viability and diversifying funding.



PRIORITY AREA

Academic Responsiveness and Innovation

Stakeholder input throughout the process affirmed Heartland Community College's role as a premier educational provider, preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions or direct entry into the workforce. With strengths in high-quality instruction, robust technical programs, flexible pathways, and innovative curriculum development, HCC is deeply committed to student success. The College fosters clear, supportive, and responsive pathways that lead to program completion, career readiness, and long-term achievement.

Strategic Goals:

- A. Implement and maintain an Academic Strategic Plan to ensure program responsiveness to student and community needs.
- B. Integrate flexible pathways across the curriculum that address current and emerging workforce needs to promote economic and social mobility.
- C. Launch a comprehensive onboarding and orientation experience to improve student engagement, persistence, and community connection.
- D. Expand guided pathways from K-12 and Adult Education through college and careers by strengthening partnerships and introducing credentials that support completion.
- E. Leverage and integrate non-credit learning opportunities where appropriate to respond to workforce training, development and continuing education needs.
- F. Establish institutional standards for digital literacy to enhance teaching and learning across all formats.



Board End Statement

Current and future members of the College community will experience a welcoming and accessible environment and an equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture by prioritizing resource allocations for underserved and underrepresented students and employees.



PRIORITY AREA

Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Leadership maintains a strong focus on advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), with an emphasis on enhancing access and belonging for non-traditional and underserved students, increasing representation among faculty and staff, and improving supports for learners with visible and invisible disabilities. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of fostering pride and connection through clear communication, inclusive campus environments, mentorship, and student engagement strategies that reinforce HCC as an accessible and welcoming institution.



Strategic Goals:

- A. Expand personalized student support services to promote equitable outcomes for diverse student populations.
- B. Strengthen equity-centered supports and professional development to foster inclusive teaching and learning environments.
- C. Modernize campus infrastructure to support learning, engagement, and sustainability with equitable access to flexible environments.
- D. Develop and maintain an IT Strategic Plan to improve digital learning environments and ensure equitable technology access.

Board End Statement

The District 540 community will be enriched through integrated collaborative partnerships and engaged citizens, while mitigating administrative and financial risks.

PRIORITY AREA

Community Vibrancy and Workforce Development

The College is viewed as a vital bridge between individuals and the broader community, supporting seamless transitions to employment, connections to local resources and services, economic mobility, and long-term stability. Active collaboration with schools, local governments, higher education institutions, and employers is seen as essential to advancing regional growth. HCC's role as a driver of workforce readiness and regional development is central to both stakeholder and leadership priorities. There is a strong commitment to aligning education with real-world career opportunities through expanded continuing education, customized trainings, strengthened employer partnerships, apprenticeships, and hands-on learning experiences like internships and job shadowing.

Strategic Goals:

- A. Increase student and community engagement through expanded regional and customized programming, training, and outreach.
- B. Expand real-world learning opportunities to improve workforce readiness and student career outcomes.
- C. Engage business & industry partners to address customized trainings and incumbent professional development needs.
- D. Strengthen College communications to build trust and highlight the impact of students, faculty, alumni, and community.

State Farm Electric Vehicle Lab



Board End Statement

The College will continue to strengthen its culture, organizational capacity, and recognition of success.



PRIORITY AREA

Organizational Development, Leadership, and Culture

Heartland's leadership recognizes that its people, both students and employees, are the College's greatest asset. To strengthen organizational culture, the College prioritizes employee retention, leadership development, onboarding, and succession planning. Leadership also emphasizes the importance of clear pathways for both students and staff, along with fostering a more connected and collaborative internal environment. A culture rooted in compassion, reflection, and celebration of success helps sustain morale and reinforces the mission-driven community HCC aspires to be. A strong internal culture, effective leadership, and alignment with the College's mission are viewed as foundational to HCC's continued success.

Strategic Goals:

- A. Support employee growth and leadership through onboarding, mentorship, and advancement pathways.
- B. Strengthen inclusive governance and internal communication through collaborative structures and equity-centered engagement.
- C. Advance financial sustainability through strategic planning, stewardship, and environmental responsibility.
- D. Leverage emerging technologies to enhance operational efficiency and support institutional knowledge transfer.



STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heartland Community College Stakeholders

The College would like to thank all the community members, alumni, students, faculty, and staff who participated in the stakeholder feedback phase of the process. An effective strategic plan includes extensive feedback from stakeholders to ensure that needs and expectations are shared and understood by leaders of the College.

Heartland Community College Board of Trustees

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and Early College Programs

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Coordinator, Student Access
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Jess Washington

Program Assistant, Career
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Strategic Plan Task Force

All members of the Working Group were included in the Task Force in addition to the individuals below.

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Coordinator, Marketing

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