

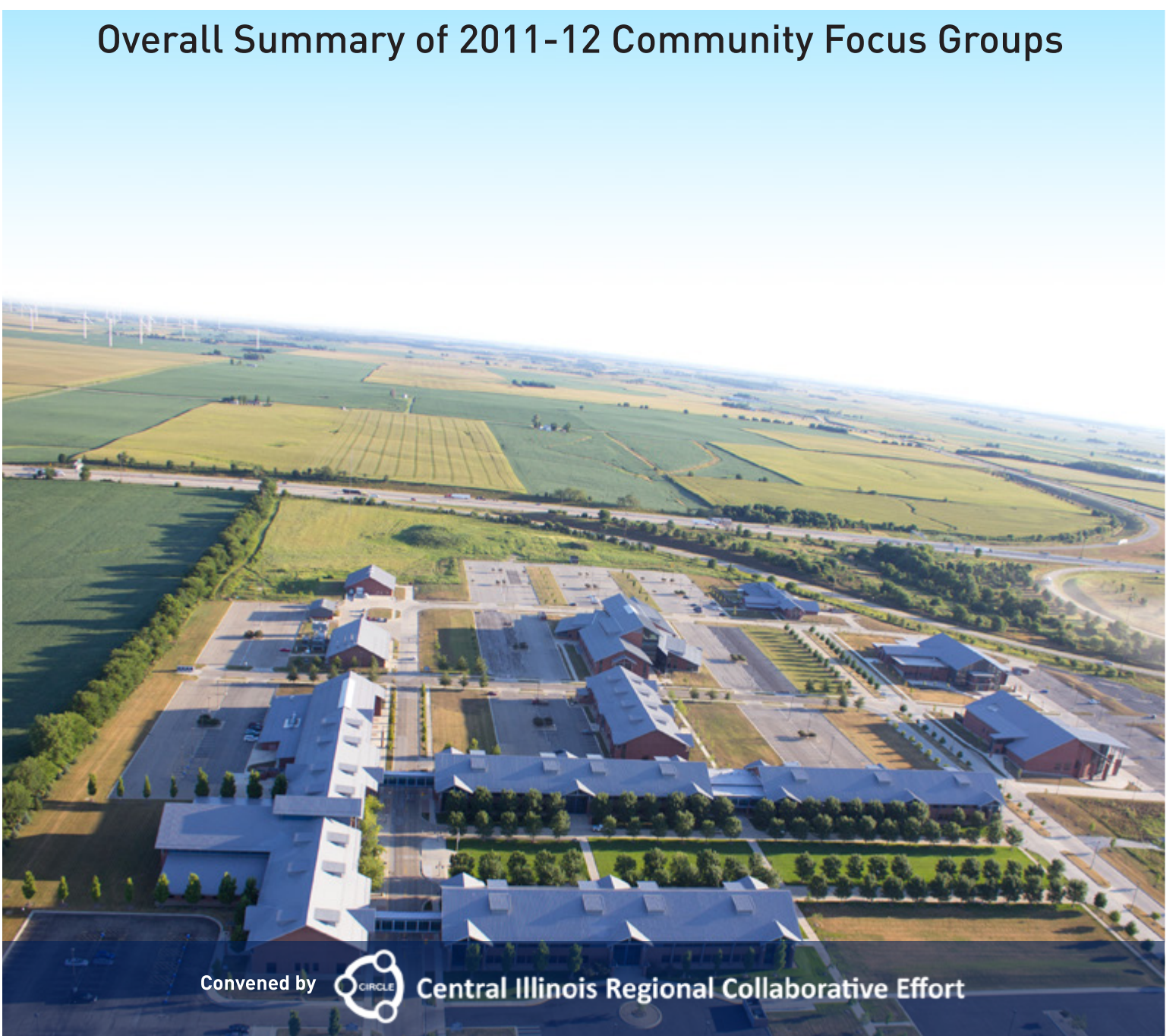


HEARTLAND  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Visioning Phase for Future Campus Development



Overall Summary of 2011-12 Community Focus Groups



Convened by



Central Illinois Regional Collaborative Effort

# Visioning Phase for Future Campus Development

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## Introduction (Process and Purpose)

In 2011, following the acquisition of approximately 96 acres directly adjacent to its main campus in Normal, IL the previous year, Heartland Community College (HCC) began a comprehensive engagement conversation about future Campus Development.

This effort includes five phases that will, over time, allow the College to obtain broad input for the evolution of campus planning. The first phase, or “Dreaming Phase,” sought input from campus and community constituents including students, employees, alumni, Board of Trustees members, community members, and other related advisory groups. The Dreaming Phase concluded in mid-2011, as surveys and discussions allowed individuals most familiar with the current campus

to share how they might envision HCC in the future. Themes from this phase emerged around ambitions for facilities and programs related to technology, healthcare, sustainability, and entrepreneur/business development. As well, there was a multitude of other ideas. The second phase, or “Visioning Phase,” then commenced to bring an even broader range of community leaders to campus for insight on how community needs might drive future college planning.



In late 2011 and early 2012, Heartland began the Visioning Phase, convening nine separate industry-related focus groups consisting of community leaders in each area. An invitation was sent to approximately fifteen to thirty individuals for each meeting, including lead administrators, human resources specialists, practitioners, educators in the given industry (from HCC as well as K-12 and other post-secondary institutions), and others who were identified by College leadership as having expertise and interest in the particular topic. While not an exhaustive list including every possible industry area, this effort is seen as a substantial start to gaining district-wide input in several industries prevalent throughout Heartland’s service region. Further industries will be explored in the future, but the first effort included the following areas (in chronological order):

1. Media and Communication
2. Agriculture and Local Foods
3. Healthcare
4. Finance
5. Insurance
6. Information Technology
7. Business and Entrepreneurship
8. Manufacturing and Logistics
9. Education (strategically conducted last, in order to share input from prior focus groups)



**Education Focus Group – July 18, 2012**

The ultimate goal in obtaining this feedback was to fully engage the Heartland communities and be most responsive in future land use and facilities planning. College leaders believe identifying more immediate regional, statewide, national, and global needs—and keeping abreast of overall industry trends—are integral precursors to longer-term campus development planning. The following questions (slightly restated for relevance to each industry) were posed to participants:

1. What do you see as Trends, or areas of growth surrounding the (Healthcare) industry? Regionally, nationally, globally? What elements of the industry are diminishing or no longer exist?
2. What are some Needs that have been created by these Trends?
3. How might HCC enhance the industry through Campus Development, Program Expansion, or other ways?



**Business and Entrepreneurship Focus Group – March 21, 2012**



These questions were posed to small groups, with a College host facilitating dialogue and taking detailed notes at each table. Tables then reported out and large group discussion ensued. Large group discussion was scribed by an executive assistant, and later compiled along with notes from each small group table conversation and input from follow up surveys. Following dialogue, participants were also provided with a brief overview of programs and services offered by the College, and invited to stay for lunch and a campus tour.

**This methodical and inclusive process has provided outstanding input for the College and opportunities for collaborative relationships to develop and advance across the region. College leadership recognizes feedback from this process is not quantitative in nature. Thus, further research and analysis will be conducted to examine the input in more detail and compare it to current, emerging, and future College goals. Additional research will also include a thorough examination of external source**

**data, such as labor market statistics, global trends, etc. Summary statements in this report are particularly useful for our communities' college, because they represent insights from talented community leaders with expertise in the given focus area. Moreover, these leaders are engaged in daily happenings within vital regional industries.**

A summary report from each focus group follows. Each summary begins with Trends identified by participants, and is followed by Opportunities to Consider - a brief listing of ideas that participants suggested Heartland and its community partners might consider investigating. This information offers thoughts for short-term collaborative opportunities, more involved program considerations, and ideas for long-term campus development. Further work will include phases of Analysis, Reflection, and Planning (Campus Master Planning). Ultimately, input will assist in facilities and land use Master Planning and be considered for relevance to the College's Strategic Plan.

## Cross-Cutting Themes (Trends and Needs frequently identified in multiple industries)

### Cross-Cutting Themes

As each group reflected upon trends within their own industry, prevalent needs due to those trends, and ways Heartland might support those prevalent needs, several relatively consistent

trends emerged across multiple industries. Some elements of these themes are also highlighted in the industry-specific summaries.

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#### **Analytics**

One of the most consistent needs expressed was for broad, applied analytics capabilities among all employees, whether recent college graduates at entry level or longtime incumbent workers. While not negating the importance of master's-degreed research analysts, the main focus was on basic data usage, interpretation, applied analytics, and useful business intelligence skills. Participants

emphasized the importance of employees' abilities to discover and communicate meaningful patterns of data anchored in modern technologies, and they desired abilities to predict and improve business performance. As discussed in the Finance focus group, for example, an "historic rise in compliance and regulatory risks" has highlighted the importance of analytics.

The proper understanding and implications of data are necessary to demonstrate accountability and regulatory compliance. The following complementary information was published recently in an article in *The Washington Post*:

**The explosion in the use of Google, Facebook, Twitter and other services has resulted in the generation of some 2.5 quintillion bytes each day, according to IBM.**

**“Big data,” as it has been dubbed by researchers, has become so valuable that the World Economic Forum, in a report published last year, deemed it a new class of economic asset, like oil.**

**“Business boundaries are being redrawn,” the report said. Companies with the ability to mine the data are becoming the most powerful, it added. (Cha, Ariana. “‘Big Data’ from Social Media, Elsewhere On-Line, Redefines Trend Watching.” *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2012.**

Nearly all industries now need these skills but the skill set is neither taught across traditional curriculum nor offered in the form of certificates, diplomas, or degrees. It was suggested that Heartland might be ideally positioned to develop these skills across a variety of curricular offerings for basic skills as well as through certificates and

perhaps even degree programs. In addition, the concept of a 2 + 2 degree path from a Heartland associate degree in applied analytics to related university degrees was discussed with general input indicating such an approach would be highly desirable.

## Communication

Another commonly expressed need was the desire for Heartland graduates and future employees to develop situational communication skills. Each group also discussed the integral nature of traditional communication skills historically cited by employers. However, many focus group participants encouraged an even higher importance on these skills and specifically cited an increased need for collaboration competencies and “right fit” communication skills. Modern workers across industries must identify the communication needs of their internal and external constituents and adjust their own approach, pivoting to meet the needs of the audience (formal or less formal; technology-based or personal; written or verbal; slow and thorough or fast and concise; etc.). Intergenerational communication differences were often cited

as examples of current workplace challenges. This ability to identify audience expectations and adjust appropriately was described as significantly lacking among many employees. Focus group participants from the insurance industry, for example, indicated trends toward specialized training in online communications, as many companies now provide a ‘chat option’ with company representatives through a pop-up window on a website. The ability to effectively communicate in this manner while maintaining a personal connection needed in sales demonstrates the necessary balance of communication skills. Additionally, general “people skills” were often indicated as highly relevant and a particular difference maker in a tight economy.

## Technology

A theme common to every focus group was the need to remain current with constantly changing technology. As mentioned above regarding transferable skills, knowledge of basic technology is a necessary component of educational programs leading to any position or profession. Additionally, conversations indicated growing awareness that Heartland might serve as a common training provider for regional businesses

of all sizes, helping employees stay current as technologies emerge. Classes on Heartland’s campus or at employer locations (offered and/or coordinated by the College) were discussed as a convenience-generating and cost-saving measure for a variety of employers. As well, Heartland’s ability to develop, package, and deliver short-term certificate training in key technology areas was discussed as an emerging community resource.

**“Most of the growth in manufacturing is within ‘knowledge positions’ as opposed to manual labor and those knowledge positions will continue to demand strong, updated technology skills.”** *Manufacturing focus group participant*

## Transferable Skills

Several focus groups engaged in dialogue about the need for transferable skills. It was desired by several participants across multiple industries that embedded skills including technology, finance, communications, critical thinking, decision making, and others that should be taught across curriculum and program offerings. Comments from healthcare participants around integral skill sets included “a strong need for communications training (to patients, families, and all levels of coworkers) encompassing patient empathy, listening skills, and customer service skills” as well as a statement that there are “few healthcare jobs, even among housekeeping, that don’t require a modicum of computer literacy.” The business and entrepreneurship focus group dialogue, in particular, emphasized a necessary broad skill set including knowledge of numerous business processes, financial literacy, and trends in technology. Several participants from various industries also commented that in the current economy, employees must often move into related positions within an organization or industry, again highlighting the benefit of a transferable skill set.

Fortunately, in its efforts to align College learning outcomes with 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, Heartland Community College initiated a curriculum revision plan in 2008 coined “The Cornerstone Project” because it began with the cornerstone courses that most students take in their first semester of college (English 101, Communication 101, Psychology 101, and Sociology 101). The emphasis was on developing four key skill sets: Communication, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, and Diversity (the ability to work well with, and appreciate the value of, those who may think and believe differently). Rather than developing individual courses in such subjects, twenty key skill sets across the four areas were embedded throughout the General Education curriculum at Heartland (the project has since spanned beyond the original Cornerstone courses to now include over twenty of the highest enrolled General Education and Technology courses at Heartland). Skill sets included are: communicating effectively via written, oral, visual, and/or experiential channels; listening in order to comprehend; considering the views

of others in developing one’s own perspective; analyzing problems from multiple frameworks to produce a solution, then analyzing the results and refining the solution; and gathering information from multiple sources, then synthesizing that information to draw reasonable conclusions and offer well-considered and useful input. Heartland faculty worked together to develop shared understandings of how to assess student learning outcomes and to ensure students completing the General Education curriculum at Heartland were exposed to the skill sets consistently and repeatedly.

Faculty members have discussed removing some outcomes that may be redundant and

**Timing of the College’s industry-based campus visioning meetings has coincided with new faculty efforts to re-examine the twenty skill sets within the Cornerstone courses to ensure they appropriately align with modern needs.**

adding new outcomes that focus on statistical literacy, technological proficiency, ethics, and civic engagement. The recent input regarding applied analytics is also being considered across curriculum with regard to certificate and program/degree development.

### Relevant and Up-To-Date Curriculum

Virtually everyone expressed a desire for HCC to keep curriculum relevant and up-to-date. Information Technology focus group participants, in particular, emphasized the necessity of a flexible delivery system for education. Industry experts stated that the constantly changing IT landscape calls for a way to offer a broad base of IT knowledge while incorporating elements for rapidly changing curriculum that would address immediate and specific workforce needs. Since the Campus Visioning sessions allowed a variety of industry experts to come together in

meaningful and direct dialogue with Heartland and other educational institutions, it was proposed that some form of ongoing engagement be structured. The College already has program-specific advisory groups; initial dialogue has begun to leverage and expand that structure by combining credit programs and continuing education in ongoing, meaningful conversations with industry experts. Further, initial conversations are evaluating a suggestion to form a College-wide advisory group with a key representative from each industry area.

### Heartland as a Collaborative Hub

A final cross-cutting theme was that our communities already leverage HCC as a non-political convening point to make collaborative progress, and industries and businesses should continue to think of HCC as a key resource for diverse needs.

Several participants acknowledged that as Heartland has grown and become more visible, it

**“Strong partnerships with local business provide a win/win for both the business and the College.”** *Insurance focus group participant*

has also become more valuable as a community resource with its highly desirable location for convening meetings and its wide array of facilities and expertise.



## Cross Cutting Themes

### OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified across multiple industries)

1. Consider infusion of basic, applied analytics skills across HCC curriculum and in stackable certificate & degree programs (also seek university partners to develop 2 + 2 paths to related bachelor's degrees).
2. Continue developing situational communications lessons with some specific focus on intergenerational communication.
3. Consider developing technology curriculum and programs in a core curriculum/major focus/appended certificate model (possibly developed as stackable certificates) in a manner that allows for quick course, unit, and lesson updates as technologies change.
4. Continue expanding Heartland's Cornerstone efforts that address some of the most pointed needs expressed across industries. In particular, infuse applied analytics skills across HCC's curriculum and programs while continuing to stress communication skills.
5. Develop a College-wide advisory group that will convene twice annually to drive substantive and coordinated follow-up from this Campus Visioning effort to provide ongoing, industry-based input.

## Community Input (by Industry-Based Focus Group)

A summary report from each individual focus group follows. Each summary begins with *Trends* identified by participants, and is followed by *Opportunities to Consider* - a brief listing of several ideas that participants suggested HCC and community partners might consider investigating. This information offers thoughts for short-term collaborative opportunities, more involved program considerations, and ideas for long-term campus development. Particular ideas that surfaced around themes common to all or most focus groups are summarized in the "Cross-Cutting Themes" section above and will also appear throughout a variety of the following individual focus group summaries.

### Media and Communications Convened: September 14, 2011

#### *Participants:*

**Mr. Bruce Bergethon** – General Manager, WGLT, Illinois State University

**Mr. Shannon Brinker** – Advertising Director, The Pantagraph

**Mr. David Cook** – Executive Director of Instructional Effectiveness, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Angie Coughlin** – Associate Director of Community Education, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Dick Johnston** – Publisher, The Pantagraph

**Ms. Bethany Kriegsman** – Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Rick Moll** – News Director, WMBD/WYZZ TV

**Ms. Kathy Peterson** – Program Manager of Community Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Mark Pickering** – Editor, The Pantagraph

**Dr. Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Susan Salazar** – Instructor, Humanities and Fine Arts, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Don Shafer** – News/Multimedia Content, WEEK – TV News 25

**Mr. Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Phil Vandiver** – Professor, Digital Media Technology, Heartland Community College

A Media & Communications focus group was convened in the fall of 2011. This focus group included a variety of media representatives and spawned dialogue about not only the Media and Communications field, but also about the interrelatedness of skills across industries. Given that the initial Media & Communications focus group was slightly smaller in numbers and was convened around a less formal agenda, this summary may appear slightly abbreviated in comparison to subsequent synopses. This initial conversation, however, provided vital insights to set the stage for subsequent Visioning meetings which would be convened for the same overall purpose and value. In addition to enhancing relationships between College and community leaders, Heartland’s team was able to hear first-hand knowledge of industry trends and needs while gaining valuable insights to shape future Visioning meetings. Given upcoming campus development planning, College leaders appreciated that this focus group provided a framework for ongoing learning about regional needs and a springboard into further conversations across a variety of industry sectors. Particularly relevant was the dialogue about common core skill sets that are needed in nearly all career paths and evidenced in HCC’s Cornerstone effort.



## TRENDS in Media & Communications – Input from Participants

### Employee Competencies

Participants focused on the importance of “core competencies” in media and communications related occupations. Specifically cited were needs for solid communications skills, analytical

thinking, critical review of information, effective writing, and the ability to find information. One participant stated, “If the content of a reporter’s story isn’t solid, it doesn’t matter how technically

savvy he or she is. The College is doing the right things, but the technology is changing so fast you should just focus on the core competencies.”

Though industry representatives seemed to agree with a need for what was termed “core competencies,” it was also stated that this industry seeks *employees who are technologically*

*savvy and can move adeptly between multiple media platforms.* Many of the employees “trained” by working in this industry go on to other large, corporate employers because they have (or have developed) a valuable core skill set – ease of face-to-face interaction, solid verbal and written communication skills, critical thinking, and a good general knowledge of “how things work.”

## Industry Trends

There was a general consensus from this group that the industry has downsized and consolidated responsibilities within positions. For example, the journalist is now also a videographer, photographer, social media user/generator, and posts stories on multiple platforms (emphasizing critical nature of technical skills mentioned earlier). The impact is that fewer people are doing more. The industry has also outsourced certain

functions such as web maintenance.

Additional conversation focused on the importance of soliciting input from those in the field while analyzing labor market information. In attempting to understand what some of the data might be reflecting, for example, participants felt the growth indicated in radio jobs may have to do with the fact that radio stations may license in one community but their broadcast range is in a different geographical area. This conversation helped to point out that anecdotal information may be equally if not more important than data projections, depending upon the nature of the questions being asked.

“**Labor market data is not always consistent with employers’ realities.**”

*Media & Communications focus group participant*

## Media & Communications

### OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Media & Communications participants)

1. Continue investigating how to bundle courses in ways that respond to the consolidated responsibilities of many media jobs, and prepare students for a range of related skills. For example, the College might consider clustering courses to help a journalism student develop additional competencies in public relations, photography, and web development since this was one common consolidation described by participants.
2. Increase placement of interns in Communications positions, based upon expressed interest from employers represented at the focus group.
3. Consider increased use of employer representatives as guest speakers in classes.

## Agriculture and Local Foods

Convened: January 10, 2012

*(Initial list does not include small group discussions with individuals below who were unable to attend the January 10th meeting.)*

### Participants:

**Mr. Dave Bishop** – Owner, PrairiErth Farms

**Ms. Terra Brockman** – Founder, Land Connection (Edible Economy Project)

**Ms. Jessica Chambers** – Horticulture Center Director, Department of Agriculture, Illinois State University

**Mr. David Cook** – Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Cynthia Haskins** – Business Development and Compliance Manager, Illinois Farm Bureau

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Arlene Hosea** – Director of Dining Services, Illinois State University

**Mr. John Jenkins** – Naturally Grown Produce Entrepreneur; Manager Sales and Marketing, STL Technology Partners

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Dave Kopsell** – Professor, Department of Agriculture – Horticulture, Illinois State University

**Mr. Manny Martinez** – Executive Chef and Partner, DESTIHL Restaurant and Brew Works

**Ms. Julie McCoy** – Food Service Director, Coordinator of Wellness Activities, Bloomington Public School District 87

**Mr. Steve Meilinger** – Chef, Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, Uptown Normal

**Mr. Jeff Pritts** – General Manager, Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, Uptown Normal

**Dr. Rob Rhykerd** – Chair and Professor of Soil Science, Department of Agriculture, Illinois State University

**Mr. Colin Riley** – Dining Room Director, Station 220

**Ms. Sara Riley** – Instructor, Culinary Arts, Normal West High School

**Dr. Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Mike Scheer** – Manager of Agronomy Marketing and Communications, Growmark

**Ms. Elaine Sebald** – Coordinator, Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Adrienne Tucker** – Associate Director of the Green Institute, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

*Additional meetings with agriculture representatives unable to make January 10th meeting:*

**Mr. Alan Dodds** – Vice President of Finance and Treasurer, Illinois Farm Bureau

**Mr. Jim Drew** – Manager, Logan County Farm Bureau; Trustee, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Matt Hynes** – Manager of Agronomy Marketing, Growmark

**Mr. Dan Kelley** – President, Growmark

**Mr. Adam Nielsen** – Director of National Legislation and Policy Development, Illinois Farm Bureau

**Mr. Jim Spradlin** – Vice President of Agronomy, Growmark

**Mr. Gary Swango** – Director of Human Resources, Growmark



## TRENDS in Agriculture and Local Foods – Input from Participants

### Local Foods

Participants stated the production and supply of local foods is increasing as demand increases. They believe a trend toward organic foods and healthy, fresh alternatives is growing. They cited evidence that farmers markets continue to become more popular with their local, natural offerings. Additionally, some participants stated that many states are promoting fresh food purchasing within their particular state. It was noted, however, that some consumers remain unwilling to trade the conveniences of traditional grocery buying for local alternatives.

In addition to individual consumer purchasing, participants noted the number of local restaurants and institutions interested in farm-to-fork practices continues to grow. Some stated that there is increased pressure to buy local foods, and one participant cited a survey of chefs supporting this movement.

According to several in the focus group, there is interest in community-based food systems as a result of increased demand for local foods and a growing number of small, diverse farms in the region. Some voiced that consumers are more educated and there have been growing concerns around where our food comes from; thus the demand for high-quality, safe food products is also increasing.

Participants stated that there is a need for infrastructure to support local food production and consumption. Most felt that a common understanding of what constitutes local foods or community-based food systems would be very beneficial. Production, storage, processing, distribution, etc. are often disjointed, according to this group, and coordination of processes such as how to bring foods to market and how to grow organically would be a great advantage to the region.

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### Aggregate/Commercial Agriculture

Some discussion focused on the large role that will continue to increase for aggregate food production. One community leader stated that an additional 2 billion people will be coming into the world over the next thirty years and that local food production will not address that global growth. It was added that millions of tons of corn will be needed in order to produce enough food, fiber, and fuel. It was also indicated that production and supply of local food is doubling each year in Central Illinois, while farmland prices continue to escalate. Another participant cautioned that a food system dependent on non-renewable resources—mainly oil—for both production and exporting may not be sustainable in the long term, and that regional food systems help create viable, long-term, global solutions. A related comment

focused on the importance of continued corporate transparency. Some large scale agriculture production specialists commented that there will be a “brain drain” in agriculture in the next 10-15 years due to retirements, adding that particular needs are anticipated in agriculture, accounting, and insurance for those with bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

It was also stated that a growing corporate presence in agriculture could be perceived as diminishing the effectiveness of local food efforts. However, participants agreed that both local and aggregate production will continue to play a major role in our regional economy. Conversation evolved around large-scale production and production for regional demand being simultaneous and

complementary. One participant summarized that industrial farms continue to grow in capacity as

production efficiencies increase, while the supply/demand for local foods simultaneously increases.

### Workforce Implications

Focus group participants indicated an emerging interest in farming, citing that youth have a greater interest in gardening and local and organic foods. Participants stated that youth often view careers on the farm as viable options offering pride in heritage and intersecting with their ethical views. Focus group members also stated

According to focus group dialogue, the changing nature of the agricultural workforce indicates that current educational offerings in agriculture may need revisions in order to remain relevant for students' future careers. They felt this need may be partially due to the diminishing capacity of the "Extension," creating a gap in what individuals

**“I believe you captured the significant points in the discussion I attended and I am particularly supportive of collaboration with ISU on horticulture and greenhouse projects that could bring a world class program to Normal’s two excellent campuses.”**

*Agriculture & Local foods focus group participant*

know about potential agriculture programs and careers. It was mentioned that educators, at colleges in particular, should support aspects of agriculture across various sectors (business, farming,

that the number of entrepreneurs interested in the farmers markets continues to increase. It was noted that entities such as the Farm Bureau remain very active in bringing agriculture into the classroom, and there is an ongoing need for career awareness around opportunities in agriculture. Some participants felt this need may be in part due to the fact fewer family farms exist, as large-scale production farms continue to grow.

technology, entrepreneurship, etc.) to help ensure educational programs in agriculture are relevant—leading to new, emerging workforce opportunities. ISU representatives indicated enrollment in agriculture programs continues to increase. Another participant suggested that a growing horticulture program could benefit from collaboration to create a cutting-edge greenhouse for the region.

### Advancements in Technology

Participants voiced that there is a massive and rapid increase in the use of technology in agriculture. They cited that computerized machinery, GPS equipment, and other applications of technology continue to advance across all sectors of farming. Representatives who engage regularly with large-scale production farmers cited an ongoing need for farmers to maintain and upgrade technical skills, adding that technological advances often outpace the ability to obtain training.



## Agriculture and Local Foods

### **OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER** (as identified by Agriculture and Local Foods participants)

1. Host/co-host an informational forum about aggregate agriculture and regional food systems, demonstrating how both benefit the regional economy; approach IGEN and IL Farm Bureau about possibly co-hosting such an event.
2. Investigate potential to offer healthy, local food alternatives in Heartland Café and/or Child Development Lab; investigate a potential fit with McLean County Childhood Obesity initiative, Edible Economy Project, and Green Economy Initiative.
3. Convene community leaders for dialogue around economic benefits of local foods initiatives; leverage IGEN interests, USDA study for Logan County Economic Development Strategic Plan, Green Initiative at HCC, and existing regional resources such as Land Connection expertise, the Edible Economy Project, and CIRCLE; determine possible next steps for work that has begun in the region.
4. Collaborate with ISU to investigate new opportunities in agriculture-related educational programs (horticulture program, culinary arts program, others).
5. Collaborate with ISU Horticulture Center to create a campus beautification project at Heartland's CCB circle drive area; potentially engage HCC and ISU students in the project, thus promoting student interest in horticulture programs, demonstrating campus collaboration, and advancing relationships for future efforts.
6. Consider enhancements to new or existing agriculture-related programs (i.e. locally sourced foods initiatives, culinary arts, horticulture, agriculture transfer programs) when determining long-term land and facilities use; examples could include considering land use for a regional food hub, hands-on agriculture training, a greenhouse, and relevance to the nearby ISU Horticulture Center, or expanded facilities use such as the National Guard building kitchen for culinary arts.)



## Healthcare

Convened: January 31, 2012

### Participants:

**Ms. Laurie Adams** – Certified Financial Planner, Country Financial

**Mr. David Bateman** – Community President, Bloomington-Normal, Easter Seals

**Mr. Bob Bertsche** – President and CEO, Meadows Mennonite Home

**Mr. Ken Beutke** – Vice President of Human Resources, OSF Saint James - John W. Albrecht Medical Center

**Mr. Gregg Chadwick** – CEO, Premier Medical Group; Board of Trustees Chair, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Tony Coletta** – Vice President of Human Resources, Advocate BroMenn Medical Center

**Mr. David Cook** – Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Vicki Folse** – Director, School of Nursing, Illinois Wesleyan University

**Mr. Tom Frazier** – Director, Bloomington Area Career Center

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Jennie Harling** – System Director, Talent Planning, Memorial Health System

**Ms. Sue Herriott** – Director of Human Resources, OSF St. Joseph Medical Center

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Connie Hoselton** – Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Heritage Enterprises

**Dr. Holly Houska** – Dentist, Houska Dental Center

**Mr. Mark Hovren** – President and CEO, Evenglow Lodge

**Ms. Colleen Kannaday** – CEO, Advocate BroMenn Medical Center

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Dietra Kulicke** – Executive Director, Chestnut Health Center

**Dr. H. Catherine Miller** – Associate Dean, Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University

**Mr. Doug Minter** – Chief Information Officer, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Ken Natzke** – President and CEO, OSF St. Joseph Medical Center

**Dr. Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Teri Saxton** – Dean of Health and Human Services, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Padriac Shinville** – Dean of Enrollment Services, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Rose M. Stadel** – Vice President of Operations, Central Region, Heritage Enterprises

**Dr. Ann Stroink** – Neurological Surgeon, Central Illinois Neuro Health Systems

**Ms. Kaylee Tanner** – Director of Human Resources, Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Katherine S. Young** – Director, Research and Sponsored Programs, Illinois State University

## TRENDS in Healthcare – Input from Participants

### Career Preparation/Training

The trends most commonly expressed by participants related to the issue of professional career preparation and training. Among these, the impact of rapidly changing technological

advances results in considerable effort toward career preparation and ongoing training. As one participant stated, there are few healthcare jobs—even among housekeeping—that don't



require a modicum of computer literacy. These technological advances result in the need for continued training for support staff as well as for high-level professionals. A concern was also expressed regarding some healthcare students and employees self-selecting out of the industry due to aversion to technology, particularly as telemedicine becomes more prevalent. Participants described a current deficit of trained, educated healthcare professionals resulting in an uneven distribution of human capital that is fueling local healthcare providers' desire to keep healthcare graduates in the community.

Participants emphasized that mid-level providers will continue to be in more demand. The expanding role of nurses was the position most commonly discussed. Nationally, many reports indicate the percent of new nurses educated at community colleges hovers around 60%.

HCC's nursing program was praised for its 96% NCLEX pass rate and 37% rate of graduates who continue on to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), as discussion evolved around the ongoing nationwide focus on increased educational levels for nurses who will need to experience an expanding role.

**HCC's nursing program was praised for its 96% NCLEX pass rate and 37% rate of graduates who continue on to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), as discussion evolved around the ongoing nationwide focus on increased educational levels for nurses who will need to experience an expanding role.**

was stated that dental care will also likely see an increase in reliance on mid-level providers. A hospital administrator and a dentist agreed that the dental need is at a crisis point in our community, as both cited recent local research that revealed dental care as one of the top three prominent health issues in our community.

Given an agreement about this crisis, ongoing collaboration with the McLean County Dental Association and the IL State Dental Society for training and expanded duty certifications in the dental professions would be very beneficial in central Illinois.

Additionally, there was some dialogue around the benefits of having healthcare employees with mixed skills, and that often a flexible skill set is currently lacking. There will be a continued need for employees who can transition into different healthcare settings as coordination of care continues to evolve. The group brought up several broad skills that are currently needed in all healthcare employees yet not regularly demonstrated. According to the participants, there is a strong need for communications training (to patients, families, and all levels of coworkers) encompassing patient empathy, listening skills, and customer service skills. According to participants, students may leave programs with the technical knowledge necessary to perform their role, but are less likely to be able to communicate effectively. This is most evident as the average age of patients is shifting due to the aging Baby Boomer generation, resulting in a communicative disconnect between patients and

healthcare providers. It was mentioned that even specialized support employees in healthcare, such as IT or HVAC workers, need these skills to some degree, particularly given a growing focus

on customer satisfaction. The support side of the healthcare industry is exploding and will also require flexible skill sets. Participants specifically named coders, medical assistants, surgical technologists, and physical therapy assistants as examples of such support personnel.

## Operational

Relating closely to career preparation/training trends are tendencies regarding the operational functioning of healthcare organizations. As health care costs rise for a multitude of reasons, healthcare representatives stated that their organizations and other providers must work within an increasingly efficient framework. Part of this focus on increased efficiency has resulted in the shift from inpatient to outpatient/ambulatory care, which requires a seamless transition between healthcare providers.

There is also a concern among many healthcare providers regarding changes that will be enacted through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which aims to provide higher-quality healthcare at a lower cost to the consumer. These focus group participants believe the anticipated changes have resulted in much uncertainty and confusion, stressing the overall system. All agreed that reduced financial support from government

**“One of every two adults now has chronic disease and better management of this situation is necessary.”**

*Healthcare group focus participant*

agencies compounds many difficulties faced in trying to improve quality while lowering cost. As one participant verbalized, there is a need for a financial model in healthcare that takes into account the lack of government reimbursements. One trending solution to cutting costs while increasing efficiency is the active consolidation of hospitals and healthcare providers, allowing these organizations to centralize their services and

decrease the need for patients to travel outside of the community for procedures whenever possible.

As mentioned in the comments relating to workforce needs above, increased technology will continue to have a major impact on healthcare operations. The growing use of telemedicine was emphasized by numerous focus group participants. Telemed will cause increased needs in workforce skills, technology capabilities, and the collaborative capacity of providers. Additional implications of technology advancements are evident in the increased use of electronic records. A concern was voiced about the great inconsistencies among these records systems.

The constantly changing environment, technology, resources, and regulations for the rapidly growing healthcare industry all point to a need for creative processes in all areas. The need to revisit traditional processes and models was emphasized by all participants.

Process improvement is a way of life in the healthcare industry, according to participants.

The need for creativity will continue to be balanced, according to one representative, by the ongoing emphasis on research-based practices. More data is available than ever before (relevant to patient care and operations), and according to participants, an ongoing push for more data will continue to create the need for individuals who can interpret data and make decisions informed by the data.

## Intra-organizational

Several trends identified by this group have implications for individual organizations. The desire for employees who can communicate clearly and effectively while still maintaining the

human component necessary in a healthcare setting was a regularly-expressed trend. As mentioned in workforce needs above, a communication gap exists between healthcare

professionals and their patients; healthcare organizations are also noticing compromised communication between professional staff members which is detrimental to solving issues and delivering healthcare.

Healthcare participants also discussed how new trends for organizational business models will require a balance between performance metrics and service elements. This will require innovative leaders who can analyze what exists and generate new ideas on how to deliver healthcare.

### Inter-organizational/Community

Healthcare representatives indicated several trends that demonstrate a need for collaborative skills. Coordination of care, an inter-professional work environment, and team-based approaches

**“Case management by a navigator will be a growing need in this community and others.”**

*Healthcare focus group participant*

were examples of trends leading to increased need for collaboration. The coordination of care model was mentioned several times as a critical component since global patient care and care at home will continue to grow. One participant pointed out that healthcare will continue to be a consolidated industry, and that resulting financial and electronic coordination will increase interconnectedness.

Healthcare organizations are also likely to increase collaboration to address workforce needs, according to this group. An uneven distribution of healthcare professionals across regions was cited as a trend that will create a necessary willingness to cooperate, as will the aforementioned advancements in telemedicine. One human resource representative indicated that many employees in the industry are already concurrently employed by more than one organization. Some dialogue ensued around the sharing of specialized healthcare professionals and around the benefits of collaboration among regional educational programs.

This group indicated an interest in providing as many services as possible in our own community rather than referring out of the community, thus fostering regional collaboration around

healthcare. One participant added that there will continue to be a desire to keep our own healthcare graduates (regional retention of talent) and another envisioned increased

partnerships among healthcare providers that will address some of the current and pending business needs.

Healthcare trends that reach more directly into communities and homes were also voiced. One example was the national push for wellness programs and a movement toward preventive care rather than curative/interventional care. As healthcare consumers become more empowered in the course of their care, healthcare organizations are supporting the model of shifting some responsibility for patient health to the patient themselves through increased patient education and health literacy. It was pointed out that much of this shift is due to generational patterns of patients, particularly the increased number of Baby Boomer-aged patients utilizing healthcare as they age. Increasingly, this shift is being represented by healthcare providers moving from an inpatient to an outpatient focus. Taking responsibility for preventive care in the home, and caring for aging adults in individual homes will cause a need for increased communications and technology in healthcare.

## OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Healthcare participants)

1. Investigate opportunities to collaborate with neighboring community colleges to coordinate offering of healthcare programs on a more regional basis; benefits might include eliminating regional duplicity, promoting cost efficiencies for high cost healthcare programs, addressing regional demands in healthcare occupations, offering promising career paths for students, and encouraging regional retention of graduates. Programs mentioned include surgical tech, physical therapy assistant, dental assistant, and dental lab technician.
2. Collaborate with regional and state dental representatives (McLean County Dental Society and/or IL State Dental Society) to address the identified community health crisis of lacking dental care; considerations might include feasibility of certified dental assistant program and/or dental laboratory technician program, continuing education for dental professionals, certification courses for regional dental assistants, and using local dentists as guest lecturers in CNA, nursing, or EMS programs.
3. Continue convening healthcare representatives to promote collaboration around opportunities among providers that benefit multiple healthcare organizations. Opportunities identified included sharing of employees to maximize the workforce, offering continuing education and/or seminars for regional physicians around health reform, or pursuing ways to support telemedicine opportunities in the region.
4. Consider means to assist healthcare organizations in offering specific training for leadership and communications skills of incumbent workers. Opportunities cited include communication strategies to support intergenerational relations and customer service and a high need for collaborative skills/ team approaches due to increases in inter-professional environments, coordination of care, and a decrease in the autonomous nature of healthcare delivery.
5. Continue working closely with university partners to create seamless pathways for students in healthcare programs. Trends in healthcare toward increased requirements for advanced degrees and the expanded roles for mid-level providers were cited as an impetus for ongoing promotion of educational articulation in post-secondary healthcare programs.
6. Investigate how growth of data-based components of healthcare, such as increased focus on performance metrics and evidence based practices, might support a College program for analytics.



## Finance

**Convened: February 15, 2012**

### *Participants:*

**Kim Barman** – Dean of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mark Bowers** – Real Estate Professional, Prudential Snyder Real Estate

**Paul Brown** – President, First Midstate, Inc.

**Patrick Dienslake** – Market President, Central Illinois, Regions Bank

**Scott Dixon** – Chair, Heartland Community College Foundation

**Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Sue Gilpin** – Controller, Heartland Community College

**Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**John Gunyon** – Instructional Chair, Social & Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Rich Hentschel** – Interim Director of Finance, City of Bloomington

**Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Andrew Huhn** – Director of Finance, Town of Normal

**Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Gary Koppenhaver** – Professor and Chair, Department of Finance, Insurance and Law, Illinois State University

**Jeff Myers** – Econometrician, Strategic Resources, Global Business Analysis, State Farm Insurance

**Doug Minter** – Chief Information Officer, Heartland Community College

**Patty Parette** – Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Heartland Bank & Trust Company

**Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Steve Timmerman** – Vice President, First Farmers State Bank

**Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Jill West** – Sales Associate, Prudential Snyder Real Estate

**Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

**Greg Yount** – Manager of Commercial Division, Coldwell Banker Heart of America Realtors

## TRENDS in Finance – Input from Participants

### Employee Skills

Focus group participants indicated three trending areas for employee skills: “soft skills” such as interpersonal communication, technological aptitude, and a broad set of general skills with a focus on understanding compliance and regulations. While the banking sector overall is shrinking due to the consolidation of banks, dynamic governmental regulations, and an increased use of internet banking, community banking is currently thriving. Dialogue ensued that while there are fewer traditional contacts with customers, there is still a need to maintain a human element with quality interpersonal

communication.

A limited pool of candidates with expertise in government finance and difficulty in transitioning within the finance industry were identified as trends which could benefit from training solutions. The causes of these needs, as stated by participants, are due to weaknesses inherent in job specialization and the amount of learning that occurs on the job. As such, the industry is currently seeking individuals with more general skillsets that can more easily move across the industry and between the private and public sectors. Several participants agreed that

businesses in the finance industry and students would benefit from an increase in service learning projects or internships. Another suggestion was to assist individuals hired for support roles in the finance industry, such as information technology, in becoming accredited in some area of the financial industry. It was noted that the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) provides certification for knowledge of public finance.

Participants widely agreed with a statement that all individuals entering the workforce in Finance need strong IT and interpersonal communication skills. It was also noted that individuals in the Finance industry need to understand sales components. A few small business owners added that due to a limited number of employees within their organization, individuals with these skills, as well as a solid knowledge background in finance and regulation, are invaluable.

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### Information and Analytics

Of growing importance within the industry, as identified by participants, is the area of analytics. Phrases which participants used for skill sets in demand included information analysis, performance analytics, decision support, and logistics. Participants indicated that individuals within the finance workforce must be able to determine which areas of service are most efficient, and they highlighted a need for

fact that information must be made available to numerous individuals including buyers, agents, title professionals, and bankers.

The proper understanding and implications of data are necessary to demonstrate accountability and regulatory compliance. Participants cited the significance of business ethics in business courses, given a movement toward greater

**“An historic rise in compliance and regulatory risks has resulted in an even greater importance of analytics.”** *Finance focus group participant*

performance measurement and operational analytics. Additionally, the ability to organize, provide, and communicate information across the industry is paramount, as participants stated that banking and finance require more precise information than most industries in order to make decisions. Additional discussion centered on the

emphasis on ethical business practices. Participants indicated a deficit of qualified compliance professionals, especially for smaller organizations which

may have a difficult time creating such a position. Conversation ensued around an opportunity to bring together a series of compliance training workshops, which could benefit a number of businesses in the area as these are currently offered disjointedly by various associations.

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### Financial Literacy

Participants indicated a societal trend toward increased need for financial literacy, likely a result of the 2008 recession. Participants felt that the promotion of financial literacy, in the K-12 sector and beyond, would increase levels of financial understanding and personal accountability among consumers and thereby benefit the banking

industry through a better understanding of products and practices. One participant indicated that an increase in broad-based financial literacy, such as international and global financial literacy, is also important for finance and banking professionals.

This trend toward financial literacy has also resulted in a realization of the importance of financial advising. One participant stated that the recession “has emphasized people’s perceived need for a financial plan.” By obtaining a Certified Financial Planning Certificate, finance industry professionals are qualified to assist in financial

planning for areas such as insurance, investment and retirement. Participants also expressed the challenges currently experienced in securing financing, such as in securing financing for new home buyers, which also points to an increased need for financial advisors.

## Technology

Participants expressed that the increased use of technology—particularly the ubiquity of online banking and the growing popularity of smart phone—is resulting in more online applications and fewer brick-and-mortar branches. It was also pointed out that today’s consumers, who expect availability of immediate and accurate financial

information, demand technological expertise from financial institutions. Conversation around the importance of technology also included a mention of the “banking back room.” Management of paper file storage has largely given way to knowledge of processes and expertise in imaging and data technology.

# Finance

## OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Finance participants)

1. Investigate the potential of an analytics program or a “Center of Excellence” focused on analytics; consider including understanding of financial information and the analysis of propositions associated with that information as part of an analytics curriculum.
2. Offer existing and new programs to promote financial literacy among all age levels; consider offering financial literacy workshops as part of an orientation series for incoming students; investigate opportunities to partner with local financial institutions to conduct and/or promote these financial literacy programs/courses.
3. Collaborate with regional small businesses to determine educational needs for specialized financial software; consider offering training in a distance learning format so incumbent workers can attend sessions during convenient hours.
4. Investigate educational offerings in Compliance Training for financial professionals, including what workshops exist from various associations around a “Compliance Professional” certification; survey businesses to determine the gap between existing training and the needs of incumbent workers in the region, including desired times and locations of potential course offerings.
5. Consider an increase in the number of service learning projects and internships; pursue opportunities for class projects consisting of “case studies” at local small businesses, such as a project to investigate leasing options and propose an optimal solution.

## Insurance

Convened: February 20, 2012

### Participants:

**Ms. Kim Barman** – Dean of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Angela Blair** – Manager, Creative Services, State Farm Insurance

**Mr. Mark Brent** – Vice President, Van Gundy Insurance

**Ms. Val Crawford** – Director of Administrative Services, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Sarah Diel-Hunt** – Dean of Social and Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jeffrey Flessner** – President, Benefits Planning Associates

**Ms. Sue Gilpin** – Controller, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Dr. John Gunyon** – Instructional Chair, Social and Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Brent Kelly** – Certified Insurance Counselor, Clemons & Associates, Inc.

**Dr. Gary Koppenhaver** – Professor and Chair, Department of Finance, Insurance and Law, Illinois State University

**Ms. Barb Leathers** – Executive Director of Human Resources, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Cheryl Logue** – AVP, Learning and Development, State Farm Insurance

**Ms. Kathy Mathewson** – Coordinator of Employee Benefits, Heartland Community College

**Mr. John O'Donnell** – Vice President, Receivables Management Operations, Afni, Inc.

**Ms. Sarah Powell** – Director of Business Development, Afni, Inc.

**Dr. Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jay Verner** – Manager, Public Affairs & Media Relations, Country Financial

**Ms. Denise Younge** – Strategic Human Resources Professional, Diversity Program Manager, Country Financial

## TRENDS in Insurance – Input from Participants

### Human Resources

Participants stated that, due mainly to increased regulation at both the state and federal levels, the insurance industry is experiencing an increased focus on ethics. Ethical standards are more frequently being demanded and applied by the insurance industry. Participants noted that due to these changes, the industry is realizing human resource needs in Systems and Claims, as well as a need for individuals with specific ethics/regulation expertise. Participants also stated that increased involvement of professional organizations such as Chartered Property

Casualty Underwriters (CPCU) may also assist with understanding and adhering to recent regulatory changes.

Participants noted that the movement toward the use of technology – for example, in trainings and in communicating with customers – has created a host of new opportunities as well as new challenges. One participant stated that the industry needs people who can create the online learning component for educating both industry members and customers in new developments.

However, participants reiterated that there will continue to be a need for face-to-face trainings. Understanding which methods of communication are preferred by each affected generation is paramount, participants said.

Though customer service has changed due to regulatory modifications and technology, it is still a critical area requiring constant improvement. While technological advances have altered customer needs and permitted new forms of communication, such as online chats, personal contact skills “are fading but still in high demand.” Participants indicated the industry trending toward specialized training for online communications, as many companies now provide the option of ‘chatting’ with company representatives through a pop-up window on their websites. Participants highlighted the need for balance between

technological aptitude and communication skills. It was noted that a broad skill set is beneficial for individuals employed in the Insurance industry. For example, those in Property and Casualty use

**“We need to find a way to combine technical expertise with the personal connection needed for sales.”** *Insurance focus group participant*

many elements of business education. Individuals hired in Claims and Technical roles require expertise in project management. One participant advised that those in positions such as actuaries, sales agents, personal finance advisors, etc. might benefit from a generic degree in insurance. The question was posed, “How can other disciplines become involved in the insurance industry?”

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## Consumers

Consumer education – in other words, how to be a good consumer of healthcare – was one of the primary trends addressed by participants. In addition to understanding wellness indicators and participating in wellness programs such as biometrics, smoking cessation and mental health, participants indicated that knowing what questions to ask the doctor, how to provide an accurate medical history, and how to make treatment decisions based on outcomes were important across the industry. Participants noted that more readily available online information has heightened this need for consumer understanding. Healthcare reform will continue

to impact the insurance industry by encouraging the standardization of products, according to one participant, and consumers should understand how their own health and healthcare will be impacted.

Participants also noted a shift away from an agent-based industry model toward an agent-free, self-service model. For almost every type of insurance available, consumers can now communicate directly with customer service in this model, eliminating the agent. While this model carries its own successes and challenges, overall it creates a lower price-point for products.

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## Technology

Participants indicated that technology is perhaps the largest force driving changes in operations as well as communications. Relatively recent innovations, such as social media, mobile apps, and fully internet-based insurers have only served

to increase the prevalence of the self-service model. In many companies across the industry, customers are able to receive quotes, purchase products, report claims and add policies, all without an agent. Participants noted the popularity



of the self-service model has resulted in less face-to-face time, as customers want to be told what pertains to them rather than listening to a ‘sales pitch.’ This increases the importance of technological expertise when evaluating human

resources needs. In order to continue improving and to remain competitive, participants stated that companies must leverage technology to its full advantage.

## Analytics

“Data is the language,” stated one participant, indicating the importance of analytics across the industry. Several participants agreed that three record years of claims, as well as less-than-reliable investment performance, have resulted in an increasingly critical need for analytics in order for those in the insurance industry to remain competitive. Individuals with experience in

project management or in business management strategies, such as Six Sigma, are becoming more appealing to Human Resources across the industry, according to representatives in this focus group. It was stated that process improvement and change management based upon data analysis are key elements desired among Insurance industry employees.

## OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Insurance participants)

1. Host “Careers in Insurance” and/or “Careers in Business” presentations for all students, in conjunction with partners having expertise in the insurance industry, having expertise in business and/or being engaged in local professional associations; consider such presentations early in all students’ educational experiences and in lieu of, or as enhancements to, post-degree job fairs; expose students to numerous career opportunities in the insurance industry (as well as finance and business) that might emanate from educational expertise in banking, investment, accounting, management, human resources, database administration, communications, and so forth.
2. Investigate educational opportunities for local Insurance professionals in our area, given ongoing increases in required continuing education; some high need areas cited include regulation, ethics, online learning, and online communication components.
3. Consider increased or enhanced service learning opportunities for students in collaboration with insurance partners; an example included obtaining data from an insurance provider who might frame a given scenario and request that students interpret and suggest relevant implications.
4. Investigate how various disciplines might be involved in curriculum for students with an interest in the insurance industry; consider how curriculum addressing the following needs might fit together: actuarial science, strategy of analytics, change management, project management, and organizational planning.
5. Consider courses targeted at becoming an “educated consumer,” particularly as a consumer of health and given the current focus on wellness; investigate interest in supporting such courses from insurance and healthcare partners who identified this need in separate focus groups.

## Information Technology

Convened: March 5, 2012

### Participants:

**Mr. Loren C. Baele** – Director of Technology, McLean County Unit District 5

**Ms. Kim Barman** – Dean of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Mary Bennett-Henrichs** – President, Integrity Technology Solutions

**Mr. Tim Bobell** – District Manager, Anixter

**Mr. Mike Bokus** – Director of Technology Support, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Frank Broskovetz** – Client Director, Microsoft Corporation

**Mr. Andrew Butler** – Area Sales Manager, Sprint/Nextel

**Mr. Mat Cicero** – Site Manager, EDP Renewables, Rail Splitter Wind Farm

**Mr. Jake Davis** – Chief Operating Officer, Mavidea Technology Group, LLC

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Eric Fisher** – President and CTO, A5.com  
Mr. Tim Foster – Chief Technology Officer, Lincoln College

**Mr. Scott Genung** – Director Telecommunications and Networking, CIRBN, Illinois State University

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jeff Hartweg** – Vice President, Infrastructure Technology Consulting, Burwood Group

**Mr. Jason Hayek** – IT Director, Afni, Inc.

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Jackie Langhoff** – Web Site Manager, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Joy Lucht** – Faculty, Computer Technology, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Aaron McArdle** – President Zeller Digital Innovations, Inc.

**Mr. Tony Meredith** – Regional Manager, Cisco

**Mr. Doug Minter** – Chief Information Officer, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Tim Norman** – President, STL Technology Partners

**Mr. Jim Peterson** – Director of Technology, Bloomington School District 87

**Mr. Jason Radford** – Systems Administrator, Bloomington School District 87

**Dr. Allan Saaf** – Vice President of Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Tom Steffen** – Account Manager, Cisco Downstate Illinois

**Mr. Johnny tenBroek** – Professor, Computer Technology, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Mark Walbert** – Associate Vice President for Technology, Illinois State University

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College



## TRENDS in Information Technology – Input from Participants

### Education

One issue stated by participants was that experts often lack flexibility due to training that is sometimes too narrow at the top. Overall, the sentiment was that IT professionals need additional training in communication and business functions/processes throughout their education. As with many other focus groups, participants

**“A broad practical knowledge of modern development tools and technologies assists in understanding how to use those technologies to drive business needs.”**

*Information Technology focus group participant*

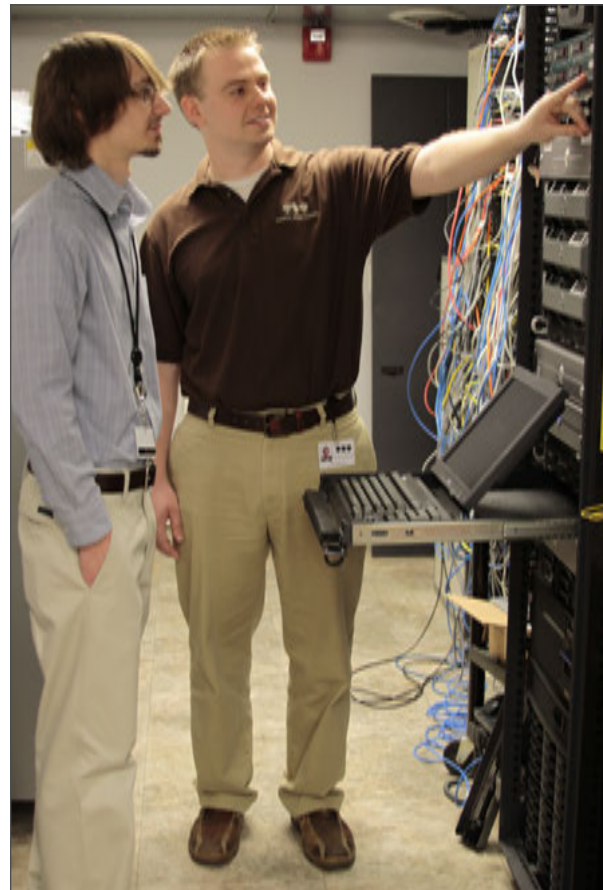
expressed a trend toward and a need for technicians and IT professionals who understand the business operations of an organization. To this end, participants indicated a desire to have more business courses embedded in the IT curriculum. It was stated that the need to understand these processes becomes even more important and apparent when examining the many industries in which an IT professional may be employed: for example, participants noted a need for IT personnel who understand industrial control systems such as SCADA.

Additionally, participants indicated a need for education regarding communication and improved communication techniques. One example provided involved social media: while IT professionals must understand the technical functioning behind the implementation of social media, they also must understand how social media is effectively used as a means of communication with clients/customers as well as how social media affects business processes (and vice versa). These IT generalists, participants said, are able to serve as resources with diverse skill sets and the ability to cross-train. While participants in the focus group expressed

an industry need for IT generalists who are able to apply a non-specific IT knowledge across several topics and projects, they stated that the need for IT specialists is also growing. Among these needs are programmers. Interestingly, participants expressed concern about not having enough COBOL programmers to maintain many systems

that were coded in COBOL many years ago. While there may not be much new development occurring in COBOL, some major employers are faced with a shortage of programmers

willing and able to do COBOL work. Some felt this example represents an opportunity to educate incumbent workers for a specific need, as opposed



to embedding this into the regular curriculum. While data sets are becoming more incorporated into business processes and decisions, they are also increasing in size and complexity due to the growing use of mobile devices—part of a phenomenon known as “big data”—and there is

a need for individuals with the necessary analytic skills to understand and communicate the ramifications of that data. Participants believed that non-credit courses are quickly changing education into a dynamic and fluid system that promotes continuing education.

## IT Expertise

Participants identified three trending areas/needs for the IT industry: the growth of cloud computing, the ubiquity of mobile devices, and the development of social media outside of the constraints of traditional channels such as Facebook. One participant stated that IT professionals need to be flexible and open in order to address social media needs.

Cloud computing was the most frequently mentioned trend in IT expertise during the focus group. Participants explained that there are three models for cloud computing: IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service – the use of external servers and data centers, and the most common model), PaaS (Platform as a Service – a scalable infrastructure with a hosted operating system and an environment for executing program languages) and SaaS (Software as a Service – software accessible by cloud end users, with load balancing and the ability to clone tasks on virtual machines to handle a variable number of cloud users). The growth of these three models of cloud computing allows a business’s IT infrastructure to be more scalable as needed without the cost of adding onsite hosting. According to participants, cloud computing also promotes the consolidation and effective use of data in an organization. Additionally, an accessible cloud provides more

opportunities for telecommuting, thus reducing the amount of physical space necessary for business operations.

The increase in mobile device usage is also promoting the development of many BYOD—or “BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE”—policies. The explosion of internet access provided by the increased accessibility of IT by consumers is providing ever-increasing amounts of data, said participants, and this wealth of data is an asset to businesses and organizations. The mobile computing trend also signals a decreased reliance

**“Computers as we know them are going away as more applications are being developed for mobile platforms.”**

*Information Technology focus group participant*

on and importance of personal computers. Finally, participants expressed that social mediums are evolving, and both organizations and IT professionals need to be adaptable to these changing channels of communication. As more companies have integrated Facebook into their relationships with their clients/customers, there is an increasing expectation on behalf of prospective clients/customers that the organization will carry a presence in social media.

## Business-Operational Implications

Participants mentioned several business/operational implications of IT, of which organizations need to be cognizant. The business

implication most often voiced by participants was that of security, particularly security of data and infrastructures. Participants highlighted the



importance of an organization having a disaster recovery plan to promote business continuity (also relevant to the aforementioned cloud servers). Changes in security when using public and private wireless networks also necessitate application and communication security processes. The importance of security has been underscored by several recent, high-profile instances of cybercrime and hacking. Participants stated that education in certain practices, such as penetration testing and intrusion detection training, will make IT professionals and organizations better equipped to handle possible security concerns.

As more data are gathered about computing devices and end-users, participants stated that there is a growing need for data security. However, there is also a need for data integration into the organization, with an expectation of data sharing and standardization of data. The integration and use of these data allows organizations to anticipate support needs or identify possible cost reductions and respond preemptively. While data are incredibly valuable to an organization, participants reiterated the need for data control and an understanding of data integration.

Organizations need to have a better understanding of physical technology infrastructure needs, said participants, which greatly affects their necessary physical space. As cloud computing and virtualization become more prevalent, participants

indicated a trend away from brick-and-mortar structures and toward technological capabilities of devices. The simplification of complex systems for end-users and globalized access with around-the-clock support are promoting a self-service mentality, and participants believed that organizations need to accommodate these changing expectations. There is a resulting need, as one participant stated, for organizations to “focus IT spends on innovation.”

Finally, participants discussed the perception that IT professionals have regarding Central Illinois and how IT professionals are drawn to larger technology firms elsewhere. CIRBN, Central

**The development of CIRBN – Central Illinois Regional Broadband Network – makes the local community very attractive for technology and would be beneficial to bringing more skill sets to the area.**

Illinois Regional Broadband Network, high-speed solution promotes the development of new businesses, which in turn assists in growing the community. It was recommended that the area ensure it is capitalizing on the development of CIRBN.





## **OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Information Technology participants)**

1. Investigate how increased creativity in an educational delivery system can increase the “openness and flexibility” of delivering curriculum in the ever-changing IT environment.  
Consider the following:
  - a. A core IT component (including focus on skills in areas such as business processes, business operations, communication, and digital competency) complemented by evolving curriculum that meets existing business needs;
  - b. Elements of stackable credentials as flexible components leading to associates degree programs in a manner such as the one mentioned above;
  - c. The progression of educational attainments in IT: continuing education courses > certificate > 2-year degree > bachelor’s degree.
2. Evaluate the increased offering of internships and earlier in the student’s educational experience.
3. Consider how the College might assist local businesses in ensuring IT employees understand the balance between technical specialization and systems thinking; investigate how we are teaching skills for thoughtful planning which allows information and data to translate into executive operations; consider how this might fit with an analytics program or assistance for entrepreneurs (mentioned in other focus groups); also consider how the College is leading by example with effective business process models associated with IT.
4. Consider service learning projects to investigate cybercrimes, simultaneously serving to educate students around high demand IT needs and providing assistance to local small businesses; offer recommendations only (as opposed to altering IT settings) to ensure the College is not at risk.
5. Consider filling a niche for antiquated or scarce skill sets that are emerging and of immediate need; this may include large corporate needs for technology and/or may address immediate needs recruiters are experiencing; consider enhanced relationships with such entities (large corporations and recruiting firms) and the development of processes allowing for quick responses to these needs.
6. Continue offering cutting-edge workshops and seminars on technology such as Yammer, which are relevant and new for many local professionals and businesses.

## Business and Entrepreneurship

Convened: March 21, 2012

### Participants:

**Ms. Kim Barman** – Dean of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Elizabeth Binning** – Director, Illinois Small Business Development Center, Illinois State University

**Ms. Jane Cluver** – Owner, Edible Arrangements

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Lu Fatlan** – Human Resources Manager, RR Donnelley

**Mr. Eric Fisher** – President /CTO, A5.com  
Dr. Allen Goben – President, Heartland Community College

**Dr. John Gunyon** – Instructional Chair, Social and Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Sarah Diel-Hunt** – Dean of Social and Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Rick Jebb** – Managing Broker, Prudential Snyder Commercial Real Estate

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Darrell P. Kruger** – Associate Vice President, Research and Graduate Studies, Illinois State University

**Mr. Mike Maniscalco** – Executive Director, Lincoln & Logan County Development Partnership

**Mr. Terry McClallen** – Director of Operations, Integrity Data, Inc.

**Mr. Charlie Moore** – CEO, McLean County Chamber of Commerce

**Mr. Ken Springer** – Senior Associate for Research and Economic Data, EDC of the Bloomington/Normal Area

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Larry Vaupel** – CEO, Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Doan Winkel** – Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship, College of Business, Illinois State University

**Mr. Rockie Zeigler** – Executive Director, Mid Central Community Action Agency

## TRENDS in Business and Entrepreneurship – Input from Participants

### Knowledge Base

Many participants commented on the comprehensive knowledge of business systems and processes that small business owners and entrepreneurs must have. A broad support network and access to specialized internal expertise is a luxury typically afforded only in larger organizations. Understanding how to write a business plan, for example, is not always a creative entrepreneur's strength. An industry trend toward proactive business planning, as participants stated, may indicate a need for business-related workshops. As one attendee

suggested, a collection of business resources, or a “business plan in a box” could also be very beneficial to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

A clear understanding of how trends in technology can positively impact business processes was also cited as integral. Participants indicated a potential technology skills gap in the workforce; for instance, understanding how to utilize social media and what software programs are most relevant and efficient for a given business.

Realizing how to take advantage of various forms of communication is also a necessary skill. An example demonstrating the need for knowledge of both communication trends and relevant technology was offered: start-ups may need to address a switch from print to digital formats. Global access through technology has

**“Successful businesses need to address four issues: technology, training, transportation, and time.”** *Business & Entrepreneurship focus group participant*

also resulted in a “data overload,” and many entrepreneurs lack the knowledge of how to filter through and best utilize the relevant data available to them. A large number of participants indicated increased financial literacy as another predominant need facing businesses and entrepreneurs. Knowing how to access capital—or, as one participant stated, “collateralize”—is essential in the business world. Additionally, many businesses and entrepreneurs contend with financial operations, such as processing payroll taxes, without having internal expertise or affordable solutions. Due to the need for broad knowledge of business and financial processes, it was also suggested that a quick “litmus

test” would be beneficial in helping individuals determine if they possess the qualities and knowledge necessary to be an entrepreneur. Workshops mentioned as beneficial included those which address financial literacy (in both business and personal settings), mini-camps for marketing/research, and courses that allow students to remain current regarding technological trends.

Several participants agreed with the statement above and expounded. In addition to technology and training needs mentioned, there was general agreement that business leadership must be able to discern what type of training is needed. In other words, small business owners and entrepreneurs must “know what they don’t know” and learn how and where they can obtain those skills. In regard to the third “T”—transportation—participants stated that local businesses should capitalize on Central Illinois’ distinction as a distribution hub due to its geographic location and access to transportation. Finally, skills in time management and a realistic understanding of the time commitments required for small and emerging businesses were acknowledged as integral for success.

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## Climate and Culture

An understanding of modern business climate and culture was cited as integral for successful businesses and entrepreneurs. Participants indicated that understanding and nurturing a healthy climate for small and entrepreneurial businesses is imperative; existing businesses and entrepreneurs, and those with resources to support them, need to encourage a culture that supports start-ups. Examples included providing information on addressing barriers to start-ups such as limited employment security and benefits. It was noted that businesses and entrepreneurs

need to develop synergy on a more global level and build a community of support, such as through the existence of non-competitive regional or national networks. Attendees emphasized the importance of sparking the entrepreneurial spirit which, as stated by one attendee, is to “make a job, not take a job.”

Participants also advised giving attention to the changing culture of the workforce, particularly with respect to generational diversity. It was noted that start-ups in particular are influenced by a

wide array of demographics, such as individuals who were recently laid-off, those who are relatively older than the overall workforce, those who desire more independence, and new college graduates with eagerness to start a business. Participants indicated a large number of retirements looming in the near future, particularly among employees with a strong work ethic toward physical labor. The desires of younger workers, such as a focus on time off instead of mandatory overtime, indicate a change in work ethic from previous generations. Opportunities such as remote work

arrangements may be more desirable by some generations. Additionally, attendees stated that younger workers typically are not as interested in manual labor, resulting in an even greater depletion in this area of the workforce. Due to this, participants felt small businesses in particular see an advantage to hiring middle-aged individuals, as well as those from younger generations who are often desirable due to their technological savvy. Discussion ensued about the positive impact on small businesses by individuals from diverse generations.

### Space and Programming Resources

An area of vital importance to existing businesses and start-ups, according to participants, centers around physical space. A space encouraging a healthy business culture would include technological capabilities, such as fiber optics to enhance the reach of small businesses – and support for relevant, up-to-date educational opportunities and other resources. One participant believed that local businesses would benefit from a neutral location, such as a coffee shop surrounded by conference rooms and workspaces. Dialogue followed around the idea of a physical space to encourage networking among small business owners and entrepreneurs, simultaneously spawning creativity and providing opportunities to address individual needs. This area could also serve as a remote work hub that supports connectivity as a result of mobile



Though participants widely agreed on the important elements of knowledge, culture, and space for small businesses and entrepreneurs as outlined previously, the most common element weaved into all conversations was the concept of coordination. The need for coordination of resources and services in this region to eliminate

redundancies, inefficiencies, and an inability to scale-up efforts to meet changes in the business climate was a theme in almost every conversation.

**“A silo-coordinator for support resources is a critical need (for entrepreneurs) in this region.”**

*Business & Entrepreneurship focus group participant*

applications. Participants suggested benefits of an incubator space for new businesses, including specific lab spaces driven by highlighted needs, such as sustainability, healthcare, or technology. The notion of entrepreneurial mentors who provide knowledge and resources in an incubator environment was also addressed by the group.

Participants voiced and discussed the benefits of providing a decision tree for local assistance and of coordinating disjointed support services in the region. Though a physical space in which to access resources seemed to be an ideal concept put forth, participants felt strongly that coordination of available resources was integral.

## OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER (as identified by Business/Entrepreneurship participants)

1. Consider providing educational opportunities for small business owners who supervise employees with remote/offsite work arrangements; similarly, consider offering programs to employees that would allow them to maximize productivity in remote/offsite work situations.
2. When considering long term facilities planning, consider a space for a “collaborative think tank” or incubator for entrepreneurs; space that fosters creativity while providing technical needs such as connectivity and business resources (i.e. accounting, marketing, legal information) could be beneficial to entrepreneurs and small business start-ups.
3. Research entrepreneurial mentoring programs and whether there is a need and opportunity to coordinate a one-on-one program for entrepreneurs and small business owners in the region; one option to investigate may be a regional or national network for entrepreneurial collaboration, which may help overcome local competitiveness.
4. Consider creation of a “decision tree” to guide regional entrepreneurs and nascent businesses to appropriate local resources; determine whether HCC might be an initial, non-political, connecting point for various regional partners who assist entrepreneurs as part of their mission; consider benefits and feasibility of a role as “silo-coordinator” for local entrepreneurial resources.
5. Foster enhanced discussion around how a student with interest in a career in business might benefit from exposure to dozens of potential careers, such as insurance, finance, marketing, management, human resources or communication; consider the broad spectrum of business needs for entrepreneurs as identified by this focus group, as well as related input from the insurance focus group about the benefits of investigating how various disciplines are involved in curriculum for students with an interest in insurance and business-related fields.





## Manufacturing Convened: May 22, 2012

### Participants:

**Ms. Sara Baker** – Coordinator of Career Services, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jerry Berwanger** – Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, Mitsubishi Motors

**Mr. David Boulay** – Illinois President, Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center

**Ms. Amy Crib** – Training Manager, Eaton Corporation, Lincoln

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Chan Gill** – Sales Engineer, Crescent Electric Supply

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Austin Grammer** – Customized Training Coordinator, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Dan Irvin** – General Manager of Corporate Communications and Public Relations, Mitsubishi Motors

**Mr. Don A. Johnson** – Chief Economist, Caterpillar, Inc.

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Doug Minter** – Chief Information Officer, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jim Nelson** – Vice President of Communications, Illinois Manufacturers Association

**Mr. John Penn** – Vice President and Midwest Regional Manager, Laborers' International Union of North America

**Mr. Jeff Randolph** – Director of Business Development, Hile Group

**Mr. Scott Schuetz** – Executive Sales Senior, Location Manager, Siemens Industry, Inc.

**Mr. Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. John Whalen** – North Central Regional Manager, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

## TRENDS in Manufacturing – Input from Participants

### Manufacturing Workforce and Careers

According to participants, anticipated manufacturing workforce needs are due to an aging workforce, retirements, adaptation to new technology, and role changes within the industry.

“Illinois’ manufacturing industry will need to replace approximately 30,000 production workers each year over the next ten years.” Manufacturing focus group participant

It was noted that this number does not include the number of engineers that will need to be replaced. While there is still a need for blue-collar, “shop-floor laborers” and positions such

as machinists and welders, participants indicated that many of these openings are a result of the aging workforce as opposed to growth. It was also stated that manufacturing employment is trending

away from blue-collar positions due to the increased mechanization and automation of these roles; it now takes fewer workers to accomplish a

manual task. Participants indicated many entry-level jobs are being eliminated and entry positions are shifting from a focus on manual labor to more sophisticated machine maintenance.

Participants indicated that current and emerging white-collar careers often address supply chain issues and the ongoing “pursuit of productivity.” The higher output per employee is a result of greater knowledge-based skills among the white-collar decision makers within manufacturing. Additionally, some white-collar roles include those not typically associated with manufacturing, such as sales, marketing, human resources, and management. The focus group discussed the demand in the manufacturing industry

for graduates from other disciplines such as mathematics and information technology. Because there are currently more positions requiring these skill sets than there are individuals with these skills, many roles such as engineers, technicians, robotics experts, and programmable logic controllers are being outsourced. Overall, there was wide agreement that manufacturing output is growing more quickly than the employment of individuals with necessary skills.

### General Industry Issues

Compounding the workforce demands previously mentioned is a concern shared by many focus group participants about the general perception of the manufacturing industry. There was wide agreement that this misconception is negatively impacting individuals’ career choices and thus the ability to fill workforce voids. The perception that manufacturing careers are dirty, unhealthy, ill-paying, low-skill and offer few opportunities for growth is resulting in little interest from younger generations. Additionally, participants indicated a difficulty in recruiting and maintaining workers in Central Illinois, and that the region would benefit from promotion as a desirable place to live and work. Based on the return of many manufacturing jobs to the United States due to low interest rates and a strong U.S. dollar, it was recommended these issues for manufacturing should be addressed with expediency.

According to participants, an increase in compliance with EPA, OSHA, and DOL regulations (such as Title VI) is another integral issue with which the industry in general must contend. For example, one participant stated that a manufacturer in Chicago was recently fined \$1.6 million for OSHA violations. Compliance issues are sometimes magnified in ever-changing environments, such as newly designed manufacturing facilities are those operating on natural gas. Additionally, participants stated that machine safety is becoming increasingly important in the industry.

Some challenges also exist from the changing priorities amidst a younger workforce and emerging cultural issues. Participants indicated that some firms struggle with employability due to drug testing, background/record checks, and poor work ethics. For example, one company identified during the focus group was recently hiring for 100 entry-level positions but experienced a 40% fallout rate due to background checks. Participants also indicated that a modicum of physical fitness is required in many manufacturing jobs based on the possibility of physical injuries due to a lack of fitness. It was suggested that a level of physical fitness be addressed within the manufacturing certificate.



## Educational Programs

One of the resounding statements from participants in this focus group was that the issue was not a lack of jobs in manufacturing, but rather a lack of skills among manufacturing workforce candidates. Specifically, technological and engineering skills were cited as necessary but scarce. One participant stated that “education is now a requirement” in manufacturing, and that “more degreed employees are being hired than in the past.” For example, one participant noted that starting associates at their company are trained to operate robots and that a strong educational background in robotics is very beneficial.

Participants in this focus group provided insight on several areas requiring additional emphasis from educational systems training these workers. Logistics was a commonly stated educational/programmatic need; it was stated that many workers employed in logistics carry a four-year degree, but there is an increasing number of institutions providing logistics certificates. Skills such as those needed for forklift operation and bar coding are still in demand. Employees also need additional training in administrative issues and compliance, such as diversity and discrimination. Conversation also evolved around the need for balanced development of relevant “hard and soft skills.”

**Manufacturing participants felt strongly that educational offerings should be in a flexible delivery format that integrates technical expertise with hands-on experiences.**

Stackable certificates that promote incremental growth of an individual’s career in the manufacturing industry were seen as positive. It was acknowledged that many companies offer tuition reimbursement for workers seeking to expand their knowledge base, and this benefit needs to be utilized by more workers.

Discussion ensued around the continued importance and value of STEM subjects in elementary-, middle- and high-school curriculum in order to develop a skilled workforce with early preparation and awareness of manufacturing-related concepts and careers. Regarding the engagement of younger students in career exploration, it was noted that the manufacturing industry strives to ensure career preparation “receives equal billing” to college preparation.



# Manufacturing

## **OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER** (as identified by Manufacturing participants)

1. Explore manufacturing education elements of stackable credentials, national portability, and transferability toward university programs; investigate these elements within the Illinois Manufacturing Association's (IMA) Manufacturing Education Initiative (MEI).
2. Engage regional manufacturers in dialogue around their suggestion to increase utilization of manufacturing facilities for hands-on educational experiences.
3. Consider the timeframe of worthwhile and meaningful manufacturing internships, so that students gain these experiences earlier in their educational careers.
4. Collaborate with regional manufacturers to create "between-term" externships allowing faculty to gain insight at facilities utilizing the latest cutting-edge technology.
5. Consider engaging in ongoing discussion with regional manufacturers and other business support organizations to help build Central Illinois as an attractive place to grow and retain our own manufacturing workforce, and to assist the manufacturing industry through strategies such as those listed above in demonstrating to students the diverse career opportunities available in transportation, distribution, logistics, and manufacturing.
6. Continue to support and expand STEM programs and opportunities for K-12 students, such as those offered at the Challenger Learning Center and in the 5th grade hands-on math/science experiences.





## Education

Convened: July 12, 2012

### Participants:

#### Regional Education Representatives:

**Mr. John S. Blackburn** – President, Lincoln College

**Mr. Larry Brown** – Principal, Hammit High School

**Mr. Nate Cunningham** – Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, McLean County Unit District 5

**Dr. Gigi Fansler** – Executive Vice President, Lincoln College

**Ms. Joan Fee** – Guidance Counselor, Normal Community High School

**Mr. Tom Frazier** – Director, Bloomington Area Career Center

**Mr. Mark Giannis** – Illinois Wesleyan University, Action Research Center Intern

**Ms. Myra Gordon** – Executive Director, Illinois Prairie Community Foundation

**Mr. Chuck Hartsell** – Member, McLean County Community COMPACT

**Dr. Herschel Hannah** – Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Bloomington School District 87

**Ms. Lee Harper** – Guidance Counselor, Tri-Valley High School

**Dr. Jeff Hill** – Superintendent, Illinois State University Laboratory Schools

**Mr. Glen Hoffmann** – Director, Regional Alternative School

**Dr. Brad Hutchinson** – Superintendent, Olympia CUSD 16

**Ms. Aimee Ingalls** – Community and Economic Development Educator, University of Illinois Extension

**Mr. Dan Irvin** – General Manager of Corporate Communications and Public Relations, Mitsubishi Motors

**Mr. Mark Jontry** – Regional Superintendent, ROE 17 - McLean, DeWitt, Livingston Counties

**Mr. Jon Kilgore** – Superintendent, Pontiac Township High School District 90

**Mr. Jeff Kratz** – Dean of Academic Affairs, Lincoln College

**Dr. Darrell P. Kruger** – Interim Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies and Illinois Geographic Alliance Coordinator, Illinois State University

**Ms. Alicia Lenard** – Director of Organizational Advancement, YouthBuild McLean County

**Dr. James Major** – Dean and Professor, College of Fine Arts, Illinois State University

**Dr. H. Catherine Miller** – Associate Dean, Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University

**Mr. Curt Nettles** – Superintendent, Lexington CUSD 7

**Ms. Julie Ornee** – Community Impact Manager, United Way of McLean County

**Dr. Jonathan Rosenthal** – Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Illinois State University

**Dr. Perry Schoon** – Dean and Professor, College of Education, Illinois State University

**Mr. Curt Simonson** – Superintendent, Tri-Valley CUSD 3

**Ms. Nicole Schuebel** – Community College Regional Manager, Franklin University

**Mr. Ron Stack** – Member, McLean County Community COMPACT

**Ms. Stacey Tutt** – Assistant Clinical Professor, Director of Community Preservation Clinic, College of Law, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Mr. Dane Ward** – Interim Dean, Milner Library, Illinois State University

**Ms. Dena Weth** – Assistant Program Director, Career Link

**Dr. Ty Wolf** – Superintendent, Heyworth CUSD 4

**Mr. Rockie Zeigler** – Executive Director, Mid Central Community Action, Inc.



**Heartland Community College Representatives:**

**Ms. Jill Blair** – Dean of Adult Education, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Val Crawford** – Director of Administrative Services, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Sarah Diel-Hunt** – Dean of Social and Business Sciences, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Chris Downing** – Director of Development, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Julie Elzanati** – Executive Director of Illinois Green Economy Network

**Ms. Sue Gilpin** – Controller, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Allen Goben** – President, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Dan Hagberg** – Dean of Online Learning and Instructional Technology, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Carol Hahn** – Instructional Chair, Humanities, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Kelli Hill** – Senior Executive for Collaborative Efforts, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jim Hubbard** – Executive Director of Facilities, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Amy Humphreys** – Director of Marketing, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Helen Katz** – Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Suresh Kumar** – Director of PeopleSoft Applications, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Becky LaMont** – Instructional Chair, Nursing, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Barb Leathers** – Executive Director of Human Resources, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Doug Minter** – Chief Information Officer, Heartland Community College

**Dr. Rick Pearce** – Vice President for Learning and Student Success, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Kristi Powell** – Site Supervisor, Lincoln Center, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Jim Resser** – Dean of Math and Science, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Teri Saxton** – Dean of Health and Human Services, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Bob Shaw** – Dean of Technical Instruction, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Mary Beth Trakinat** – Vice President of Continuing Education, Heartland Community College

**Mr. Rob Widmer** – Vice President of Business Services, Heartland Community College

**Ms. Alaina Winters** – Faculty Communication, Heartland Community College

**Industry Panelist Representatives:****Media & Communications**

Mr. Mark Pickering, Editor, The Pantagraph

**Agriculture & Local Foods**

Mr. Dave Bishop, Farmer and Owner, PrairiErth Farms

**Healthcare**

Ms. Sue Herriott, Director, Human Resources, OSF St. Joseph Medical Center

**Finance**

Mr. Steve Timmermann, Vice President, First Farmers State Bank

**Insurance**

Ms. Sarah Powell, Director of Business Development, Afni, Inc.

**Information Technology**

Mr. Tim Norman, President, STL Technology Partners

**Business & Entrepreneurship**

Mr. Larry Vaupel, CEO, Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council

**Manufacturing**

Mr. Jerry Berwanger, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, Mitsubishi Motors

**Background**

The Education focus group was intentionally convened following the first eight industry leadership groups in order to share insights gathered at the previous meetings. Eight regional

experts – one from each prior focus group – served on a panel to recap their respective industry dialogue. Accordingly, the format of the Education focus group was slightly different.

The morning began with panelists summarizing each industry (outlined previously in this report), fielding questions from Educational leaders, and dialoguing informally over lunch. Each offered follow-up contact information which was emailed to the Education meeting participants.

The afternoon session consisted of obtaining insight from regional Educational leaders and, due to the unique nature of Education as an industry, questions were slightly adjusted from those posed in prior focus groups. Participants learned from one another about regional efforts that are addressing some of the needs previously shared by industry panelists. The first focus for small group discussions: Please share some relevant collaborative efforts – existing or emerging – that are helping to better align education with employer or industry needs. Tables reported out to the larger group as a whole. Next, participants were asked to dialogue about opportunities we

might pursue collaboratively to better align our educational efforts with employer needs and expectations. Participants were also asked to leave sticky notes with ideas of how these opportunities might be actualized in next steps, and a follow-up electronic survey provided a final manner in which participants offered insights.

Participant responses are summarized in three sections below. The first section captures a sampling of current or emerging efforts discussed within small groups. The second section identifies three recurring themes which categorize the opportunities participants suggested would help better align regional educational efforts with employer needs and expectations. Some suggestions are offered within the theme context as examples for future investigation. A final third section lists specific opportunities for Heartland Community College and its partners to consider.

## RELEVANT COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS (Existing or Emerging) – A Sample of Input from Small Group Dialogue

**Regional Career Center (Bloomington Area Career Center)** – partnering with numerous secondary schools (often via counselors) and local businesses for visits, speakers, and new or enhanced educational program opportunities.

**Financial Opportunities Center** – enhancing partnerships (Mid Central Community Action, Heartland Community College, University of Illinois, United Way, and others) around emerging efforts to empower unemployed or underemployed individuals to lead financially sustainable lifestyles.

**Heartland Community College GPS (Guided Path to Success) High School Workshop Series** – offering a series of workshops at area high schools, equipping secondary students with career planning, life skills, and academic capabilities necessary to advance to the next level of work and/or education. Heartland has also developed

College Now, which is a more systematized approach to offering college credit opportunities in partnership with all area high schools through dual credit, dual enrollment, advanced placement testing, and so forth. The Campus Visioning meetings reviewed throughout this report were also cited as a focus by the College to enhance partnering with a variety of industries, employers, and Pre-K-20 educators.

**McLean County Community COMPACT** – coordinating and administering various efforts between local educational institutions and businesses.

**ISU College of Education and Professional Development Schools** – offering undergraduate education for future educators based on clinical education models, including MOUs with professional development schools for novel, year-long undergraduate clinical experiences.

**Regional Office of Education** – coordinating partnerships for students in alternative high school; promoting Heartland Community College Business Essentials program as a relevant entry into the college environment; and collaboratively merging Adult Basic Education services into one program located at Heartland Community College. **Common Core Standards** – partnering across various educational levels (University High School, Heartland Community College, Illinois State University) to investigate alignment of standards and best practices into existing curriculum, following statewide and nationwide K-12 collaboration to develop and implement the Common Core Standards.

**Livingston County** – emerging effort to create a panel of local experts to investigate regional skills needs.

**Illinois Prairie Community Foundation** – administering several programs with numerous partners to reduce barriers for local families and individuals and to enhance educational opportunities.

**Illinois Valley Community College, Community Scholars** – coordinating employer experts who serve as adjuncts; College pays 50% of typical rate and employer contributes additional 50% to foundation.

**YouthBuild McLean County** – educating students often going directly to work after earning a high school diploma and maintaining college/industry partnerships for unique programs that simultaneously offer high school credit and work skills.

## OPPORTUNITIES to BETTER ALIGN EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS with EMPLOYER NEEDS and EXPECTATIONS – Input from Small Group Dialogue, Written Feedback, and Electronic Surveys

Three categorical themes emerged from the Educational Leaders focus group regarding efforts that could benefit from ongoing collaboration among educational and business leaders. These include:

**1) Workplace Learning Opportunities; 2) Educational Processes and Policies; and 3) Relevant and Flexible Curriculum.**

### Workplace Learning Opportunities

Several individuals indicated a need for educational and business leaders to collaboratively create meaningful learning opportunities for students at all levels and that directly relate to the workplace.

Examples of issues related to Workplace Learning Opportunities included: 1) coordination of systematic, meaningful, and accessible internships at various levels in students' educational careers, and 2) additional sessions for new audiences (faculty/students/parents) to hear the input from business panelists similar to that at the Educational Leaders focus group. Creative opportunities in systematized processes

- Several comments from educational leaders focused on the need for internships to be creative in delivery formats and experiences offered, while ensuring these experiences are coordinated in a more systematized manner. An example of creative delivery included the potential to offer virtual internships, which might be more realistic than having students actually present in certain work environments. Additionally, participants often cited a need for varied experiences (creative offerings) but with a specific purpose during given stages of a student's educational career. For example, elementary students might be made aware of various jobs and roles, while middle

school students could experience a “toe in the water.” Participants felt early experiences offer opportunities for students to find something about which they have passion. Similarly, high school students might make targeted connections and do shadowing or exploratory work within a given industry, while college students should work directly with an individual mentor or in a role that more specifically parallels their impending employment.

Participants did not view workplace experiences as being synonymous with capstone experiences. Instead they supported a series of engagements at all educational levels that demonstrate to students the need for education, the relevance of what they learn in school, and opportunities to

Business and employer input – Numerous comments surfaced around the importance of the business leaders’ role in ensuring meaningful workplace experiences. Because the actual experience is often left to those within the employment setting, it is integral that these individuals have a common understanding of the purpose and appropriateness of experiences at each educational level. Therefore, educational leaders felt the business leaders must be at the table as opportunities are developed. Additionally, educational representatives cited a need for workplace experiences to be economically feasible for educational institutions as well as businesses, and that businesses must view student engagement at all levels as opportunities to partner with education for long-term investment.

**“Students should have experiences that don’t just involve pushing a broom but that represent meaningful experiences and at a much earlier age.”** Education participant

gain novel insights. One participant stated that it is “good to get students out of their comfort zones.” One group surfaced the idea of an “internship manual” which could provide a framework for common purposes at given educational levels and promote best practices that prepare students for the next level of education or work.

It was also noted that participants saw the need for the workplace experiences to have elements of creativity and flexibility within such a systematized structure. For example, workplace experiences for diverse student populations were recommended, including students at alternative high schools and underrepresented groups such as those at the Occupational Development Center. Dialogue also ensued emphasizing the importance of diverse workplaces such as those within nonprofits, labor unions, and public sector environments, among others.

Educational leaders also emphasized the importance of communications that come from business leaders. It was suggested that business and industry professionals work more directly with students even prior to workplace experiences to synchronize communication and expectations. “Who is sending the message impacts how learners receive it.” Several participants requested that an industry panel, such as the one sharing focus group summaries with educational leaders, be replicated periodically for direct communication with faculty, students, and parents.

Discussion continued around the broad impact of collaboration between business and education. Students who develop relationships with local businesses and individuals within those businesses will likely be dedicated to Central Illinois and perhaps more likely to remain in the region. Heartland representatives noted that well over 90% of Heartland graduates remain in the region after graduating, and perhaps

**Educational leaders noted that as businesses enhance their engagement with education, the region gains substantial overall benefits.**

this could be a useful component for aligning these opportunities as well as fueling university partnering strategies. This indirect “recruitment strategy” can benefit educational institutions, businesses, and our community - as regional

workforce needs are addressed, individuals become employed, and our community retains its talent. Additionally, educational leaders suggested employers communicate and support the continuing educational needs of their existing employees. Most of the industry-based focus groups discussed the need to make Central

Illinois an attractive place to live and work, and the Education group postulated the best way to start is to enhance relationships between business professionals and students at all ability and educational levels.

### Educational Processes and Policies

Several individuals indicated a need for educational leaders, and business leaders where appropriate, to address existing processes, policies, and regulations that may be limiting educational effectiveness. Examples of issues related to Educational Processes and Policies included 1) the need for consistency in processes such as those involved with educational transcripts, and 2) a desire to help business leaders fully understand educational constraints.

**Spirit of collaboration** – Interestingly, many educational leaders cited the need for educators and educational institutions to improve collaboration with one another. Many noted that processes at one level within the educational system are often unclear to educators at the subsequent level, and vice versa. Numerous comments highlighted this need for increased articulation, with time availability and existing processes being stated as major hurdles to progress in this area. However, participants felt getting representatives of various educational levels together is integral in enabling educators to prepare students for their next steps. In addition to finding time for educators to be out of the classroom, attendees noted the need for “a

mechanism to convene those who are interested in and motivated to engage in collaborative efforts.”

**Practices and processes within education** – The coordination of practices and processes within education was suggested by many participants as a way to put collaboration into action for meaningful results. One participant proposed an initial step of helping educators across the full P-20 spectrum understand one another’s metrics and measures of student success. Dialogue ensued about how various educational

“The structure and culture (within education) get in our own way.”

*Education focus group participant*

levels collect and analyze data. A more specific example included a suggestion that colleges better articulate their expectations to secondary institutions, perhaps initially better coordinating the entry standards between the postsecondary institutions themselves. The need for consistent processes involved with educational transcripts was one illustration. Another participant recommended internship coordination be a focus of business process mapping among educational



institutions in our region, aligning with the previously emphasized focus on workplace learning opportunities.

Additional dialogue pointed to the fact that many business processes within education are tied to

help students determine what is needed for the next level, for example, businesses can benefit from similarly providing input to employees on advancing to the next level within their profession. Another participant cited the reciprocal value of educational leaders enlightening business

leaders on common core standards. It was noted that business is not often invited to the table due to time constraints or lack of planning resources within the educational structure. However, given the various comments, it is clear that this inclusive

approach must be used if compelling results are to be achieved.

**Overall, educators cited benefits of coordinating business processes across regional P-20 education to enhance the alignment of curriculum, the messaging to students, and the transitions to a student’s next level of school or work.**

imposed policy and mandates. It was noted that policy impact may be an integral and precursory element for most educational change. Indeed, educators agreed that the time to get together to advance collaborative opportunities was invaluable, but presented an initial hurdle at all levels given the multitude of mandates limiting that resource for educators.

Business leaders have historically been invited (often by government entities) to provide input on what is needed from education, but typically without being provided an understanding of the full spectrum of expectations and constraints required within the educational system. As one participant noted, when career-specific programs or skill sets are in demand, the question might be framed as “Is this an industry need or a community need, in

addition to being an educational issue?” Given the likelihood of affirmative responses, participants felt educational leaders could assist in helping those outside the profession of education view educational offerings as collaborative solutions as opposed to issues for the educational arena to resolve.

“I would like to see progress towards helping business leaders fully understand educational constraints and communicate with one another. It is crucial for employers and educators to be on the same page so having workshops, seminars, etc. can only work to mend the gap that is there.” Education focus group participant

**Educational leadership for engaging business and industry** – Comments from educational leaders highlighted the need for education professionals to engage business and industry representatives in solutions. There was a general sense that education as a whole might benefit from asking, “What can business/ industry learn from education?” As educators

addition to being an educational issue?” Given the likelihood of affirmative responses, participants felt educational leaders could assist in helping those outside the profession of education view educational offerings as collaborative solutions as opposed to issues for the educational arena to resolve.

## Relevant and Flexible Curriculum

Several individuals indicated a need for educational and business leaders to collaboratively ensure that curriculum delivery maintains the flexibility to be relevant for students' future education and/or work. Examples of issues related to Relevant and Flexible Curriculum included 1) incorporating analytics into existing curriculum in order to meet identified industry skills gaps, and 2) flexible delivery formats that might combine online components, maximized classroom instruction, and workplace experiences.

**College and Career Preparation** – Many comments during the Educational Leaders focus group pointed to the need for education to constantly ask what students will need at the next level. Ultimately, students are preparing for college or a career. One post-secondary educational leader stated that there is always an opportunity for us to ask, “What is higher education for?”

Several participants agreed that in order for education to remain relevant to pending career opportunities for students, colleges should engage with Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations, as well

“Everyone in education must see themselves as career prep people.”

*Education focus group participant*

as individual businesses. It was noted that these collaborations might enhance the marketability of Central Illinois as we compete with larger urban areas for top job candidates. There was great consensus that events such as the regional panel of industry experts during the morning session of the Education Focus Group should be ongoing to increase collaboration between business and education in our region.

Further discussion focused on the balance between preparing students for jobs in our region and enabling them to compete in global markets. Benefits and cautions were cited for both approaches. One participant noted that Heartland Community College's Cornerstone efforts, which embed global and universal workplace, academic, and life skill sets into existing general education curriculum, represent a model to simultaneously meet regional and national workforce demands. One participant stated, “Liberal arts education should be a focus but not at the cost of being jack-of-all-trades and master of none.” The overall blending of liberal arts and career-focused or training-oriented education was discussed as an important contemporary phenomenon.

**Experiential Opportunities** – How education can creatively offer relevant workplace learning experiences was also discussed. As mentioned in the previous section entitled Workplace Learning Opportunities, these experiences must be systematic, meaningful, and involve students, parents, and educators. Additionally, educational leaders discussed innovative ways to address the day to day details of implementation within the educational structure. For example, it was noted that college graduates often express they would have benefited from more clinical time during their educational preparation. Focus group participants discussed whether students' time in clinicals is truly spent the way educators would ideally desire, and whether some internship-type experiences might be offered in a more strategic manner. Some participants pointed out “credit hour” constraints create added difficulties for meaningful experiences.

Further conversation evolved around the realistic nature of workplace or clinical experiences. Students in nursing, for example, never experience what a “real day,” such as a twelve-

hour shift, is actually like. Though education is not offered in twelve-hour shifts, perhaps a clinical component could more closely mirror the workplace structure. A question was also posed about the competitiveness of the real workplace, and whether student experiences might incorporate that element in some fashion. Overall, in addition to ensuring that workplace learning opportunities are relevant and meaningful, educators felt that how workplace learning experiences are pragmatically coordinated into the education structure should be reevaluated, and when possible, increased creativity should be considered. All told, then, improved flexibility and overall strategy is desired.

**Flexible Delivery Formats** – Numerous comments suggested an acknowledgment of the benefits of increased flexibility in educational delivery formats. It should be noted that discussion also occurred about the rigidity of educational processes and policies, many of which are imposed on education (see previous Educational Processes and Policies section). Most agreed that finding room to fit more into an already stretched curriculum and school day seemed at times insurmountable but, as one participant voiced, “We can also get rid of some sacred cows.”

“**There is constantly change within education, trends, culture, and environment. Therefore, it is important that curriculum can adapt to stay current for students as well as employers – everyone benefits.** *Education focus group participant*

One such example cited by multiple educators was the perceived value in allowing grades to be given for blended work and school studies. More than one secondary educational leader expressed a desire for learning experiences that involve online, classroom, and workplace components, noting that state funding formulas currently limit such

practices. Another flexible educational delivery format having perceived value but presenting great difficulty in implementation involved the suggestion of an abbreviated (9-12 hours per week) version of work-study. There was agreement on the benefits of increased opportunities for college experiences among secondary students in order to decrease the likelihood of intimidation about entering a college campus. One educator suggested coordinating the delivery of “immersion” type experiences at regional colleges/universities for secondary students.

Performance-based educational delivery formats were favored over traditional models organized around semesters or degree requirements. 2 + 2 programs, for example, were mentioned as opportunities for college students to gain meaningful and relevant skills without repeating course content when transitioning from a community college to a university. Collaboration between institutions offering associate degrees and those offering bachelor’s degrees could save students time and money, while more rapidly meeting workforce demands. Stackable certificates at community colleges were also cited as flexible ways for students and/or incumbent workers to earn college credit by gaining skills

through accumulated, rigorous certificate programs that stack into degrees (some or all of which might further stack into 2 + 2 year programs leading to bachelor degrees). A final example of flexible education included the value of credit for portfolios

that demonstrate skills an individual already possesses.

In general, participants in the Education focus group felt increased collaboration was beneficial and must continue among our regional educational institutions, as well as among business and

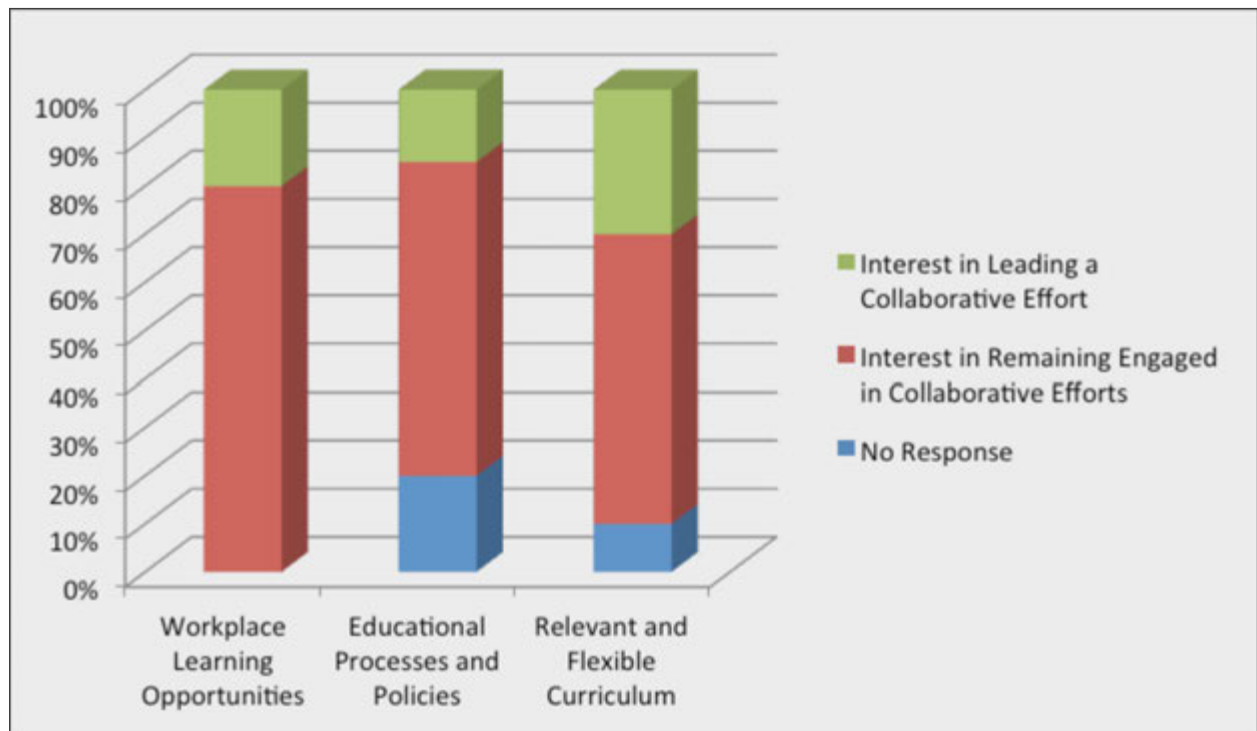
educational leaders. Numerous examples were cited of progress that would be made from collaboration within the three areas of Workplace Learning Opportunities, Educational Processes and Policies, and Relevant and Flexible Curriculum. Though the educational system admittedly has many constraints, there was great consensus that continuing to work together on priority educational issues was worthwhile and integral in continuing to offer unsurpassed opportunities for our students, businesses, and communities.



## Education Survey Results

Electronic Survey - Follow Up to Education Focus Group Participants \*

(\*Responses obtained from 20 participants; does not include participants from Heartland Community College, as the convening entity)



## Key Areas of Interest, as Expressed by Those Desiring to Lead

Workplace Learning Opportunities	Educational Processes and Policies	Relevant and Flexible Curriculum
<p>Student Communication in the Workplace</p> <p>Desired Employee Characteristics</p> <p>Conversations on Curriculum and Programs with Faculty from Given Disciplines</p> <p>Replicated Panel Sessions for Teachers to Learn of Local Business Needs</p>	<p>Presentations on Educational Policies and Constraints for Regional Business Leaders</p> <p>Parallels in Education and the Workplace</p> <p>Facilitated Conversations among Corresponding Faculty and Business Leaders</p>	<p>Communication, Problem Solving, and Critical Thinking Needed in the Workplace</p> <p>Analytics and Literacy (Financial/Social/Health) in the Curriculum</p> <p>Integration and Articulation of Common Core Standards</p> <p>Relationships Between Employers and Educators – Why, What, and Measurable Benefits for Both</p> <p>Information Literacy – Personal and Professional Competencies to Navigate the Information Universe</p> <p>Blended Model Curriculum – Online, Classroom, and Workplace Experiences</p>



Education focus group – July 18, 2012



## OPPORTUNITIES to CONSIDER as identified by Education participants

1. Provide ongoing opportunities for regional business and P-20 educational leaders to collaborate toward meaningful action; seek leaders with the expertise and desire to lead efforts they deem as relevant, valuable, and feasible; consider offering a mechanism to support collaboration around efforts that ultimately benefit students, businesses, and our community; see graph above for input on organizing these opportunities.
2. Assess the value of offering opportunities for business and educational leaders to network and informally build relationships as part of a possible broad reconvening; consider how this might increase the likelihood of collaborative success and build the region’s ability to attract future businesses and employees.
3. Consider organizing a broad-based College Advisory Council to inform Heartland Community College’s visioning in an ongoing manner; investigate how such an advisory might complement existing content-specific advisories which offer insights for specific career programs.
4. Investigate replication of a business-industry panel presentation, similar to the one at the Education focus group, for regional students, parents, and faculty at all levels; consider the value of expanding the audience of those hearing direct input on vital skills needs from regional experts in given professions.
5. Consider collaborative creation of an “internship manual” which would outline expectations and processes for regional workplace learning opportunities at given educational levels; systematize regional coordination of such opportunities among businesses and educational institutions by defining business processes; incorporate a clearinghouse or database of businesses/organizations with interest in offering workplace learning opportunities, including nonprofits, labor unions, public sector, and private industry.
6. Redefine how education can benefit regional businesses beyond training and education; consider helping businesses with “job analysis” - assisting employers in determining which employees need what skills upgrades - then matching or creating appropriate curriculum.

**“Collaboration is very valuable. Next steps need to be determined so we can all keep the momentum flowing to benefit students.”** *Education participant*

Education participant

## Conclusion (Next Steps)

**Heartland Community College greatly appreciates the time, expertise, and passion of all community leaders who participated in the focus groups.**

Input received through dialogue and follow-up surveys is integral to the College, our students, and our communities in a multitude of ways. Relationships developed and enhanced will set the stage for ongoing partnership opportunities across the region. The sharing of industry trends and anticipated needs will stimulate ideas for collaborative initiatives, program considerations, and long-term campus development. Thoughts and information gathered will inform HCC's Strategic Planning processes and ultimately its Campus Development Master Planning. This invaluable input from focus group participants will be revisited periodically as those processes unfold. Additional data such as regional labor market projections and global demand will be analyzed subsequent to these Visioning focus groups. Likewise, numerous factors unique to the College and region will be examined in the consideration of opportunities. Questions will be asked such as: How does this initiative fit with the College's mission? How do required investments compare to the benefits? What partnering opportunities exist? Are adequate resources available? What is already occurring at HCC and in the region that aligns with this idea?

The evaluation of opportunities generated will be ongoing and fluid. College leadership anticipates that some short-term advancements will emanate from focus group input, and many other ideas will remain as considerations until the optimal circumstances and resources are identified. Considerations cited from each focus group, as well as themes voiced in various focus groups (see Cross Cutting Themes earlier in this report) will be



Healthcare focus group  
January 31, 2012

shared with all HCC employees and with a variety of constituents, including but not limited to regional economic developers, legislators, and educators at all levels.

HCC is very fortunate to have the support of industry leaders within our region and to capitalize on this global expertise. On behalf of our students and community, HCC sincerely appreciates your assistance in keeping us abreast of urgent community needs and maintaining high-quality, relevant programs and facilities. Heartland Community College will continue to be an integral, flexible, collaborative resource for our students and communities. As we continue to partner in fulfilling this role, we will engage in reciprocal dialogue to understand community needs, obtain input from regional leaders, and communicate our progress.





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Central Illinois Regional Collaborative Effort

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