



2026 PAUL SIMON STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Heartland Community College provides a \$200 scholarship to the student who best describes “How My Community College Has Changed My Life.” The winning essay is automatically entered into the state contest, and the Illinois Community College Trustees Association provides the state winner with a \$1000 scholarship.

CONTEST RULES

All currently enrolled students at ICCTA member colleges are eligible to participate in the Paul Simon Student Essay Contest at the local level. However, each ICCTA member college may enter only **ONE** student essay in the statewide competition each year.

Each essay must be brief (less than 500 words), typed, and address the theme “*How My Community College Has Changed My Life.*” **Entrants must use “*How My Community College Has Changed My Life*” as the essay’s title.**

All entries will be judged on the basis of the following criteria:

- Writing style
- Clarity of expression
- Relevancy to the theme “How My Community College Has Changed My Life”
- Use of correct grammar and punctuation

★ Failure to follow these rules will result in the disqualification of an essay ★

CONTEST DEADLINES

All essays must be received **BY 11:59 PM, SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026**. The winner of the Paul Simon Student Essay Contest will receive a \$200 cash stipend from Heartland Community College. The winning essay will be automatically entered into the state contest, and the state winner will receive a \$1000 scholarship. Funds must be used for educational expenses during the fall 2026 semester. In addition, ICCTA will invite the winner to attend the association's June 5, 2026 awards banquet in Normal.

To submit an entry for the Paul Simon Student Essay Contest, please send your essay to Cathy Gilbert, Interim Liberal Arts Coordinator, at catherine.gilbert@heartland.edu. Put “Simon Scholarship Essay” in the subject line.

For more information, please contact:

Cathy Gilbert, Interim Liberal Arts Coordinator, at catherine.gilbert@heartland.edu