In celebration of Highland Community College’s 50th Anniversary, the College’s Human Resources and RSVP staff asked current and former employees to submit memories about their time at Highland. Minimal guidance was given with regard to the nature and content of these submissions. It was hoped that this would result in a wide variety of stories, memories, thoughts and feelings about HCC. The following collection includes the responses in their entirety, slightly edited.

From founding faculty member Warren Burstroms’ detailed account of life as an instructor in the early years, to Randy Powell’s submission of a whimsical memo written by former maintenance director LeRoy Wilson, these accounts provide an informative and entertaining look back at the institution that has not only profoundly shaped the life of its students and community, but of its employees as well.
In 1962 my wife came back from a PTA meeting in Forreston where the main speaker was the Dean of the new Freeport Community College. After the meeting she approached and asked him if there was math position open. He said that I should apply. I did apply, was interviewed, and later offered a job as math instructor. There were difficulties to consider. The college had no offices, no desks and we borrowed classrooms from the Freeport High School. One room in the building was divided into little cubicles. There were lunch tables for desks and folding chairs to sit on. The most difficult aspect for me was the hours we had to work. We had to be in our offices by one p.m. Classes started at four p.m. and ended at ten. We had three small children and I liked to put them in bed. But if I took the job, that was not an option for weekdays. Dean Harget painted a completely different picture of what the college could be in the future. I thought he would be a good man to work for and maybe the college would become as nice as he thought it could be.

So I accepted the position and for the first year taught just about the same courses I taught in high school. There were some problems. Some high school teachers resented having the college use their classrooms. As a result more than once I could not find any chalk. This was not an accident but I learned to live with it. In 1965 the science division got a new small building that had been built beside the junior high tennis courts. This building had nice offices, comfortable chairs and desks. It also had chemistry and a biology laboratory.

The chairman of the natural sciences left our college for a similar position at the new Rock Valley College. The Natural Science staff elected me to be the new chairman. A few weeks later I was informed that our biology teachers took jobs at different colleges. This was three weeks before fall semester was to begin. I immediately wrote to all the state universities employment offices inquired if they had any college qualified biology teachers.

The college moved from the high school in 1965 into an unoccupied insurance building at the corner of Stephenson and Locust near downtown Freeport. The natural science offices were also moved into this building and it was nice to be with the rest of the teaching staff. Our labs were still in the building beside the junior high so it was quite a walk for the students to make between classes.

A short time later a church across the street from the insurance building was vacated and the college expanded into the church for more classroom space.

Freeport College was now firmly established and the Freeport School Board decided to have the college become independent of the High School Board. A vote was held to establish an independent college district and this new college district would include all of Northwest Illinois school districts. All the districts joined except Galena school district. Two years later Galena joined. Now the college had a much larger tax base; a new board had to be elected and the college also needed a new name. A contest was held to select the name and someone noticed that the highest point in Illinois was located in the college district. Since the highest point in Illinois was in the district, we should call the college Highland Community College.

The next step was to locate a site for the new college campus. A farmer who lived just west of Freeport, Mr. Taft, offered to sell his 170 acre farm to the College Board. Now how do you pay for the farm? The new College Board had some very astute people on the board and they formed the first two year college foundation in the state of Illinois. The Foundation formed a committee called Acres for Education and people of the new district were encouraged to buy an acre. I bought a small part of one.

In 1970 the Natural Science Division developed a Practical Nursing Program. This is a one year program and it helped fill a need for nurses at our local hospital. At this time the Nursing Board of the State of Illinois began forcing Registered Nursing Programs called Diploma Programs from hospitals to college campuses.
The Registered Nursing Program is a two year program and number of courses the nurses have to take are regular college courses. The practical part of the RN program is still taught at the hospital.

In retrospect I cannot help but be impressed with the first HCC College Board members. They had exceptional foresight and they developed a very good relationship with the college teaching staff. To illustrate this I conclude this story. It was Christmas time, 1967, and I went downtown to get a small gift for my son. I went to the True Value hardware store and found what I wanted. I was holding the little car when an HCC board member Mr. Fred Smith, approached. I told him I was going to buy the car for my son and he said “Take it.” I could only say “Huh”. He said he owned the store and because he did, he was giving it to me. I accepted but said, “Let’s have a cup of coffee on me”. He accepted. One could conclude: “These were the good old days”.

Delbert Scheider
Founding HCC Trustee, 1966-1978

The first meeting of an elected board responded for founding a community college in northwest Illinois, was held in an insurance building on the west end of Freeport business district. Prior to the meeting a required feasibility study had been carried out. This study involved many people from throughout the four county college district also an election had been held with 28 or so candidates.

The seven successful candidates were called to order by Lyle Talbert who was then the Stephenson County superintendent of schools. At this meeting Dr. Lyle Rachey, Stockton, was elected board chairman, Robert Rimington, Freeport was elected secretary. Other board members were Frederic Smith, Freeport, Delbert Scheider, Freeport, H. Clarence Mitchell, Mt. Morris and Donald Richardson, Savanna.

Perhaps at this meeting the full responsibility fell heavily on this board for we had no college president (CEO), no name, no campus plan and no architect. The State of IL had granted $100,000 as a startup fee. We had several part-time temporary employees from the Freeport School system to pay. The Freeport School Board was conducting an “Acre for Education” campaign to raise money to purchase the Parker Taft farm on the extreme west end of residential Freeport for a future campus.

At the second meeting of the College Board it was decided that this new institution needed a specific name. Board member Louise Neyhart agreed to head a name selection committee. Solicitation for suggested names were advertised throughout the district. The board selected Highland Community College from 12 or more names submitted. The name selected was published at the next meeting of the board, a delegation appeared before the board stating that this name was unsuitable and requesting the selection of a new name. Their request was promptly rejected.

What was to become Highland Community College did not physically exist but did exist as a vision in the minds of these seven board members as well as many other citizens of the college district.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that this first board and subsequent boards with support of our faculty, staff and the general public interest and create the institution that exists today.

Perhaps the most precarious period in the college existence occurred in early 1973 when a local taxpayers association was formed and was able to elect three new members to the college 7 member board. Three dependable former board members were defeated. The board thus became split with three and sometimes four members dedicated to cutting college expenses. President Borland resigned. The new board faced the challenge of hiring a new President. It was thus demanded that the new President have a strong background in business and financial control this came ahead of academics and personnel management.
With pressure for fiscal restraint many programs were severely cut or greatly reduced. Thus the college mission changed from serving the educational needs of the district to a mission more closely resembling a traditional liberal arts college.

Eventually these changes led to a faculty strike and the eventual resignation of the college president.

Fortunately new elections and a changing board and a new President led to a change in philosophy and mission. The college thus returned to meeting the educational needs of the college district, job skills needed by local industries, English as a second language, programs for high school equivalency and other courses became a part of the curriculum.

**Franklin Walker**  
Past Member HCC Board of Trustees, 1978-2005  
Assistant Director of the Learning Resources Center, 1971-1972

After being discharged from the USAF in 1970 I returned to Western Illinois University where I received my BA degree. I then returned to HCC where I was employed as the Assistant Director of The Learning Resource Center. George Goldsworthy was my boss. My primary duties were to oversee the distribution of AV equipment and set up and operate the Television Department and Studio. One of our first major productions of the LRC TV production was the Development of a video to be used for student library orientation. We had quite a time making “stars” out of the library staff, Phil McCarthy, Librarian and Dave Arola his assistant.

We employed many student assistants, who would transport AV equipment, projectors, tape recorders, overhead projectors etc. to class rooms all across the campus. We didn’t lose many!!

It was a true joy to be part of the staff. Everyone was dedicated to making HCC the best and we were/are.

**Jeanne Mordick**  
Student, 1966-1968

I am proud of my education at HCC in 1966-1968, and I encourage young people today to consider attending HCC to further their education. Without HCC, I would not have been able to attend college due to lack of finances. HCC instructors provided an excellent education, and after finishing my BS, I was able to transfer all credits to the University of Illinois at Champaign, where I completed my BA in English in 1970. I then returned to Freeport and taught 33 years in School District #145. Without the opportunity to attend HCC, this would not have been possible. HCC definitely provides a quality education to all students. Congratulations on the 50th year!

**Cheryl Graff MSN RN**  
Nursing Instructor, 1988-2011

Highland Community College has had an integral role in nursing education from the first opening days of the college. In the summer of 1962, I had graduated from Forreston High School and was accepted into the diploma nursing program at (then) Freeport Memorial Hospital. A significant change had just been made in the diploma nursing program, and at that time, none our freshman class fully understood the impact the (then) Freeport Junior College could have on our nursing profession.

On Monday, September 6, our class went over to the hospital cafeteria to have an early supper at 5 pm. By 5:30 p.m. we were on our way, walking over to the Freeport High School for evening classes. The new college contracted with the Freeport School District to use class rooms for college classes in the evenings after the high school classes and students were done for the day. Classes were over by 9:30/10:00 p.m. and we then walked back to the nurse’s dorm on Stephenson St. Our first classes that fall in 1962 were Anatomy and Physiology, followed by Microbiology and Chemistry. These classes granted college credit. At the time in 1962, we simply were grateful for the fact that we could walk over to the
Freeport High School in the evening for college classes, instead of boarding a bus and riding to Rockford for these classes, what previous diploma nursing students had done before us. What we did not fully appreciate, at that time, was that our college science courses gave us college credit for satisfactory completion. Some years later, when some of us wanted to go back to college to work on our bachelor requirements, we did not have to repeat previous course work for college credit we had earned at Freeport Community College. Having to repeat A&P, Micro and Chem discouraged many nurses from continuing their education.

Later, when I was teaching in the Diploma Nursing Program at FMH, I recall Warren Burstrom and Casey Mayer coming to meet with our nursing faculty to review curriculum content of the college courses and ensure that the college courses met the nursing program’s educational needs. The college was also committed to working with the nursing programs when the diploma program was replaced with the practical nursing program and the associate degree in nursing program. The first nursing program that Highland offered was the Practical Program, which began in 1972, in a class room and lab located in the Vo-Tech building. The Associate Degree program followed when the Diploma Nursing Program closed. Over the intervening years, nursing classes were taught, at various times, in every building on campus. That changed with the commitment of Highland Community College, the Foundation, faculty, staff and residents of the college district to our programs to build the beautiful, state of the art Ray and Betty Stamm Nursing Wing, where all nursing and health care programs are provided.

When I completed my Master’s degree, I was privileged to teach at Highland in the Nursing Program. However, without the foresight of the college and the diploma program to partner and offer college credit in the fall, 1962, I may not have furthered my own education. I am grateful for all that Highland offers; past, present and future. Both our sons attended Highland, earning associate degrees. Highland has indeed been “shaping our communities for 50 years”, and has also been shaping career choices and opportunities for successful achievements that benefit the communities in which we live and work.

Thank you Highland Community College. May you have many more years of successful service to our college district. Thank you to all benefactors, making growth of our college possible.

Edward Rawson
Engineering, Physics, Math Instructor
1964-1981

Norm Soukup and I organized a bowling seminar for our students. We met every Friday after classes at the Seasons Bowling in Freeport for over 10 years. It was called the seminar of solids and liquids. We bowled and socialized. It was suggested by a student of Norm Bertram. We were written up in Reader Digest. Many students like Tony Honchar and Dale Kinney came back after graduating.

Clarence Mayer
Natural Science Division Instructor,
1966-1981

One summer during the fifties, I was on a Military Reserve assignment in Amarillo, TX. Some of the other people on duty were Junior College Teachers from Texas and Florida. In Freeport, we had an adult education program, but it would still be a few years before a Junior College was established. About this time the Soviet Union had successfully completed the first man into space program and it was probably a motivating factor to improve the education facilities for many communities.

In 1962 when Freeport Junior College held its first classes in the High School, many of us taught classes in the evening and continued our work in the Freeport School System. In 1966 I was hired to teach Chemistry and Mathematics at Freeport Community College. The Science building was temporary metal structure that was located behind the High School Agriculture building.
and adjacent to the Junior High School building. The college held classes in this metal building and also in an insurance building and other building where space was available. We spent a lot of time shuttling between locations for classes. The temporary metal building had a well-equipped laboratory area and I hope we had some of the most interesting and dedicated people with whom I have ever worked occupying this building.

A few years later we were asked to sell the idea of a community college to the people of Stephenson County and neighboring counties. Some of the people that I called on were against any expansion of education programs that would increase their taxes. It was a nervous night when we monitored the votes that came in, to establish a community college. The vote was close, but our new and young college president breathed a sigh of relief when the final votes were counted.

There was a contest to select the name for the new college. Many interesting names were submitted, the name that was chosen was Highland Community College and it was submitted by the librarian of the college, it was based on the fact that the highest elevation in the state was located within the boundaries.

Keith Blackmore
Biology Instructor, 1969-2006

With 37 years of teaching at Highland, there are many memories from which to choose. All of the best memories revolve around the constant parade of quality students which I had the opportunity to teach.

While there were always quality students in every class, the structure of the Field Ornithology class was such that I had the chance to get to know many of the students quite well. Many of those individuals remain close friends to this day.

On one occasion, a former ornithology student and his wife, who reside in Ann Arbor, Michigan, arranged to have our class stop at a great birding spot as we were heading to Pointe Pelee, Ontario. When the class of 15 got to Ann Arbor, we were treated to a homemade gourmet picnic followed by a nearby spectacular display of American Woodcocks.

On another occasion the class was about to depart on the southern trip to Big Bend National Park when an elderly lady, a veteran of several past trips, was grieving the recent loss of her husband. She called to see if she could join the class for the trip only. Allowing her to go was not only a warmly human thing to do, but also reduced the per student fee for the other class members. It was decided to allow her to go, a good decision.

On the third day at Big Bend, the class took a very rigorous 9 mile hike into the Chisos Mountains. The hike was too strenuous for our elderly classmate so I told her that I’d take her for a hike on a portion of the more leisurely Lost Mine Trail after we got back. What mad that hike special was the fact that three young men in the class asked if they could go along to help point out birds for the elderly classmate. Imagine that, after completing a rugged 9 – mile hike, they volunteered to do another four miles to please an elderly lady. Quality students do such things!

Lillian Stees Ditzler
GED Instructor, math lab instructor (Freeport/Savanna) Liaison for starting college classes in Elizabeth, Savanna and extending into East Dubuque, 1968-1998

When I first began with the Adult Ed Program it consisted of Bob Baker, the director, Ruth Schubert, the secretary, Cleone McGinness and me. Cleone and I would carry what supplies we needed to the Freeport Junior High School one night a week. The class was held there in one room where we sat at table desks with the students sitting in theirs beside us. It wasn’t the ideal setting for teaching but we made the best of what was available to us. This was in the mid 1960’s.

I don’t remember exactly when we moved to the church on the corner of Main and Locust streets, but we were
so excited to actually have tables and chairs and a place we could leave our supplies. We also had a few separate rooms and began to place students according to their academic needs. Some could barely read while others were ready to prepare for the GED exam. The teacher base was also expanded so teaching skill could be utilized more effectively.

We really started growing and next we were moved onto campus and were housed in temporary trailers at the northeast section. The one thing that stands out, for me, was our making the decision to have the first GED Graduation Ceremony on campus. It was held in the theatre building in one of the music rooms. There were, as I remember 10 extremely proud graduates and some very proud and happy teachers too. We had gotten little corsages for each student and when one of the men came wearing a yellow tee shirt, we wondered about pinning the flower on it, but we just did it and he was thrilled. Ken Borland was president of HCC at the time and he was right there in the midst of things helping us with cleaning up after the ceremony and refreshments.

In the insurance building, I had US History with Richard Sennett, who had written the text books we used and had an unusual method of teaching. He used lots of visual aids, slides and film strips to illustrate his instruction. I found it much easier to learn with these visual aids. (Little did I know that later visual aids would play a major role in my life!) The typical visual aid in the other classes was an overhead projector or the geology class, field trips and actual rocks of the different types we were studying.

In the 70’s, we started classes after Labor Day and had a Christmas break and then our fall semester ended in January with a week off before Spring Semester would begin. During that time of December 1970 and January 1971 the new campus opened up off Pearl City Road with Temporary buildings A-G as Administration offices, classrooms, Library and Cafeteria plus trailers for instructor offices.

The old barn held the Art classes which was quite a trek in knee deep snow from the Library/Lounge temporary building L. Jody Schultz taught Intro to Art, in the upper part of the barn. Temporary building G stood for Gymnasium and I had a gymnastics class there taught by Ann Wright. Building B stood for Business and I had an Intro to Business class there taught by Dr. Steve Jennings. Building C was for all other classes and A was for Administration offices.

There was no circle drive or street between Pearl City Road and Stephens Street. I would go to school with friends who had early classes and stay all day until my classes were done, then rides from others going back into town.

Sharon Shaw
Audio Visual Department, 1986-2010

I began my career at Highland Community College in the fall of 1969 when the campus was downtown, sharing the insurance building at the corner of Stephenson St. and Locust St. It was the perfect stepping stone between small school, (Aquín High School) and big university (NIU).

In the church across the street, I went to my Rhetoric...
I was involved in the school paper and yearbook and took photos of the new building being built – the IMC, Instructional Materials Center and Natural Science buildings. Neither of these buildings was finished by the time I graduated in 1971.

In 1981, I was back in Freeport, doing freelance photography and had asked the AV Dept. for photo information and help. The AV dept. filled the whole NW corner of the IMC building.

I also took some continuing Education classes including a course based on the PBS Series by Carl Sagan. It was taught by Jeff Davidson and Keith Blackmore in NS107. That room had several televisions mounted on the walls of the room. There was a phone in the room and when the instructors were ready for us to view the videos, they would call the AV dept. and the 27” televisions would start showing the series.

In 1982, I took a Small Business Management class with Dr. Jennings and did so well, I decided I wasn’t too old in my 30’s to go back to school for another degree, so in the fall of 1982, I went to SIU Carbondale planning to get another BS degree in Photography. While I was there, small format video became affordable and the College of Education was using it for instructional uses. After discussing options with instructors there, I decided to get a Master of Science degree in Instructional Technology.

Before I knew it, it was 1986 and I was receiving several newspaper ads from friends that HCC was looking for a Media Specialist. I applied for the job and received it. I finished my Master’s project that semester and starting working April 14, 1986.

My boss was Eric Welch, Head Librarian, and one of the first things he asked was what did I know about satellite dishes. I didn’t know much but soon learned by going to seminars in Nebraska where satellite learning was prominent in their curriculum and talking to installers as we received dishes sponsored by local businesses to enable their employees to receive advanced training while continuing to work. I was able to coordinate with the company employees to create videotapes of the satellite classes and there were several people who received engineering degrees from National Technical University (NTU) thru our facilities.

Many of the instructors I had as a student were now my colleagues. Jody Schultz worked in AV as a graphic designer helping instructors with their teaching materials and as photographer; there were also about 6 student workers who helped develop film and move AV equipment around rooms.

While all rooms had overhead projectors, there were only a few carts with TV/vcrs on every floor needing them, so instructors would call AV with their equipment requests and we would fulfill them by bringing the equipment from AV or other rooms in the needed building.

Some instructors needed us to set up the equipment and run it for them. The film class taught by Tom Wallmo and Alan Wenzel was held in IMC 107. It had a built in projection room that used 2 matched 16mm projectors and a specially built wide cinemascope screen. Eventually, the 16mm gave way to a video projector that played video discs (the size of a 33 1/3 record) – then video tapes, then dvd, until 2010 when film class was moved to the Lindo Theatre where both students and the general public could learn and enjoy the different genres of film with state of the art projection.

Eric Welch also worked with our local cablevision company and we received two channels to use for distance learning. For a time, one channel went directly to the local company for retransmission of NTU classes; the other channel went to everyone receiving basic cable service or more. On that channel we ran videotapes coordinated with classes offered by instructors. We also worked with local librarians in libraries throughout the HCC district to have copies of the videos available for students to view in the libraries or their own home. These tele-courses allowed students to work at their own pace within a semester timeline.
Distance learning expanded in 1994 with the advent of two-way audio visual instruction via 1 AT computer band/phone line, and dedicated classrooms in H building. We were part of a consortium of colleges using the equipment to offer Law Enforcement, and Para-legal classes as well as Horticulture and advanced teacher education classes from Sauk Valley College, Blackhawk College and Western Illinois University. We also had equipment at Freeport High School and HCC West in Elizabeth.

We were able to use the two-way communication for different local companies to receive classes from their corporate officers in MO, and took part in the Lewis and Clark commemoration with a guest speaker from Galena speaking from H127 to students all over the country.

Our department videotaped classes such as speech, math and early education classes as a resource where students and instructors could review how students had done giving demonstrations. We could also tape instructor’s lessons should they need to be gone from a particular class. The students would still be able to receive the instruction, but ask questions when the instructor returned to class.

We also worked with GED to create English/Spanish instruction videotapes. We worked with U of I Extension service to create instructional videotapes too.

The AV department was the resource for the Athletic department to tape practice for review and I was taping a conference game in the late 80’s for Coach Don Tune when a fight broke out between our team and our opponent. Eventually, the game continued but again stopped when the opposing team’s coach was ejected for remarks he made to the referees. The next day, Coach Tune and others went through the videotape looking for the acts our student player had said precipitated the fight. Indeed, we found the opposing team players had struck our player several times without being seen by the referees.

The result was our opponents’ Coach and College President both apologized and a new conference rule was created that each home team must record their games so if something similar were to happen the tape could be reviewed.

From then on, our department recorded home games and made copies for coaches to review. We supplied equipment for the team to use on away games with their students doing the recording. By the time I retired in Feb 2010, teams had digital video cameras and were transitioning to computers to make digital copies and DVD’s in the coaches’ offices.

Another early task I had in the department was setting up and running the sound for the graduation ceremony in Krape Park. It was always a pleasure to see the students who had worked so hard in their classes, finely accomplish their goals and graduate. It was difficult to run the sound from within the band shell. I would have to rely on others to come back and tell me if the sound was adequate because I couldn’t hear anything (unless there was feedback) I could peek out from the doors at the back of the band shell and see some of what was going on. Occasionally, if weather was bad, the graduation would be moved indoors to the YMCA/HCC gym. I would have to set up the equipment there. This was one of the reasons why I worked hard to get a new sound system for the gym in 1997. Eventually, others were hired to supply the sound for the ceremony; I began taping the ceremony, offering copies for sale and showing it on cablevision.

The first time I had to revamp classrooms with new equipment was in 1997. I bought new overhead projectors, screens, and TV carts with combo vcr/dvd players for every classroom. A few classrooms received new LCD projectors that could project both video and computer screens. More classroom upgrades came in 1999.

In 2005, a bond was rolled over and I was given the go ahead to convert many more classrooms with smart cameras connected to computer and LCD projectors. The smart cameras could be used to project over
transparencies, 3D objects, paper and books. I was also able to put ceiling mounted projectors in the conference center rooms and upgrade the sound and controls in H201.

The last major project I worked on before my stroke and retirement was the equipment for the nursing addition attached to the Natural Science, which would allow instructors to use interactive aspects of computers projected for all students to see and upgrades for building R classrooms. I had a stroke in my office in March 2009, after recovering from it; I retired on Feb 28, 2010 after almost 24 years working as Media Specialist in the AV department, and almost 39 years after graduating from HCC.

I am sure that HCC will continue to be a part of my life, not only because of the friends I’ve made but also because I believe in life-long learning and so does Highland!

Ruby Carol Ellrich
Financial Aid staff, 1970-1971

Employment in the Financial Aid Office at Highland Community College during 1970-71 was my introduction to the community college environment.

The experience and knowledge gained at Highland lead me to pursue a career in the community college system. After moving from Freeport to Rochester IL, I was offered a job at Lincoln Land Community College where I worked for thirty years, retiring in 2001 as the Director of Financial Services.

My family has been staunch supporters of the community college system. Both our children attended Lincoln Land with husband Phil employed as Director Physical Plant at Kaskaskia College and myself as a Foundation Trustee.

Had it not been for being hiring at Highland Community College, I would not have gained the experience and fulfillment in a most rewarding career.

Colleen Gift
Psychology Instructor, 1970-2005

The first semester at the permanent campus was spring 1971. A huge blizzard caused the campus to be closed for the first two days of the semester. There were temporary buildings and the road was not paved. The road deteriorated with each snowfall. It quickly became a bumpy mess of large potholes. There also were no sidewalks, just some asphalt strips between buildings. There was a lot of snow that spring. When the snow melted it did so very quickly, the campus was a sea of mud and large puddles. The data processing center was located in a trailer, which was surrounded by a small lake of melted snow. Maintenance had to put pumps in the lake to keep the water from rising and damaging the computer system.

Vi Bangasser

It was a privilege to teach in the HCC environment, to work with the professionals at HCC and to support the educational endeavors of so many area students, employees and citizens.

Over the 21 years at HCC I worked in the ever changing world of technology. Along with helping others understand and use technology I regularly upgraded my own knowledge by taking university classes and seminars.

Technology at Highland is an ever changing and growing endeavor!

Some early steps: In 1981-82 I scheduled and taught seminars about microcomputers and their usage to area teachers and business employees. I literally loaded microcomputers in a van and provided hands on experience at schools and business locations in the area.
The early use of microcomputers was limited to the writing and using BASIC programs. Gradually software could be purchased to improve the usage of the microcomputer. We helped students get comfortable with the hardware and understand the operating system software. Some of the major productivity software included word processing, spreadsheet processing, and database processing and slideshow/graphics software. We helped students learn and use the software and remained up-to-date with new and improved versions thru the years. Productivity software is available today for every type of application or need. Today computers are available in many sizes and platforms and have powerful software and help screens!

The technology world saw a need to network a group of computers with a server, a box that served software to users on the microcomputers among other management tasks. I helped in the installment of a first local area network in a lab at HCC. I helped some local companies get their employees to understand and use company networks. The campus and local companies are now a wonder of networking! Every student and college employee is connected within the college and to the world at large. The learning process and management needs are supported and enhanced by incredible technology.

On campus we taught classes in the design and analysis of computer programs. I taught COBOL, RPG, BASIC and FORTRAN, the standard programming languages at the time. In my later years I taught area programmers to use the language of C which was a new generation language. Many of these languages have been replaced with modular forms of programming.

Teaching mathematics was always my preferred area of teaching. During my time at HCC we introduced and used graphing calculators in many classes. Computer software and graphing calculators help teachers demonstrate the concepts of math and help students do real world problems.

Richard Luthin
Dean of Business Services, 1972-1992

Some people claim that the Highland Campus is the coldest place in Stephenson County. I don’t know if that is a fact or not, but I remember some cold times. LeRoy Wilson, Director of Maintenance and Grounds, kept a snow shovel in his northwest office of the temporary building A (it doesn’t exist now). There were several mornings LeRoy had to shovel the snow out of his office. During the late 1970’s we had several years of harsh winters, with severe cold and lots of snow. I remember one morning when it was below 0 degrees. I was walking from my car in Faculty and Staff Parking Lot E towards my office in IMC Building (now Marvin-Burt Liberal Arts Center) directly into a strong west wind. My eyes started to water and tears were freezing on my cheeks. I couldn’t see and my eyes hurt a lot. Since I was halfway to the IMC it didn’t make any sense to go back to my car so I continued on. I made it. From that experience I learned to remove my glasses while walking up the sidewalk, which helped. It was about the same time period that a water pipe in Fine Arts Building (Now Ferguson Fine Arts Center) froze and burst, flooding several rooms in the Fine Arts Building. Clyde Veasely, Maintenance Grounds man claimed that the only thing slowing down the Artic wind was a barbed wire fence in Nebraska. He may have been right.

On a happier note, John Webb, Patrick Beckman and Company presented a cabaret show, “Jacques Brel is Alive and Well Living in Paris”. It was held at the old Holiday Inn. It was probably the best show I have ever seen in my life.
Elizabeth Smith  
RSVP Director, 1972-1982

I helped HCC become the first community college to have a RSVP program under the direction of Robert Baker. I became the state president of RSVP for 3 years, then the national RSVP secretary-treasurer for 2 years, then the vice president for two years. During my leadership of RSVP at HCC I started the Senior Songsters and we traveled to numerous events across the state including the state fair to perform. We provided transportation for seniors in the area to senior activities, quilting programs, nursing home activities as well as to doctor’s appointments. Volunteers filled those activities as often as they visited seniors in their home to encourage them and provide support and help when necessary. My first secretary was Lona Kniskern and 2nd was Diane Conroy. Kate Sorn was the activities coordinator. I also set up and ran Adult Education classes in my home in Warren, Vivian Kepner and Carol Aurand were contracted to teach. I developed a TV program in Freeport called “Womb to Tomb” which covered topics relevant to seniors, often bringing guests speakers for related topics. Mr. Baker’s direction was invaluable.

Other volunteer activities developed for RSVP including art classes in nursing homes, quilting, singing, discussion on health, family history were all common. I’m grateful for the years of service to our seniors; it was one of our most valuable experiences of my life. I hope RSVP continues to bring great joy to all!

Jan Ayer  
Instructor in Adult Education Department, 1973-1996

The memories I have of Highland Community College are many and quite varied. They began when our family first moved to Freeport in the 1960’s. Our children were all in school so I decided to continue working towards a college degree.

At the time Freeport Community College was located in a downtown location. The instructors were all helpful, understanding, and caring. I enjoyed the time I spent pursuing an associate degree.

This accomplishment inspired me to continue my education, which eventually resulted in a Bachelor’s degree from Western Illinois University – a biggy to mark off my bucket list.

When I was ready to join the work force, I was delighted to be hired by Highland to teach ABE-GED classes in the Adult Continuing Education Department. The students and fellow instructors made this job fun and rewarding. I have many fond memories of the 23 years I spent at HCC. I found friendships there which I still maintain and cherish.

And the saga continues as my children, and now my grandchildren have become students at HCC. The citizens of Freeport can be very proud to have such a fine educational institution in their city.

Alan Wenzel  
Speech Instructor, 1974-2013

Gray Old Age Dreaming Over a Crowded Past  
“Goodbye Mr. Chips”

After working at Highland for thirty nine years, memories of students, colleagues, and events certainly abound. One quickly comes to mind.

The first class I taught after arriving at Highland in August of 1974 was an extension class in Savanna, Illinois. Psychology Instructor, Jim Peace, and I drove to Savanna High School on Monday nights in the fall of 1974 to teach classes to residents of that area. Jim taught Introduction to Psychology and I taught an Interpersonal Communications class.

The College fleet for instructor’s use consisted of three new Chevy Vegas; one blue, one green and one red. Jim and I usually got the red Vega Wagon and would leave campus around 4:00 p.m., drive to Savanna, stop
Memories

at Grimm's Café on the northwest edge of town, have dinner and then proceed to the school. The ride to Savanna was especially memorable for me, because the more experienced Mr. Peace was able to help orient a new, first year teacher to the ways of college and of Highland. From Jim, I learned a lot about Highland’s history and traditions and what it meant to work at a community college. Jim helped boost my confidence as an instructor, gave me classroom tips and provided me with wise counsel regarding all matters of the teaching profession. Among the various musings Jim offered was this one: “When people ask me what I do, I tell them I’m a psychology instructor. I don’t call myself a teacher. In my life, I’ve only had two or three teachers. I don’t yet feel I can put myself in their company.”

The speech class in Savanna only had five students and yet it was representative of what I would find at Highland; classrooms rich with students of different backgrounds and experiences. One student was an eighteen year old recent graduate of Savanna. Three students were in their twenties and early thirties; working adults. The fifth student was an 82 year old woman taking classes through Highland because she hadn’t had the opportunity to attend college earlier in life. That first Highland class is indelibly etched into my memory.

As I look back on all my years at Highland, I realize that I learned much about communication from that class in Savanna. I learned much about being a teacher from Jim.

Submitted by Randy Powell
HCC Custodial Services, 1974-present

Memo sent to Jim Berberet from LeRoy Wilson
October 18, 1974
Subject: Functions of the Maintenance Department

I started writing this on three different occasions, but was interrupted each time. Yesterday, I was interrupted by the report that there was a herd of cows in the east parking lot. Five minutes later, I was told that a horse was walking south on the sidewalk between Buildings A and K. Before I could get the saddle on the horse to chase the cows, I received more serious calls: Phil McCarthy had four lamps out in the library, Charlotte Fedderson was cold in the Fine Arts Building, and a toilet still was plugged in Building K. Since toilet stools are high on my priority list, I told Harold Zier to stop fertilizing trees and go get the plumbers friend. I dispatch Harold Horner to the Fine Arts Building to warm up Charlotte.

Then the phone rang again; problems really started piling up: Jody had five works of art to be hung, A Castetter had one of his student’s lips frozen to the French horn, because it was so cold in the Fine Arts Building and, Wally couldn’t get the kilns to fire off in the pottery shop. I called Harold Horner again, by this time he had Charlotte happy; so I sent him to the music department to get the student and the horn. He took both to the kiln room, started the kiln fire and thawed the student’s lips loose. That is efficiency – two jobs in one. Since modern art isn’t my bag, I stalled Jody.

Again, I started back to my office to write this; however, two students stopped me, seems they left their keys in the ignition and locked the car doors. I got my trusty Loc Joc and headed for the parking lot to give lessons on how to break in to any car. That is when I discovered I had not done anything about the cows or horse. I got the car open, and then raced back to my office to inform Mr. Meinzer that his cows were in our parking lot. He informed me that he would come get his cows, but I better “damn well” fix the fence or he would go to you know who!

I then went in search of the horse, as I came around the northwest corner of the IMC, I stepped in something – I knew I was on the right track. I found the horse south of Natural Science along with two young girls. I told the one girl (to whom I thought the horse belonged) that we didn’t allow horses on campus. She asked me “why”? I informed her they did nasty things on the walks and tear up the turf. She allowed as her horse was trained not do nasty things on walks. I pointed out my right shoe and
I was told it wasn’t her horse, because it was the wrong color.

Jim, I am back at the office again, but I am not going to write and explain the functions of the maintenance department at Highland. When you get a chance come across the hallway – I’ll explain, you write. I don’t have time. Phil has six more lamps out now.

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Dr. E. Ray Searby  
1976-1990

It was my privilege to serve Highland Community College in a variety of administrative positions: Business Division Chairman, Dean of Instruction, Dean of Student Development, and Interim President. As a result I got to know the entire staff and faculty well. I feel that the staff and faculty was highly student oriented and that they were individually motivated toward excellence in performance.

We rebounded from several miscellaneous negative aspects including a financial and personnel downsizing into a streamlined functional college. There were notable achievements in academic instruction; in the arts; in athletics; in career preparation for jobs; in technology such as turbines and geothermal; in serving students; and adult education.

The community college future should be bright as the needs of the district are served.

As a personal note, I visit a certain tree planted on campus dedicated to my father by the personnel of the college. Thanks HCC

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Jeanne Massingill  
Information Technology Instructor,  
1979-2005

My first day on campus was the Friday before classes began in the fall of 1979 – I was there for an interview. I began the following Monday as a temporary fulltime instructor.

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Sandy Feaver  
Adult Education, 1984-2006

Highland was my work home for over 40 years and I’m so grateful that it was. It was great place on so many levels.

Our students were our collective focus; Service to them was our top priority.

We understood that our role with NW Illinois community was also critically important. We worked hard to make sure that we were evolving in ways that supported our region.

The staff was bright, hard-working, fun and deeply committed to the success of our students and NW Illinois. It was great to share my days with them.

Developing our staff was nearly as much a priority as developing our students. I often felt stretched, but encouraged to grow and act.

We were a team – working to use the skills and assets within each of us. As a result we were far more effective than individuals acting alone.

And we routinely took time to celebrate, have fun and enjoy our Highland community.
Thanks Highland. What a great place to work, grow and contribute to the home I love!

**Bev Schone**
Instructor Business Division, Secretary to President (Sims and Piland) and Secretary to the HCC Board of Trustees; Title II Director; Secretary to Dean of Students 1977-1994

Love HCC, great watching it grow.
I was able to attend HCC and then get my BS in education from NIU. All five daughters also attended HCC.

**Alex Toth**
Data Processing Instructor, 1980-1996

My memory started with my teaching data processing at Freeport High School. As part of the course, students used the keypunch machine to key simple programs into IBM cards. I took the packs of IBM card programs to Highland College to run them on the computer that took up a huge part of a room on the first floor of the main building. The Highland staff was so helpful and cooperative in helping me and my students. This was in 1979. Within a couple of years I was asked to teach part time Data Processing and Basic programming at Highland. This lasted until 1996. I remember that everyone involved with this highly rated school was a member of a close knit family known as Highland College.

As a member of the Scots, Mr. Castetter took us to a choral festival in Murray, KY at Murray State University. It was their spring break and we left cold northern Illinois to what seemed like a land of enchantment, the spring flowers were blooming and it was green and warm. I immediately fell in love with the campus and decided that was where I wanted to go to school and finish my degree. It was a long way from home, but I knew of one other HCC grad that was also attending Murray, so that helped transition me to being a long way from home. I graduated from MSU after switching to a theatre major in 1982 and was beginning to start grad work. I suddenly realized I needed a break from schooling and applied for a job as RSVP Coordinator at HCC. I knew some of the staff and remembered older people in a room quilting when I was a student and worked in the cafeteria. I sent my application and resume shortly after Christmas. I was called for the interview by mid-January. I remember walking into the RSVP office and Kate Sorn jumped out of her chair and gave me a big hug saying “I thought that was you when I read the resume” Another volunteer who was helping interview said “Kate, I don’t think you are supposed to hug the candidate.” I was hired for the position and started three weeks later. I drove from KY

**Mike Shore**
RSVP Director 1982-present

Happy Anniversary HCC – I am proud to be a part of that history for 30 years. I started out as a student in 1973 as a graduate from Savanna High School. I came to HCC not knowing what to expect, I started out as an English major, but immediately realized my love and passion was music. I think I switched majors the first week of school.

Art Castetter, involved me in the music department where I sang with the Royal Scots from 1973 to 1975. I was also a member of the jazz and concert band. I remember our classes were in the same building as the gym with practice room next to the locker rooms. We were very excited that a new fine arts building was being built at the time. I can remember the first time we got to tour the construction and it neared completion. We were amazed that the new piano lab would not have any wires or electric cords for people to trip over and the recording studio had such modern equipment. Having gone to a small high school with the stage in the gym, I was so impressed with the stage and all the fly space available. After the building officially opened and I was assisting with a theatre production, I can remember climbing all the way to the top of the “grid” above the stage, it was an amazing view from up there, but I was very careful where I walked.
leaving my wife there to finish out her month notice from her job and pack the house to begin my new career. I had no furniture yet, the phone was not hooked up yet (well before cell phones) and the first day I was to report we had a horrible ice storm. Cathy Wilhelms, the director at the time, had no way of getting in touch with me, so she called her ex-husband and he walked over to my house and told me to stay home at 6:00 in the morning. I remained the coordinator until 1988 when I was appointed director.

When I first started, our offices were just off building K in, I believe, building L. That summer HCC moved us to building C, another temporary building. It was fortunate we had moved because not long after that the cafeteria caught fire and smoke would have ruined about 6 quilts and countless boxes of fabric. We remained in building C until moving to building R. Building R had been built after the cafeteria fire and was the student center until they built the Student Conference Center. Ironically when we moved into building R, my office is in almost the exact same location as my original office in 1983. Highland has been an excellent place to work, it has supported my endeavors as a regional delegate to the RSVP Directors Association, allowed me to serve 8 years as state association president and it was an honor to be named one of the first HCC distinguished alumni in 1995.

Thank you Highland for such a wonderful learning experience throughout my life, you are what I am today.

Rose Harkness
Division Secretary in Humanities/Social Science, 1989-2002

The faculty and the dean (Tom Myers) had such good rapport together, gathering in the division office for many meals, celebrations, laughter, and sharing times.

Once the semester was under way many students developed the courage to stand in the hallways after class, with faculty, and argue points made during class time or about a paper or statement that was made. Many students and faculty became close friends through this hallway bantering, and faculty learned and were stimulated by a student challenging his own thoughts. I could see there was real teaching going on, in and out of the classroom, by the faculty in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Since faculty from other divisions would teach their classes on our floor, I got to know the entire faculty from all of campus quite well. Working at Highland Community College was very rewarding—never a day would be the same.

So many great people who were at HCC during my employment are not with us anymore, Neil Lathrop, Gerry McElroy, Tom Wallmo, and Eve Dvorak; along with Dr. Ruth Smith; and many other faculty and staff are retired.

I thank every one of those people for shaping me into the person I am today. I admired their knowledge, fortitude, and strength. It was a fun, learning, and rewarding experience, not only for the students, but for each person who was or is a part of Highland Community College.

Jim Setterstrom
Agriculture/Business Instructor, 1983-present

As a freshman at HCC in the fall of 1968, I was taking my classes in several locations throughout Freeport. Most classes were in the insurance building, but others were scattered all around town! Old Main (the church across the street) the downtown YMCA, the Vocational Ag building at Freeport High School, the old driver’s license station next to the former Farm and Fleet (now gone).
were some of the daily stops for many students enrolled that fall.

Outstanding instructors like Verena Aarthum, Norm Soukup and Fred Redmore laid the groundwork for an excellent educational experience at Highland.

When I became part of the faculty in the fall of 1983, I became part of the “Highland Family” and will forever be thankful for the opportunity to work on this beautiful campus with such an outstanding group of people! (Especially in the Business/Technology Division)

Elma Bucher
Custodial-Security, 1983-1993

When I was hired it was a challenge having only men as co-workers. I proved I could do as much or more than was expected.

Cathy Skiles Brunner
Student, 1981-1985

At age 19, I worked in the Audio/Visual Department the year that they began the fundraising for the Student Center after the fire of the temporary building. That summer I would go places with Mr. Opal and be his audio/visual person. I remember going to several banks and group meetings listening to him give his presentation. Many times, he would call on me to give some student perspective to the conversation. I remember feeling rather proud when the building was completed, knowing in a small way I had something to do with it.

Nancy DeZell
Switchboard and Admissions and Records Assistant, 1988-1994

I worked with some wonderful people at Highland; and especially enjoyed the enthusiasm of the students preparing for their future. Highland has always been a great asset for the community.

Dana Zimmerman
Coordinator of Career Services/Student Advisor, 1990-present

I began my employment at Highland Community College on December 26, 1990. Over 22 years later, I look back with many fond memories. After experiencing several teaching transitions throughout my twenties, I felt that I could make Highland my place of employment for a long time. I remember the anticipation of starting this new chapter of my life. The experiences of Highland have enriched my life professionally and personally.

My first 3 years here on campus were years in Building C—one of the temporary buildings that outlasted the “original plan” of our campus. Some of us remember when these were torn down in the mid-90. Nevertheless, the memories of my first years of HCC were all part of the initial foundation of my career here and have fostered my gratitude on many levels. Those initial relationships were rich. I was surrounded with people committed to Highland and committed to each other. We built a foundation that was nurturing and caring. The “matriarch of adult education,” Cleone McGinness, took me under her wing. Cleone and I worked very closely together during those years in the department. Judie Ackerman and Sandy Feaver were also very nurturing and always willing to assist and lend a hand.

Building C housed several departments at that time: Adult Education, Community Education and RSVP. My role was to coordinate the outreach literacy program in addition to providing oversight to our Outreach GED Centers: Galena, Lanark, Mt. Morris, Savanna, and Warren. I soon found that these part-time staff in our District were among the most dedicated people I have encountered over the years.

I shared a corner office with both Judy Moore and Judy Ross, who were instructors in a family literacy program at that time. Shortly after settling into my first office (several weeks had passed), Judy Ross shared with me that she had been my 4th grade teacher at Blackhawk School. Up to that point, I had not made the connection. Could I continue to call my teacher by her first name?!
HCC
Memories

Judy Moore, Mike Shore, and I are the remaining full-time staff still working here that worked in that old, worn building of long ago (Wind Tech building now stands in its place). Despite the old, trailer-like qualities, there was a cozy feeling to the “hodge-podge” of furnishings and décor. Many mornings began with socializing in the kitchen. Staff shared stories, student concerns, news from the morning paper, and laughs.

Judy Moore and I still laugh about our escape from “C” during tornado-like conditions one afternoon. We left the security of a huddle of people in the restroom. At the spur of the moment, the two of us decided that we wanted to survive and bolted from the building, leaving the rest behind. Probably a reaction to seeing the Wizard of Oz as children, or perhaps from the urgency felt from the “vacuum pressure” we were experiencing in that old building, or perhaps from the sight of flying roof shingles.

In January 1994 we made the move to Building R. The Adult Education Department was launching a new chapter, one with better facilities and technologies. My almost 8 years in adult education have had lasting impressions. Throughout these years and with fifteen years in Student Services, I have come to realize the significance of my “first” Highland Family. Most importantly I have had a career that has allowed me to enrich lives of students, and most importantly, their lives have enriched mine. I am grateful.

Sherry Maves
Administrative Assistant, Upward Bound Program, 1991-2012

First and foremost, my fondest memories of the past twenty-one years in the Upward Bound Program at HCC revolve around the people who have been such a positive influence on my life. Mary Huffcutt, the second director of UB, was a great mentor and still a dear friend. Dr. Ruth Smith believed strongly in servant leadership and excellence, and as college president, she set the tone for a caring, relation-oriented campus. Her untimely death affected everyone, and her bright spirit is still sorely missed. As I prepare to retire on this 50th anniversary year, there are other staff and faculty far too numerous to name, but each one, in his or her own special way, is leaving a footprint on my heart.

We think we are teaching students, but in many ways we learn more from them than what we give. I am amazed to see some of them overcome terrific obstacles in order to pursue their dreams. Each student also leaves a footprint.

I watched the Student/Conference Building being built, the temporary buildings being torn down, and a new nursing wing come to life. Thanks to the maintenance people, we have an extraordinarily beautiful campus where I loved to steal away to the little hidden gardens and nooks on the grounds. Being part of the support staff group that did so many thoughtful service projects makes me smile, and I especially enjoy the wonderful art, theatre, and music programs at Highland.

Email and internet weren’t part of our lives, and nobody had cell phones when I started in the early 90s. Technology has exploded and dramatically changed the face of Highland College. We celebrated being the first community college in Illinois to have a wind tech program. I watched technology change the way we do business and the way students learn. While it has its place in many positive ways, we must be careful to guard against technology taking the place of relationships between staff members and students.

A friend attending our fledgling college in the early 60’s at Freeport High School used to borrow my locker for night classes. Little did I know that I would someday be part of that college on a campus that was yet to be built. It’s been a fascinating journey; I’ve learned so much, enjoyed so many opportunities, cared about students, made so many friends, and have been part of a diverse academic family. Highland will always be my second home, and we are blessed to have a college of this caliber in our community.
Memories

Submitted by Randy Powell
Custodial Services

(memo sent from Dr. Ruth Smith to Dr. Jeff Davidson
October 13 1997)

Last Saturday morning at 3:00 a.m. our buildings
and grounds staff reported for moving day. By 8:00
a.m. they had removed all the chairs and other items,
approximately 2,100 pieces that were scheduled for that
day. Actually some of them had worked for four hours on
Friday at the Downtown Center and on the main campus
so they did have a little head start.

I must tell you that their work was awesome. The
organization of this project was masterful, thanks to
Rich Eads and Barb Edler, and the camaraderie and team
spirit were great to see. In fact at 7:00 a.m. Rich Eads
asked if anyone wanted to go home since they were ahead
of schedule and only two people opted to do so.
Please share with these folks our gratitude for their work
over a holiday weekend. They are truly a group of people
to be admired – Dr. Ruth Smith, President

Susan Wegner
Continuing Education Department
1999-2004

I had always hoped to someday work at HCC, so after
retiring from teaching for Freeport School District #145,
I applied for the Continuing Education position and
was delighted when I was called and told that the job
was mine! During my time at Highland, I made many
friends among staff, faculty, and students, many of whom
I remain connected with today. It was an opportunity
to touch people’s lives in a meaningful way, and I’m grateful to have been given
that chance.

Thompson Brandt
Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2000-present

In 1999, I made a special trip to Freeport to help my
cousin dispose of some remaining items in my uncle’s
home after his death the year before. While I was here, I
thought I’d take a moment to see Highland Community
College for the first time. Because my uncle, John Korf,
had played a significant role in charting the course for
the HCC Foundation, I thought I’d start by taking a
peek in the Foundation office itself. As it turned out, my
plans for a self-guided campus visit were replaced by an
impromptu, delightful tour conducted by former HCC
Foundation director Susan Atherton, including a stop in
the Fine Arts Center where Elwyn Webb was working on
stage in preparation for a production. Little did I know
then that a year later I’d return to Highland, this time as
an employee. The past dozen years have been wonderful.
I’m hoping for many more. Congratulations, HCC, on
a half-century of successfully serving the citizens of
Northwest Illinois!

Carolyn Rice
Teacher in Cosmetology, 2000-2006

My job as a teacher for students who were not able to get
their lessons and move on in their tasks was extremely
rewarding when they were able to start getting A’s
and moving on faster than the other students. It was
just a matter of encouraging them how to pick out and
underline the most important thought in a paragraph for
quick review when studying for a test.

On their graduation day my students brought me a flower
and a piece of cake and would tell me I deserved this as
much as they did. Over and over they would tell me they
would have dropped out if it wasn’t for me. This was
extremely rewarding for me.
One case that really stands out was a married student with three children. She was doing great and was only a few weeks from graduation when she dropped out of school. There were some family problems and she and her children were taken out of Freeport into hiding. I was very concerned for her when two years later one evening, I received a call at home from her. She was so excited and thanking me and thanking God. She said because of me teaching her the body parts and systems, she was able to pass a test and got her CNA license and had a good job as a home care nurse. I was very happy for her but encouraged her to go for her cosmetology license. One year later she called me again. She said she had to go back to the beginning and do all the tasks over again. But she was able to fly through them and now had her cosmetology license.

As a teacher I don’t think you can ask for more success than this. To know you played a part in some one’s life and her children’s lives going in a new upward life changing direction because some one cared.

Gary Creger
Custodian, 2001-present

For me there are so many good memories as my mind travels that road of the past. Starting with the first class I attended, then my family and friends that I had the honor of being a part of. Then the day I applied for a job, the year 2001. Rose Ferguson and Christie Lewis were very helpful in getting me started in my new career. Then another great memory, on my birthday I was hired full time in the custodial department in 2009.

The honor of meeting Clarence Mitchell on his 100th birthday at the Library he helped build. Reading Eric Welch’s Rarebits pamphlet with good info for all to enjoy. Don Williams who kept me up to date on new and old books that I had an interest from time to time and also talking to Ray Stamm who helped build the new nursing wing.

The staff and faculty of Prairie Wind Magazine that gave me good reviews on poems I and wife Nancy submitted a few years back.

The president and vice president and faculty and staff members will linger on for me, and there are so many more.

But my latest I must comment on: I was walking to -R-bldg. for some info. I was surprised to see the Salvation Army Kettle on campus; I put my donation in and got a thank you and candy cane from none other than our President at Highland Joe Kanosky it sure made my day.

My closing memory comments: You are the future and chosen few of humanity, you are that generation at Highland Community College past and present who have endured many hours of discipline, read and studied many books, taken many difficult tests. Thanks to all of those who made the 50th anniversary possible and may the next 50 years be great ones for the future generations remembering that every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it.

Precious memories always.

Vicki Schulz
Student Advisor, 2002 - present

Too many memories to put down. I guess my favorite is being involved with the Royal Scots. I made such wonderful friends during this time, some of which I am still in contact with. We had such a good time in practice even when the choreography was enough to make us pass out. I also became engaged to my husband who also attended HCC at the time. We are still married and have continued the tradition of HCC students with our oldest daughter. My memories keep going since I have had the pleasure of watching her play volleyball, basketball and softball at the Jr. College level. Go Cougars!
Juliet D’Souza  
Biology instructor, 2006-present

My favorite memory of HCC was the day of my interview in 2006. I remember first meeting Tana Gundry and she is probably the best person for any potential new instructor to meet. She was very personable and welcoming, which made me feel that Highland was going to be a great place to work.

After the interview I was given a tour around campus. The campus was beautiful and when she said it was a designated arboretum, I was even more impressed. As a biology instructor with an interest in the natural world, it stood out as a great asset to the college.

Even now as I use the campus in my ecology and biology classes, I find it great that we have so many different species of trees for students and visitors to observe and learn about. The arboretum, as well as the pond and prairie area, make the campus a beautiful place for anyone on campus to enjoy.

Michelle (Misty) Thruman  
Director of Institutional Research, 2006-present

My earliest memories are when my mom, Pam Schleich, began working at Highland in the early 1980’s and I remember the wonderful people (i.e. Phil Gordon, Larry Murphy, Cec Gloden) more than anything else. As a Highland student, I remember working in the bookstore when it was in Building R, the construction of building H, and the student dances! I very much enjoyed and appreciate the education I received at Highland and how it prepared me for my baccalaureate and graduate school studies. Thank you Highland Community College!

Alicia Kepner  
Medical Assistant Program Coordinator/Instructor, 2009-present

In 2009 I came to Highland Community College to help teach the Medical Assisting Program which had admitted its first group of students. In 2010, I was hired on as the Medical Assistant Program Coordinator and we graduated our first group of students in Medical Assisting. In 2011 we underwent a daunting process called accreditation which included a self-study and site visit. In September of 2011 we received our CAAHEP accreditation. I haven’t been here for very long but I know I could stay here forever. I enjoy working here. Highland has an amazingly talented staff & family and I love being a part of something great!

Jim Berberet  
Instructor, 1968-1979  
HCC Foundation Board, 1980-2010  
Executive Director, Highland Community College Foundation, 2011 - present

Back in 1962, the founders of the then Freeport Community College Foundation were very proud of what they had created—the first community college foundation in the state of Illinois. History was made right here in northwest Illinois.

These local philanthropists and pioneers had dreams that would come true. They had plans that would be achieved. They would succeed. Just look around at HCC today and witness a fully developed campus on Freeport’s west side, scholarships for thousands of students, successful alumni working locally and contributing to their communities.

The Foundation was established as a legal entity to support and assist Freeport Community College, which after a few years would expand to a four-county district and change its name to Highland Community College.

These founders were local people; Freeport area businessmen, farmers, educators, community leaders, professionals. They understood that no educational institution should be totally reliant on state reimbursements, property taxes and student tuition. The HCC Foundation would be a fourth source of support.
Their foresight and zeal set into motion many activities that continue to this day:

- continuing involvement, leadership and financial support by Foundation directors from each of the four counties of Jo Daviess, Carroll, Ogle and Stephenson.
- community support for student scholarships, more than $5.9 million since 1962 and an average of about $350,000 per year for the last five years.
- fund raising projects to build the permanent Freeport campus structures and equip them through funding of more than $9.2 million since 1962.
- purchasing of land for the college, land on which the campus now sits, totaling over $2 million plus since 1962.

One interesting aspect of how the purchase of campus land benefited the college goes back to 1965 when the Foundation was able to acquire approximately 210 acres from farmer Parker Taft at a very reasonable price. The campaign was called “Acres for Education,” and donors received plaques with small plastic holders containing “dirt” from the farm land.

Around 1970, it was a thrill for me—as a relatively new employee, having recently transitioned from teaching (English Comp and Journalism) to working as an administrator in community relations—to be able to walk the developing campus with Mr. Taft at a very reasonable price. The Taft land became a valuable source of financing for the College. In the good ole days, the State of Illinois paid 75 percent of the cost of new facility construction, while 25 percent came from local resources. As each new building in the campus master plan was designed and submitted for approval to the Illinois Community College Board and the Capital Development Board, the Highland Board of Trustees was able to apply the appreciated value of the land on which each building would sit to its portion of the local contribution. The HCC Foundation deeded that land to the college. As a result, Highland Community College needed much less local money to build the campus due to the foresight of the Foundation to acquire land for higher education in northwest Illinois.

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As the first two buildings rose from the ground, many staff and faculty attacked the very rough dirt/clay/gravel roads to get to temporary Becker buildings on campus. So too did students. Due to the conservative nature of the Trustees, those temporary buildings became somewhat “permanent” well into the late 80’s, frequently changing purpose. Also permanent were the drafts, howling winds and inconsistent heat and air. Two “trailers,” which initially saw service as a book store and as faculty offices in the former Economy Insurance parking lot, also made their way to campus. In the mid-70’s, offices for CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), which offered extensive training programs for unemployed and under-employed throughout our four-county district (plus Whiteside and Lee counties), were housed in one of the trailers.

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After 10 years of varying responsibilities (English Comp and Journalism instructor, advisor to the Catalyst yearbook, director of community relations, acting head of adult education {while the Dean was on sabbatical} and finally as Dean of Training and Manpower Services (CETA), I departed for a career in the business world. But Highland was never far away. After a year “off,” I was appointed to the Board of the Foundation and remained a member until early 2011, when I became Interim Executive Director of the Foundation. And now the “Interim” is gone.

During all those years, I witnessed the sincere and strong eagerness of the citizens and businesses of northwest Illinois to invest in and support Highland Community College. Our Foundation team puts it this way: “people don’t give to the Foundation, they give through the Foundation” to Highland and its students. They really do!
The new “Donor Wall” in the Ray and Betty Stamm Health Science Nursing Wing is a visible testament to the hundreds of individuals and businesses that have supported the “Growing for tomorrow...changing lives today” major gift campaign, started in late 2008 and continuing as this is written.

Other very recognizable names of families and individuals are affixed to facilities on our campus: Ferguson Fine Arts Center, Marvin-Burt Instructional Materials Center, H.C. Mitchell Library, Robert J. Rimington Board of Trustees board room, the Newell Room, the Lois Coon Kortemeier Lounge, the Lena-Winslow Room, the Sauer-Danfoss Manufacturing Technology Center, the Bill & Lois Fieldsend Study area, the Charles Endress classroom, the James Schneiderman physical assessment lab, the Larry Kahl Gymnasium, the St. Paul room and many more. Plus the 140 acres known today as the Donald Opel Regional Arboretum.

In addition to these legacies and personal testimonials, there are hundreds of donors who continue to support scholarships, endowments, campaigns to erect and equip educational facilities, and much more.

During good times and bad, from the growth and go-go years to bubble-bursting great recessions, our citizens in northwest Illinois continue to support Highland Community College.

We at the Foundation are honored that we actually can be what one of the founding Foundation fathers—John Korf—dubbed us——the Bucket!!

A lot has “fallen into” the Bucket© since 1962 and a lot—more than the $17 million cited above—has been distributed to and shared with Highland Community College and its students.

A true spirit of philanthropy toward Highland Community College and higher education exists in northwest Illinois. We at the Foundation thank you!

“The college in the cornfield” has come a long way in 50 years! I wonder what the next 50 will bring. We all wonder what dreams will be dreamt...and what dreams realized?

The Highland Community College Foundation—Celebrating 50 years!