

Dr. Heather Bigard is a transformational leader with an expansive career in higher education focused on strategic planning, enrollment management, program and resource development, and institutional improvement at both public and private institutions.

As an Illinois native and first-generation college student, Dr. Bigard began her higher education journey at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL, and later transferred to Lambuth University in Jackson, TN, where she worked in the financial aid office. After graduating, she applied her financial aid knowledge to restore Title IV aid eligibility for Deaconess College of Nursing in St Louis, MO, before moving back to her hometown to serve as the Director of Financial Aid for Springfield College in Illinois. She was promoted to Chief Financial and Operations Officer and began leading enrollment, student services, and program expansion initiatives, culminating in a merger with Benedictine University in Lisle, IL. After a decade of leading the transformational change effort, Dr. Bigard assumed the role of Vice President of Administration and Finance at Blackburn College in Carlinville, IL, and led another transformation that resulted in enrollment growth, facility improvements, and fiscal sustainability. She supported a similar transformation at Midway University (KY), as the women's college became co-educational in less than six months.

Her passion for expanding access, improving through innovation, and building high-performing teams continues to grow and is seen in her work at Lake-Sumter State College, a public community college serving over 5,000 students in Central Florida. As the Executive Vice President, she provides leadership to the areas of finance, facilities, information technology, institutional research and improvement, distance education, human resources, athletics, financial aid, legal affairs, and security. She also provides institution-wide leadership for strategic planning, employee relations and development, and the recent response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Bigard is actively engaged in local and legislative affairs, developing community partnerships for program expansion, serves as the Chair of the Florida College System Council of Business Affairs and is a Board Member of the LifeStream Behavioral Center.

Dr. Bigard holds a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education and Organizational Change and a Master of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior from Benedictine University in Lisle, IL, and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and Finance from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN. Dr. Bigard enjoys spending time with her husband and two children and outdoor activities such as golfing, boating, running, and landscaping.