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Heartland Community College: Growing With Purpose, Serving with Impact

At Heartland Community College, growth is more than a milestone. It is central to the institution's identity. Established in 1990, after rapid population expansion in Central Illinois pushed nearby colleges to capacity, Heartland began in a small mall plaza. From those humble beginnings, it has grown into a full campus serving thousands of students and remains the youngest community college in Illinois.

"We are a comprehensive community college," says Noah Lamb, Vice President for Finance and Administration. "We place tremendous value on the community aspect of our mission." That commitment is reflected in the breadth of its offerings. Heartland provides associate degree programs and career-ready certifications, along with a robust non-credit division featuring professional development, personal enrichment, and continuing education courses.

Lamb's own journey reflects the transformative power of higher education. A first-generation college student from rural Kentucky, he began as a music education major before discovering his passion through a student job in a university finance office. Today, he oversees finance, human resources, information technology, facilities, campus safety, risk management, and athletics, serving as both CFO and COO. Still, some of his favorite moments happen outside the boardroom. Meeting regularly with the student government association allows him to hear feedback firsthand. "It's a great way to hear directly from the community we serve," he says.

Whether serving a recent high school graduate, a working adult pursuing new credentials, or a community member exploring a personal interest, Lamb says the goal is simple: "Just a wide range of opportunities for everyone within our community, and well beyond that."

Despite its relative youth, the college

continues to expand enrollment, donor support, and regional partnerships. Lamb and the college's president often refer to it as "the premier community college in Illinois," a phrase he believes is supported by the pride he sees in students each day. "We continue to grow across multiple areas," he says, pointing not only to academic programs but also to community advocacy and engagement.

Looking ahead, Lamb believes Heartland's future depends on adaptability. "We can't just stick with what worked in 1990," he says. "We have to continue to evolve and meet students where they are." For him, that evolution is not only about growth in size, but growth in impact, ensuring the college remains a vital, accessible pathway to opportunity for generations to come.

Visit Heartland Community College's website to learn more, <https://www.heartland.edu/index.html>

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