

For Immediate Release

Contact: Susan C. Ryan
314-304-6800



The Wedge Names J. Scot Heathman as Chief Executive Officer

ALTON, IL -- March 17, 2025 -- Innovation ecosystems thrive when visionary leadership connects diverse communities, resources, and ideas. The greater Alton Metro Region is poised for unprecedented economic transformation as The Wedge, in partnership with Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), prepares to open its doors on April 7, 2025.

Today, The Wedge announces the appointment of J. Scot Heathman, a distinguished servant-leader and retired Air Force Colonel, as its inaugural Chief Executive Officer. Heathman brings over 25 years of military leadership experience to this pivotal role, where he will guide The Wedge's mission as a 55,000-square-foot social impact hub, research lab, think tank, and workspace.

"In searching for our first CEO, we needed someone who could not only manage operations but truly embody The Wedge's vision of fostering innovation across state lines," said John Simmons, AltonWorks CEO. "Scot's proven ability to build learning cultures, lead cross-functional teams, and identify business opportunities makes him the ideal leader to bridge the innovation gap between Illinois and Missouri."

Heathman's impressive background includes commanding two U.S. Air Force bases, including Scott Air Force Base in Southwestern Illinois, where he led organizations ranging from 3 to 36,000 personnel. His experience designing and executing two innovation units at Air Force bases that continue to impact current operations demonstrates his commitment to building cultures of innovation and entrepreneurship.

"The Wedge represents a transformative opportunity to connect talent, ideas, and resources across the bi-state region," said Heathman. "I'm eager to leverage my experience in organizational leadership and innovation to enhance the current and dynamic ecosystem that exists in the region and continue to drive economic growth throughout the Midwest."

As a key member of the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois' Military Economic Development Committee, Heathman has been instrumental in advancing community collaboration. His first-hand experience with programs designed to reduce food insecurity and increase community development positions him uniquely to understand the region's challenges and opportunities.

"Scot's leadership approach aligns with our vision for 'The Wedge Powered by SIUE,'" said SIUE Chancellor, Dr. James T. Minor. "His ability to foster high-performance teams and identify business gaps will be invaluable as we work together to create unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, workforce development, and community engagement."

Heathman holds three master's degrees - in Organizational Leadership, Operational Planning, and National Security & Strategic Studies. As founder and CEO of Elevating Others LLC, he has developed expertise in building high-performance teams, fostering emotional intelligence, and leading organizational change—skills that will be essential in his new role.

The Wedge, following a \$20 million investment in a 10G fiber network funded by the State of Illinois, is positioned to drive sustainable growth and build a workforce prepared for the digital economy. Under Heathman's leadership, The Wedge will collaborate with business communities and local agencies across Illinois and Missouri to create a vibrant innovation hub that extends throughout the Midwest.

Heathman will assume his role on March 18, 2025, allowing three weeks of transition before The Wedge's official opening.

The Wedge will continue to work closely with TechSTL and Executive Director Emily Hemingway to enhance the reach and collaboration of technology, innovation and problem solving in Missouri, Illinois and across an eight-state region.

About The Wedge

The Wedge is a 55,000 sq ft social impact, research lab, think tank, and workspace serving as a hub for the digital economy in the Alton Metro Region. Born out of the community revitalization efforts of AltonWorks and leveraging the assets of SIUE, The Wedge brings together entrepreneurs, researchers, and professionals under one roof, combining coworking spaces with cutting-edge research facilities.

About Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high-quality education that powerfully transforms the lives of individuals and improves communities. With a strong commitment to community engagement and applied research, SIUE serves as a catalyst for economic development throughout Southwestern Illinois and the greater St. Louis region.

About AltonWorks

Founded in 2018, AltonWorks is a social impact redevelopment company focused on the revitalization of historic downtown Alton as a healthy, thriving, walkable city and as a regional hub for reinvention and resiliency in the Alton Metro Region. AltonWorks was founded on the principles of livability, environmental stewardship, social justice, and inclusivity and believes in rebuilding communities for optimum social impact.

###