2024 SWOT Analysis

Report Presented By:

Strategic Planning and Accountability Committee

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OVERVIEW

In preparation for future planning, Harper College is investing significant time and effort in conducting a thorough assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as an external review of opportunities and threats – a SWOT Analysis. The SWOT Analysis provides an evaluation that can focus institutional attention and inform planning processes. The analysis began with the identification and critical review of key institutional data*. These key data sources included:

- Accountability Report
- Campus Mater Plan
- College Plan
- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results
- Community Scan
- Cultural Values Assessment results
- Employment and Wage dashboard
- Enrollment data
- Fact Book
- Follow-up Survey results
- General Education Assessment results
- Institutional Effectiveness Measures dashboard
- National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) results
- Persistence and Grades dashboards
- Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) results
- CCSSE Race and Ethnicity Survey results
- SOAR (Search, Onboard, Achieve, Realize) dashboard
- Strategic Enrollment Plan
- Trellis Financial Wellness Survey results

As a result of the review of these documents the College's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats began to surface. The analysis identified the current state of affairs, while highlighting areas in which Harper is strong as well as those that need focused attention. Further research was conducted to gather additional data on external forces influencing Harper as opportunities or threats. All items that surfaced were evaluated for inclusion in the SWOT using three criteria:

- Institutional - The item is at the institutional level, not one relating solely to a particular division, department or program.
- Data Informed - Once the institutional criterion is met, the item is reviewed to determine if its data are documentable and measurable.
- Peer Comparison - If applicable, Harper can be compared to similar institutions.

An initial draft document was created and reviewed by the Strategic Planning and Accountability Shared Governance Committee. The draft was then presented to the campus community via the portal and during the March 11 Dialogue Session. Faculty and staff provided feedback on the draft at the session and in an online survey. This final document incorporates the campus feedback.

*Report includes data available at the time of report creation in spring 2024

STRENGTHS

A strength is a positive internal institutional attribute.

Strength 1: Increasing Levels of Student Success

Item Description:
Persistence and completion rates continue to increase. Efforts to retain students, both inside and outside of the classroom, appear to be producing the desired effect. Additionally, completion rates continue to show improvement with graduation rates at their highest in recorded history. While room for improvement in both persistence and completion still exists, the growth in both areas, ultimately representing an increase in the success of Harper students, reflects the academic excellence of Harper College.

Supporting Information:
Harper College has experienced an increase in fall-to-fall persistence from 2016-17 to 2021-22. Harper's persistence rate is consistently higher than the peer group average and well above the average of the Aspen Institute recognized institutions.
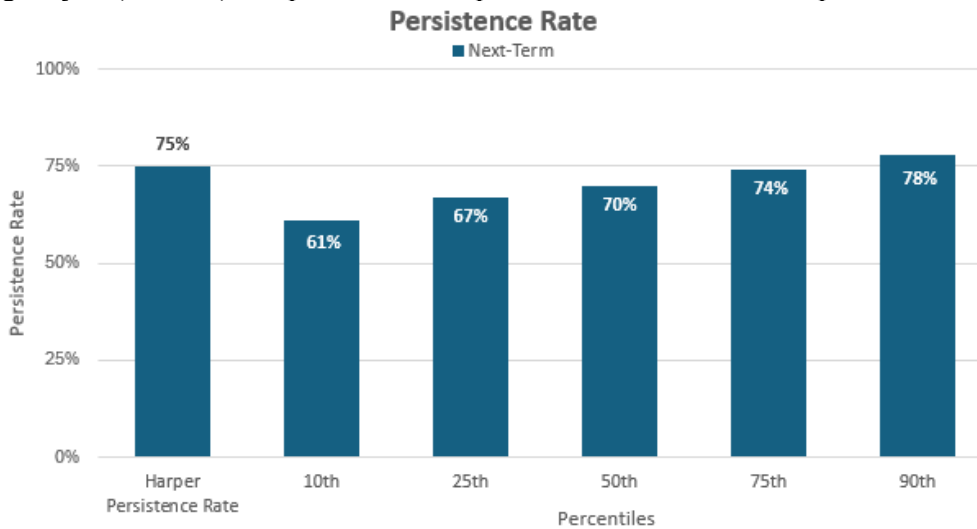
Persistence Rate (fall to fall)[1]*						
Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Harper	65.3%	69.0%	69.5%	67.0%	69.7%	68.7%
Peer Group Average**	61.7%	63.4%	61.9%	60.0%	62.5%	60.0%
Aspen Average***	58.2%	57.7%	60.0%	54.3%	52.8%	55.7%

*The percentage of first-time (full- and part-time), credential-seeking students who first enroll in the given fall semester and register in the subsequent fall semester or earn a credential in their first year (IPEDS).
**College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, Oakton Community College, Triton College
***Amarillo, Broward, Kennedy-King, Kingsborough, Indian River, Lake Area Technical, Miami Dade, Mississippi Gulf Coast, Odessa, Palo Alto, Pierce, San Antonio, San Jacinto, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe (Aspen comparison group includes colleges identified as prize winners or receiving special recognition.)

Additionally, when compared with institutions (N=123) participating in the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP), Harper's next-term persistence rate is at the 82nd percentile.[2]

Persistence rate is the percentage of fall 2021 students, both full- and part-time, who return to the campus for the next term (spring 2022). This metric excludes students who graduated or completed certificates in the time frame.

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[1]IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Advance, Persistence, Peer Comparison,
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9
[2] *2022 National Community College Benchmark Report,* p. 2.

Harper's graduation rate continues to increase and is at an all-time high of 45.6%. The 2022 rate represents a 52% increase since 2017. This exceeds the average graduation rate for both the peer group and the Aspen award winners.

Graduation Rate[3]*							
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Harper	28.8%	32.7%	33.7%	34.7%	37.8%	43.7%	45.6%
Peer Group Average**	24.4%	24.6%	25.7%	26.8%	27.8%	29.6%	Not Yet Available
Aspen***	31.5%	34.8%	35.7%	37.7%	38.4%	36.0%	Not Yet Available

*First-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who completed a credential within three years of enrolling at Harper (IPEDS, IEM Dashboard).
**College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, Oakton Community College, Triton College
*** Amarillo, Broward, Kennedy-King, Kingsborough, Indian River, Lake Area Technical, Miami Dade, Mississippi Gulf Coast, Odessa, Palo Alto, Pierce, San Antonio, San Jacinto, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe (Aspen comparison group includes colleges identified as prize winners or receiving special recognition.)

In addition to increases in graduation rate, the number of credentials awarded annually has also increased. Credentials awarded increased by 23% from FY2017 (3,607) to FY2023 (4,346).[4]

Success rates are also high in the leading indicators that predict completion, such as gateway course completion. When nationally benchmarked, Harper is in the 81st percentile for first-time students entering in fall 2021 and completing gateway English by the end of spring 2022 term[5] are in the 91st percentile for gateway math completion.[6]

Early Momentum Metrics Percentage of First-time Students Completing Gateway Courses
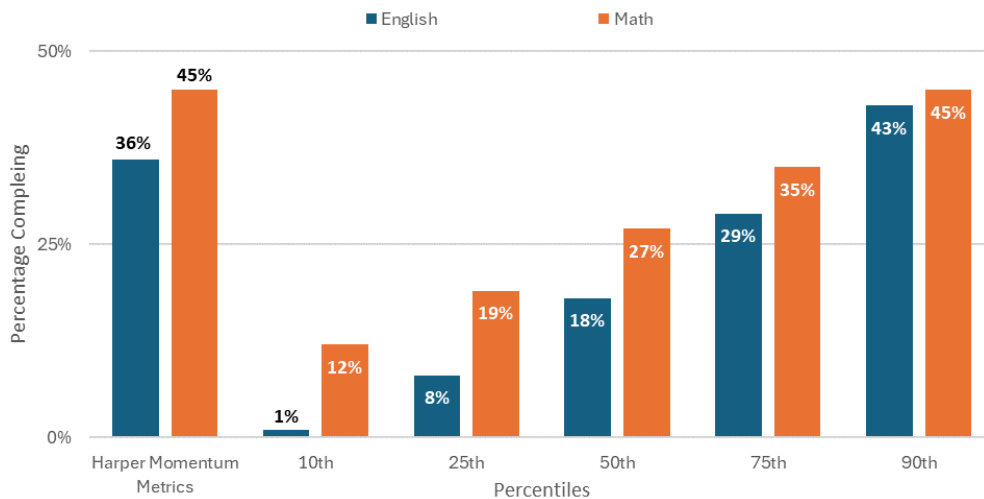
The percentage of first-time students from fall 2021 completing gateway courses in English Comp 1/II and math by the end of spring 2022 term. 110 institutions provided data for English and 109 institutions provided data for math.

Improved persistence and completion are the result of focused efforts of the College. Case-managed advising stands out as one of the most impactful strategies for supporting students' academic progress. Since its launch in the fall of 2017, the strategy has reached full-scale implementation, with 100% of credential-seeking students now assigned an advisor. A pivotal moment for students occurs during their first semester when they

[3] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Realize, Graduation Rate, Peer Comparison, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9
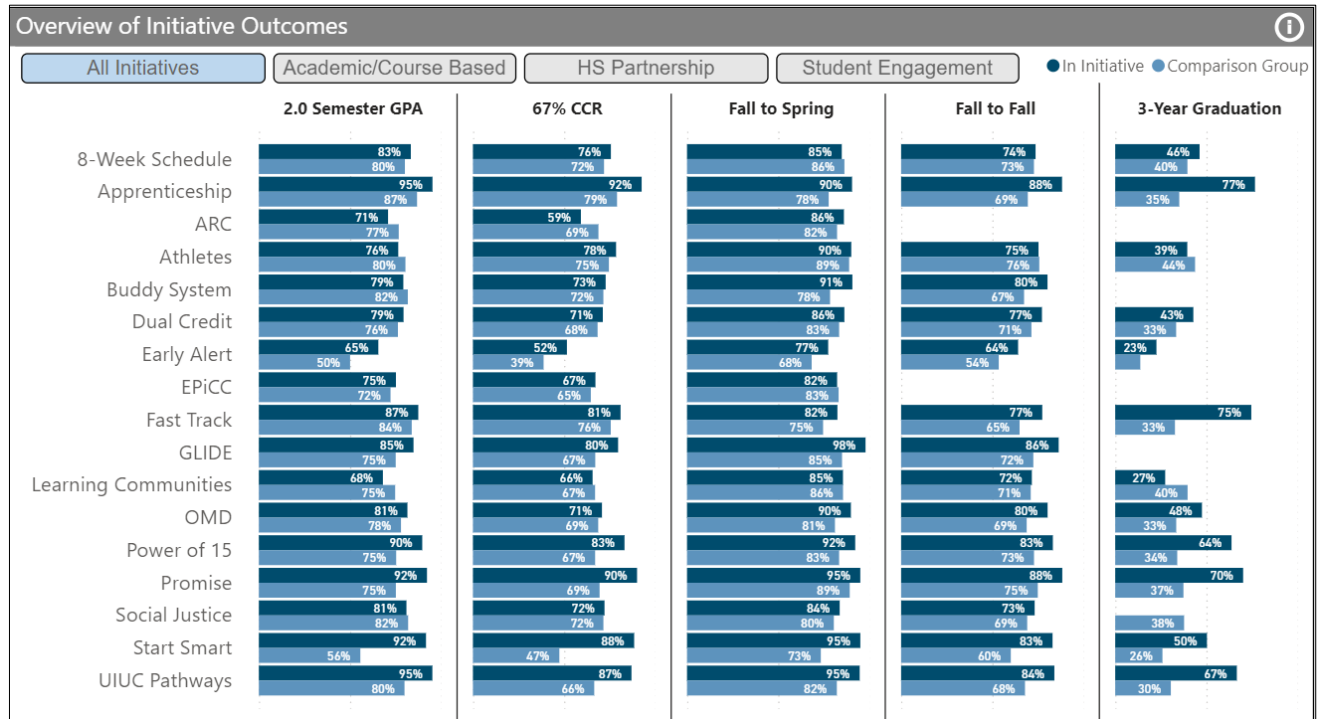[4] Harper College *Fact Book 2021-2022,* p. 35 and Harper College *Fact Book 2023-2024,* Students (Credit), Credentials Awarded, Award Type All, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDlhOGIzYWUtZGVmMS00N2VhLWE0YTItNDkzODM3NmI0OWU1IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.
[5] *2022 National Community College Benchmark Report,* p. 1.
[6] Ibid.

are encouraged to meet with their advisor to develop a personalized educational plan. Over the past four years, new credential-seeking students (both full and part-time) who take this crucial step have achieved an impressive 91% average fall-to-spring persistence rate, compared to a 62% persistence rate for those who do not connect with their advisor for personalized educational planning. This critical engagement is also correlated with students experiencing a three-year graduation rate more than double that of their peers who did not participate in this essential advising opportunity.

Harper College has implemented many initiatives aimed at improving success rates for students. When examining overall success of students in an initiative versus the identified comparison group (similar characteristics but not a part of the initiative), the students in an initiative typically outperform the comparison groups students in success metrics, including persistence and completion.[7]

Overview of Initiative Outcomes

Tabs: All Initiatives | Academic/Course Based | HS Partnership | Student Engagement — In Initiative ● Comparison Group ●

Initiative	2.0 Semester GPA (In Init. / Comp.)	67% CCR (In Init. / Comp.)	Fall to Spring (In Init. / Comp.)	Fall to Fall (In Init. / Comp.)	3-Year Graduation (In Init. / Comp.)
8-Week Schedule	83% / 80%	76% / 72%	85% / 86%	74% / 73%	46% / 40%
Apprenticeship	95% / 87%	92% / 79%	90% / 78%	88% / 69%	77% / 35%
ARC	71% / 77%	59% / 69%	86% / 82%		
Athletes	76% / 80%	78% / 75%	90% / 89%	75% / 76%	39% / 44%
Buddy System	79% / 82%	73% / 72%	91% / 78%	80% / 67%	
Dual Credit	79% / 76%	71% / 68%	86% / 83%	77% / 71%	43% / 33%
Early Alert	65% / 50%	52% / 39%	77% / 68%	64% / 54%	23%
EPiCC	75% / 72%	67% / 65%	82% / 83%		
Fast Track	87% / 84%	81% / 76%	82% / 75%	77% / 65%	75% / 33%
GLIDE	85% / 75%	80% / 67%	98% / 85%	86% / 72%	
Learning Communities	68% / 75%	66% / 67%	85% / 86%	72% / 71%	27% / 40%
OMD	81% / 78%	71% / 69%	90% / 81%	80% / 69%	48% / 33%
Power of 15	90% / 75%	83% / 67%	92% / 83%	83% / 73%	64% / 34%
Promise	92% / 75%	90% / 69%	95% / 89%	88% / 75%	70% / 37%
Social Justice	81% / 82%	72% / 72%	84% / 80%	73% / 69%	38%
Start Smart	92% / 56%	88% / 47%	95% / 73%	83% / 60%	50% / 26%
UIUC Pathways	95% / 80%	87% / 66%	95% / 82%	84% / 68%	67% / 30%

Strength 2: Student Satisfaction with Education and Support Services

Item Description:
Harper is committed to providing high quality education and student services. This commitment is demonstrated in the wide range of academic and non-academic support services available and the positive feedback from students regarding these services as well as their impact on educational growth.

Supporting Information:
Harper College measures student satisfaction in various ways. Instruments that have been used to gauge satisfaction with support services and the institution include the Follow-Up Survey, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the CCSSE Race/Ethnicity Scale, the Trellis Financial Wellness Survey, and Student Opinionnaires of Instruction (SOI). The Follow-Up Survey is an annual survey administered to program completers (transfer and career) to measure student views on Harper and the services provided toward their educational advancement. Survey results indicate:

Both career and transfer completers would recommend Harper, with at least 98% of transfer completers and 97% of career completers stating "definitely yes/yes" in 2020, 2021, and 2022.[8]

	2020	2021	2022
Would recommend Harper (definitely yes/yes)			
Transfer Completers	98.1%	97.9%	98.1%
Career Completers	98.9%	97.4%	98.9%
Transfer and Career Completers Combined	98.6%	97.8%	98.5%

Both career and transfer completers would return to Harper, with at least 86% of transfer completers and 92% of career completers stating, "definitely yes/yes."[9]

	2020	2021	2022
Would return to Harper (definitely yes/yes)			
Transfer Completers	91.1%	85.5%	89.1%
Career Completers	94.1%	91.5%	92.2%
Transfer and Career Completers Combined	93.0%	89.2%	91.0%

Completers also highly rate the quality of instruction at Harper College. At least 93% of transfer and career completers rate the quality as "excellent or good."[10]

	2020	2021	2022
Quality of Instruction (excellent or good)			
Transfer Completers	92.9%	95.7%	92.0%
Career Completers	94.9%	93.4%	94.2%
Transfer and Career Completers Combined	94.2%	94.3%	93.4%

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[8] Follow-Up Survey Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Harper Experience, Overall Experience https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=ee5c7779-83ac-402d-b3a3-f7e0023c9629&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7
[9] Ibid.
[10] Follow-Up Survey Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Harper Experience, Course Instruction https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=ee5c7779-83ac-402d-b3a3-f7e0023c9629&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is administered to students every three years, to gauge student engagement with academic and support services, as well as the overall educational environment. The 2021 CCSSE results indicate satisfaction regarding:[11, 12]

- Communication with Faculty:
  - Harper students indicate a greater degree of communication with faculty than the overall CCSSE cohort (83% v. 74%).
  - Harper students report more conversation with faculty or advisors around career plans as compared to the CCSSE cohort (41% v. 32%).
- Experience at Harper:
  - 91% of respondents rate their overall educational experience at Harper as good or excellent.
  - 97% of respondents would recommend Harper to a friend or family member.
- Support Services:
  - 80% of respondents indicated that Harper emphasizes providing the support you need to succeed.
  - 95% of respondents are somewhat or very satisfied with academic advising and planning.
  - Students were asked "Before the end of my first academic term at this college, an advisor helped me develop an academic plan" and 71% of students reported that a plan was created before the end of their first semester.
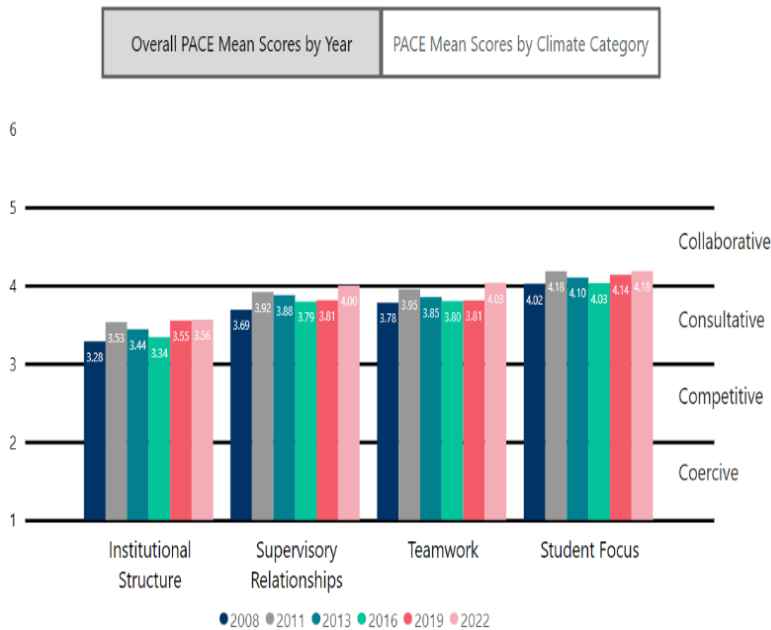
Employees perceive the campus environment as positively focused on student success. The Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) is administered to employees to assess the climate of the institution from the perspective of different education-based categories.

Within PACE, the Student Focus category "considers the centrality of students to the actions of the institution as well as the extent to which students are prepared for post-institution endeavors." Harper employee ratings have identified Student Focus as collaborative for the past five administrations of the survey. According to PACE, collaborative is the most positive rating. [13]

Students also provide feedback on courses and instruction through the SOIs. Fall 2023 SOIs indicate overall satisfaction with courses, ranging from 85-100% satisfied, and overall satisfaction with instruction, ranging from 89-100% satisfied.

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[11] *CCSSE 2021 Executive Summary of Results, p. 4.*
[12] CCSSE Dashboard, Accessed 1/2/2023. Survey Results, College Experience, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=cbae8e22-e73c-43cd-b8fb-5cb378624746&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7&config=eyJjbHVzdGGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWJpLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtaC1wcmltYXJ5LXJlZGlyZWN0LmFuYWx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0In0%3D.
[13] PACE Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2023,Overall Results, PACE Mean Scores by Climate Category https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=c41e1c0a-1fe8-422f-b350-c238a85ab925&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

Strength 3: Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

<u>Item Description</u>:
Institutional priority has been placed on creating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) since 2012 when a presidential task force was created. In recent years, an executive cabinet level role on diversity, equity and inclusion was created and campus-wide goals and priorities for addressing and minimizing systemic barriers for historically underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized communities were established. As a result, Harper College continues progressing towards a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus.

<u>Supporting Information</u>:
Harper has demonstrated a commitment to DEI through prioritizing this work in both institutional goals and institutional budget. In 2021, under the leadership of Dr. Avis Proctor, the first Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was hired. Later that year, Harper's Cultural Center opened and in 2022, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was fully established.
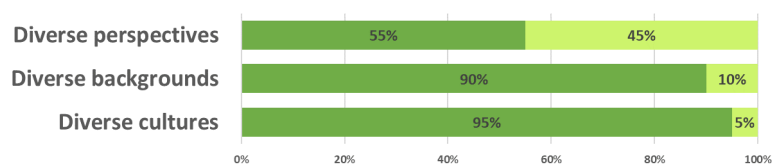
Student focused supports and opportunities include the following:
- During the fall 2022 semester, Harper launched Guiding Learners to Intentionally Develop Efficacy (GLIDE) mentorship program designed to address the equity gaps identified specifically for Black and Latinx students. GLIDE assists students with setting goals, developing proactive study habits, learning about financial literacy education, and providing information regarding available academic support services.
- Harper's One Million Degrees (OMD) program is designed to help students from low-income backgrounds succeed academically and professionally. The OMD program provides tuition balance relief, as well as a stipend. OMD scholars also receive academic tutoring, transfer support, mentors, and professional development opportunities. The goal is for OMD scholars to transfer to four-year colleges and universities upon completing their associate degree.
- The Project Assistance, Surpassing Obstacles/Proyecto de Apoyo, Superando Obstaculos (PASO) team of dedicated staff support Latinx students/families in their academic journey by providing information, guidance, and resources. Each year, PASO welcomes high school students and their families, to learn about academic programs and services, meet with faculty, and tour labs on campus.
- The Cultural Center at Harper is a culturally-affirming, educational lounge and event space for students and employees. During FY2023 the Cultural Center hosted more than 120 programs or events, attended by nearly 5,000 students (duplicated).
- Access and Disability Services (ADS) at Harper provides accessible programs, services, and support to the Harper community. In FY2023, ADS served more than 1,900 students with disabilities (duplicated count) and received more than 3,000 accommodation requests from students.
- The International Education Program at Harper College offers students the opportunity to engage in study abroad programs. In FY2023 and FY2024, 61 students participated in study aboard programs in 11 different countries.

Student learning outcomes and degree requirements include diversity and inclusion:
- The World Cultures and Diversity graduation requirement ensures students complete a World Cultures and Diversity course prior to degree completion.
- The Diverse Perspectives and Cultures general education outcome states that degree completers will be able to "examine diverse perspectives and cultures as they relate to the individual, the community, and the global society." This general education learning outcome was last assessed in 2021-22. In general, the results of this assessment indicate that students are developing diverse perspectives and attitudes.

Figure 1 - Direct Assessment Scores, All Student Groups

Category	Exceeded Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations
Diverse perspectives	55%	45%
Diverse backgrounds	90%	10%
Diverse cultures	95%	5%

Figure 2 - Direct Assessment Scores, 45+ Hours

Category	Exceeded Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations
Diverse perspectives	51%	49%
Diverse backgrounds	90%	10%
Diverse cultures	98%	2%

■ Exceeded Expectations ■ Met Expectations ■ Approached Expectations ■ Did Not Meet Expectations

More than half of all student groups exceeded expectations in diverse perspectives. Most student groups exceeded expectations in diverse backgrounds and diverse cultures. (Figure 1)

More than half the students with 45+ credit hours exceeded expectations in diverse perspectives. A large majority of students with 45+ credit hours exceeded expectations in diverse backgrounds and diverse cultures. (Figure 2)

A Social Justice Studies Distinction is available to students who intend to transfer and those planning to earn a degree at Harper. All students who wish to complete courses that align their education and career paths with imagining, analyzing, and achieving justice can participate in social justice studies.

Employee focused supports:
- Employee Resource Groups (ERG) are groups of employees, from various employment groups, who assist the College in creating an environment and culture that is welcoming and supportive of all employees but particularly those who are members of historically underrepresented populations.
- Bias incident reporting is confidential reporting by a victim or witness of an act against a person, group, or property which discriminates, stereotypes, harasses, or excludes based on some part of their identity.
- LEAD (Leveraging Equity in Academia through Diversity) faculty fellows, formerly Diverse Faculty Fellows, supports faculty diversification at Harper and prepares fellows for a full-time teaching position.

Institutional prioritization is demonstrated through:
- FY2021-2024 Strategic Plan Goal and Targets
  - Build institutional capacity to support Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
  - Reduce equity gaps by 20%.
  - Provide education and training on DEI to all employees.
  - Develop a common language around equity.
  - Assess policies/practices through an equity lens.
  - Develop/enhance community relationships that support DEI efforts.
  - Implement interculturally competent classroom pedagogies.
- Operational Plan goal tasks align with and support the Equity Strategic Plan goal.
- Institutional Effectiveness Measures related to the diversity of Harper employees (as compared to the district demographics) and faculty (as compared to student demographics).
- Creation and implementation of a diversity recruitment plan.
- Expanded diversity scorecard serving as a management accountability tool developed to support the institution's ongoing mission of fostering campus inclusion.
- Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.
- Administration of the Cultural Values Assessment on a three-year cycle.
- Participation in the Achieving the Dream network.

Professional development opportunities provided for all employees:
- Common DEI training
- Annual Diversity Symposium
- Campus Conversations: Equity Dialogues
- Social Justice Leadership Certificate

Recognition for the College's DEI work:
- Recognized by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association with the 2023 Equity and Diversity Award for exemplary commitment by an Illinois public community college board of trustees and its chief executive officer to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion in the college's programs.
- Awarded the 2023 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. As a recipient of the annual HEED Award – a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. This is the third time Harper has been named a HEED Award recipient.

Surveys are conducted with students and employees to assess the Harper environment. Overall, results are positive and reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Graduate surveys indicate that Harper values diversity and inclusion. For the FY2022 Follow-up Survey, 91.6% of completers responded, "definitely yes/yes" when asked if their experience at Harper "improved appreciation for diversity."[14]

	2020 *N=1,230	2021 *N=1,259	2022 *N=1,289
Improved Appreciation for Diversity (definitely yes/yes)			
Transfer Completers	93.1%	88.8%	92.8%
Career Completers	90.5%	86.1%	90.9%
Transfer and Career Completers Combined	91.4%	87.2%	91.6%

*Includes both Transfer and Career Completers

On the 2021 CCSSE Race/Ethnicity survey, results indicate that more than half of students do not believe that racism exists at this College. When asked "Do you believe racism exists at this college?" 64.9% responded no.[15] Additionally, students indicated that they feel a sense of belonging measures as "I have felt like I belong" at Harper College with more than 80% agreeing at some level in both recent administrations.

I have felt like I belong		
	2021 N=673	2022 N=501
Strongly agree	40.3%	37.5%
Moderately agree	25.4%	24.8%
Slightly agree	17.7%	19.6%
Total	83.4%	81.9%

Employees have also rated Harper's climate as demonstrating a commitment to racial/ethnic diversity (PACE survey). The 2022 rating is at a high of 4.14 (5-pt scale) and has increased over the past five administrations.[16]

Harper regularly demonstrates a commitment to racial and ethnic diversity				
2011 N=748	2013 N=708	2016 N=692	2019 N=660	2022 N=635
3.95	3.85	3.88	4.05	4.14

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[14] Follow-Up Survey Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Harper Experience https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=ee5c7779-83ac-402d-b3a3-f7e0023c9629&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

[15] 2021 CCSSE Race/Ethnicity Survey Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Survey Results, Students vs Faculty, Racism at this college https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=75d53c49-536e-400e-b441-384b1dbd7ae5&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7&config=eyJjbHVzdGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWppLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtc1wcmltYXJ5LXJlZGlyZWN0LmFuYWx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0LyJ9

[16] PACE Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Results by Climate Category, Harper Specific, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=c41e1c0a-1fe8-422f-b350-c238a85ab925&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

Strength 4: Strong Partnerships Across Sectors

Item Description:
Harper has developed strong relationships with partners in various sectors: community, education, and workforce. These partnerships support the College in serving its district and meeting its mission.

Supporting Information:
Harper College has prioritized its work with partners as reflected in the FY2021-2024 Strategic Plan. The Partnership strategic goal states: Advance relationships among education, community, and workforce partners. Through this goal, the College has focused its partnership efforts across these three sectors.

Education Partners

The Northwest Educational Consortium for Student Success (NECSS) is a partnership between Harper and its three sender high school districts (Districts 211,214, and 220). The collaboration promotes dual credit coursework and entering postsecondary education college ready. Most notable is the increase in total number of dual credit hours earned from FY2019 (18,075) to FY2023 (26,957)[17] and the increase in students graduating high school college ready in both math and English, from 2016 (64.8%) to 2022 (71.5%).[18]

Dual Credit		
Year	Headcount	FTE
FY2019	3,915	602
FY2020	4,604	715
FY2021	5,119	814
FY2022	4,982	834
FY2023	5,300	899

Source: Five-Year Enrollment Dashboard

Harper's dual credit program shows positive outcomes in post-high school enrollment and persistence. Students who have taken classes with Harper while in high school are more likely to enroll at Harper post-high school graduation than those who did not. For credential seeking students, those who previously enrolled in dual credit (or concurrent) persist at a rate higher than any other group, and around 5% higher than their otherwise equivalent "New High School Graduates."

First Market Segment	Student-Semesters	Persistence
AED	1,579	68.6%
Concurrent	659	79.3%
Dual Credit	32,060	80.4%
New Adult	27,542	71.0%
New High School Graduate	51,512	75.3%
New Transfer	20,486	71.6%
Total	133,838	75.0%

Students who have at least one previously attended semester
and are currently credential seeking. Fall/Spring semesters since Fall 2015
 excluding Unknown/Undeclared programs
Persistence defined as either earning credential or enrolling in the next spring/fall

Source: "Early SNAPP" model refit 202435, August 2023

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[17] Five-year Enrollment Dashboard, Accessed 7/11/2025, Fiscal Year, Dual Credit (off campus), Dual Credit (on campus), https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=26640187-c213-4c3e-a001-26fc30ca1c08&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7
[18] NECSS Student Data Dashboard, Accessed 1/24/2024, https://www.necsspartnership.com/necss-student-data-dashboard/

Additionally, Harper College offers a Promise Scholarship for all district high school students. The Promise Scholarship allows students the opportunity to earn up to two years of in-district tuition. In FY2023, 6,231 new freshmen in high school enrolled in the Promise Scholarship. As of May of 2024, there are 11,701 high school students participating throughout all grade levels. Since the start of the Promise Scholarship, more than 513,000 hours of community service have been completed.

The University Center partners with DePaul University, Northern Illinois University, Roosevelt University, and Southern Illinois University to offer eleven different bachelor's degrees and a master's degree program that can be completed while remaining on Harper's campus. The University Center has served more than 750 students, with a 92% course success rate, and 234 graduates.[19]

DePaul University:
- Business Administration (BAPS); Communication and Media (BA)

Northern Illinois University:
- Computer Science (BS); Psychology (BA or BS)

Roosevelt University:
- Criminal Justice (BA); Elementary Education (BA); Graphic Design (BA); Health Science Administration (BA); Human Resource Management (BSBA); Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Southern Illinois University:
- Accounting (BS); Public Safety Management (BS)

Harper also has strong partnerships with other transfer institutions. During FY2023, 24 new articulation agreements were formed with four-year institutions. These agreements help align coursework directly to the transfer school to ensure the maximum amount of credits transfer saving our students time and money.

Community Partners
Harper College builds relationships with community organizations to support the needs of district residents.
- Partners for Our Communities (POC) connects families in need with resources and removes barriers to access. Harper partners with POC to offer English as a second language classes and a high school equivalency program.
- The Education and Work Center (EWC) is a partnership between Harper College, Elgin Community College, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, the Village of Hanover Park and the State of Illinois. Its mission is "To expand educational and employment opportunities for residents of Hanover Park and surrounding communities through coordinated education, workforce development and career readiness activities." Classes offered at EWC include English as a second language, adult basic education, and high school equivalency classes in both English and Spanish.
- Students at the Learning and Career Center, Harper's location in Prospect Heights, can find support from a variety of community partners including Internal Revenue Service-certified tax preparation, immigration legal assistance, and childcare/enrichment activities.

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[19] University Center Dashboard, Accessed 2/2/2024, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=b078a2ad-6d70-4bec-9f1b-7fbafaf47ddc&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

- Harper is also a partner of the Wheeling American Job Center. The Center offers jobseekers and employers access to a broad range of employment, training, education, economic development, and labor market services.

Additionally, Harper College has a robust legislative and government affairs program engaging elected officials, especially at the state and federal level, through education, advocacy, and relationship building.

Workforce Partners

A strong example of workforce partnerships is Harper's apprenticeship program. This program relies on partnerships with local employers for success. Registered apprenticeship programs combine job-related courses with on-the-job learning experiences to provide workers with advanced skills to meet employers' needs. Harper has partnered with 79 employers to offer 15 apprenticeship programs, serving nearly 500 apprentices. At the end of FY2024, 233 students have graduated from apprenticeship programs and work for 48 employers.

Harper has developed a Business Strategy Team focused on creating a unified business voice and image for Harper College; internal alignment; and positioning Harper as the "Preferred Provider" for the district business community. The Business Strategy Team has created an engagement plan and unified marketing collateral. To measure progress, the team partnered with the Partnership Strategic Goal team to develop a measure of accountability focusing on four industries (healthcare, business, manufacturing/technology, and transportation) across the three partnership sectors (community, education, and workforce).[20]

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[20] Business Strategy Wildly Important Goal, Accessed 2/5/24, updated October 2023, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=71f38a0d-06eb-48c3-8125-5dac4b37c871&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

Strength 5: Fiscal Stewardship

Item Description:

Harper College demonstrates, to all constituents, a commitment of fiscal responsibility in a variety of ways including transparent budgeting, an exceptional bond rating, and clean audit reports.

Supporting Information:

Harper engages in a transparent and public budget process that demonstrates fiscal responsibility and accountability to its diverse community. Harper consistently develops a balanced or better than balanced budget for tax capped funds. The College consistently receives an unmodified opinion from the independent audit of its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.[21] The unmodified opinion states that the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the College.

Harper has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, by the Government Finance Officers Association for 13 consecutive years.[22] To receive this award, a government organization must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized comprehensive annual financial report that satisfies both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

The College's financial stewardship is also reflected in its bond rating and Composite Financial Index (CFI). The College has maintained a Moody's Aaa bond rating for nearly 20 years, the highest rating awarded. Harper has consistently maintained this Aaa rating because of its healthy operating reserves, low dependence on state appropriations, and an annual budget process that ensures appropriate allocation of funds, maintenance of a balanced budget, and collaboration with the Board of Trustees. In comparing the College's Moody rating with the rating of Harper's Illinois peers, three of the seven peers have also earned a Aaa rating, while four of the seven peers have earned a rating lower than Aaa. Additionally, Harper has maintained a CFI ranging between 4.4 and 6.2 over the past five fiscal years. This score is reported to the Higher Learning Commission and combines four principal ratios: primary reserve ratio, net operating revenue ratio, return on net assets, and viability ratio. Harper's number demonstrates adequate financial resources.[23] Harper's proactive fiscal response demonstrates its ability to maintain a balanced budget without sacrificing the educational experience of its students. The Board of Trustees policy maintains the College's fund balance in the combined Tax Capped Funds between 40% and 60% of budgeted annual expenditures. The fund balance over the past four years has ranged from a low of 47.6% to a high of 49.7%, remaining well within the policy of 40% to 60%.

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[21] Harper College, *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report,* p. 130
[22] Harper College, *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report,* p. 13
[23] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, CFI, Overview,
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9

Strength 6: Affordability

Item Description:
Harper College meets the education needs of its community in affordable ways. Harper maintains low tuition and fees and awards grants and scholarships to aid in keeping the cost of education affordable. New scholarships, such as *Igniting Paths to Success*, continue this commitment to affordability.

Supporting Information:
As stated in its mission, Harper is committed to providing affordable education. To maintain this affordability, the College is conservative in tuition increases and generous with institutional grant and scholarship opportunities. Tuition rates at Harper have remained constant over the past four years. The College raised tuition by a small amount ($2 per credit hour) only once during this period.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Resident Tuition per credit hour	$133.50	$133.50	$133.50	$133.50	$135.50

Source: Harper College Website

Harper's annual tuition and fees are consistently lower than the IPEDS Illinois peer group.[24]

Figure 6. Tuition and required fees for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students: Academic years 2018-19 to 2021-22
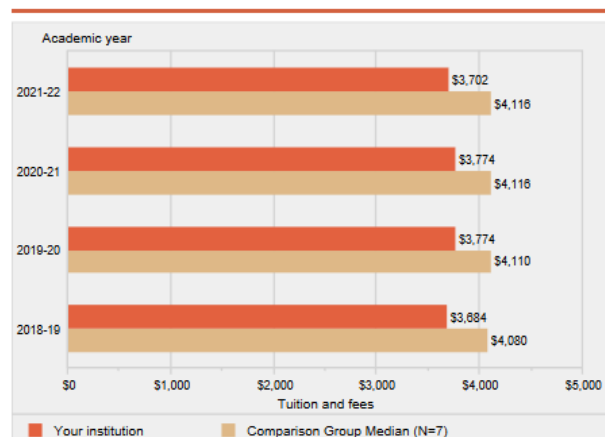
NOTE: The tuition and required fees shown here are the lowest reported from the categories of in-district, in-state, and out-of-state. N is the number of institutions in the comparison group.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Fall 2021, Institutional Characteristics survey component.

IPEDS Comparison Group: College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, Oakton Community College, Triton College

Student responses to the Trellis Financial Wellness survey recognize Harper's efforts to keep tuition low as 66% of respondents indicated they believed their school made tuition more affordable.[25] Residents of the Harper district also acknowledge efforts to keep college affordable and highly rated Harper on every measure including "other support such as financial aid."[26] Harper also maintains low cost of attendance for individuals who work, but do not live in district. Harper's Business EdVantage program allows those who work at an in-district organization to take college credit courses at in-district rates (representing a savings of hundreds of dollars per credit hour).

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[24] National Center for Education Statistics. *2022 IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2022*, p. 4.
[25] Trellis Research, March 2022, *Student Financial Wellness Survey, Fall 2021 Semester Report,* p.4.
[26] 2023 Community Scan Dashboard, Accessed 1/2/2023, Residence Offers and Performance, Programs and Faculty, Performance
https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=124fd4bc-68b3-4328-961d-5a1f683652f9&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7.

In addition to keeping tuition rates low, Harper also aids in keeping student costs down through its Open Education Resources initiative that provides course materials in a no-cost access and use manner. Harper also offers a Technology Loan Program, providing students with the opportunity to borrow Chromebooks, hotspots, and graphic calculators. Additionally, transportation costs for students are addressed through the College's Lyft Rideshare program which provides students with eight discounted rides (to or from Harper) each month. Additionally, Harper worked with the Pace transit system to revive public transportation to the College that includes a route between Pace's Northwest Transportation Center in Schaumburg to the College.

The College provides students a variety of scholarships and grants to aid in financing their education:
- Igniting Paths to Success Scholarship is a full-tuition scholarship (one semester, renewable) and book voucher. Credential seeking students with financial need, enrolled in at least six credit hours, who live or work in Harper's district are eligible for the scholarship. Preference is given to underrepresented students pursuing health careers, career and technical programs, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), or business/entrepreneurship programs. During the 2022-23 academic year 2,600 scholarships were awarded.
- One Million Degrees (OMD) is a scholarship program that is designed to help low-income students succeed academically and professionally. The OMD program provides last dollar scholarships (students pay no tuition), as well as a stipend. OMD scholars also receive academic tutoring and transfer support, mentors, and professional development opportunities.
- Promise Scholarship Program provides every district high school student the opportunity to earn up to two years of Harper tuition if, while in high school, they maintain solid grades, have good attendance, do not repeat classes, graduate on-time, and provide service to their community.
- Finish Line Grants provide up to $1,000 for students near completion to finish their studies. The grants do not need to be repaid and are applied directly to the student's account.
- Overall, $5.8M was awarded in scholarships, grants, and awards by the Harper College Educational Foundation in FY2023 with 1,847 students receiving a scholarship, grant, or award. Students can apply for a variety of scholarships through a single scholarship application increasing accessibility to funds that support their educational needs.

Support for students via financial aid has increased since 2017-18. Large increases were realized for Asian (23.4% increase) and Hispanic students (18.3% increase) from 2017-18 to 2021-22.[27]

Financial Aid*										
	2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
Race/Ethnicity	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	7	0.1%	9	0.2%	17	0.3%	10	0.2%	13	0.2%
Asian	633	11.7%	681	13.3%	759	13.0%	719	13.4%	781	13.8%
Black or African American	447	8.3%	406	7.9%	423	7.2%	367	6.8%	379	6.7%
Hispanic or Latino	1,608	29.8%	1,546	30.2%	1,908	32.7%	1,713	31.9%	1,903	33.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	12	0.2%	9	0.2%	10	0.2%	4	0.1%	6	0.1%
White	2,428	45.0%	2,222	43.4%	2,424	41.5%	2,292	42.6%	2,285	40.4%
Multi-Racial	159	2.9%	143	2.8%	173	3.0%	174	3.2%	175	3.1%
International	12	0.2%	8	0.2%	26	0.4%	18	0.3%	42	0.7%
Unknown	89	1.6%	99	1.9%	96	1.6%	81	1.5%	78	1.4%
Total	5,395	100%	5,123	100%	5,836	100%	5,378	100%	5,662	100%

*Financial Aid includes all forms of financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, and work study) from all sources (federal, state, private, and institutional)

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[27] Harper College *Fact Book 2022-2023,* p. 78.

WEAKNESSES
A weakness is an internal attribute requiring improvement.

Weakness 1: Racial/Ethnic Diversity of Employees

Item Description:
The racial/ethnic diversity of Harper College employees is not yet representative of the community it serves. Additionally, the racial/ethnic diversity of faculty is not representative of the diversity of the student body. While attention has been placed on increasing employee diversity, Harper is challenged to achieve a representative workforce within the College.

Supporting Information:
A similar weakness was identified for Harper in previous SWOT analyses. As described then, research indicates that having a racially and culturally diverse faculty and staff greatly benefits students and the College. Through this diversity, minority students gain mentors and role models, while all students benefit from the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of faculty and staff.[28]

Although a strength of the College is its commitment to efforts around diversity and inclusion, Harper employees do not represent the racial/ethnic diversity of the community or the student body. The College has placed priority on diversifying its staff as indicated by two Institutional Effectiveness Measures (IEMs) related to employee diversity. The first compares Harper employee diversity (race/ethnicity) to the community.

The percentage of diverse employees (22.3%) is not yet representative of the community (37.5%).[29] As the race/ethnicity of employees is reviewed, certain employee groups are less diverse than others, as shown on the following page.[30]

Employee Relative to Community Diversity
● Population ● Employees

Year	Population	Employees
2018	34.8%	17.4%
2019	35.2%	18.9%
2020	35.8%	18.8%
2021	36.4%	18.2%
2022	37.5%	22.3%

Definition: The percentage of racial/ethnic diverse employees relative to the percentage of racial/ethnic diverse community population.[31]

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[28] Harper College *SWOT 2019* p. 16; *2014*, p.11.
[29] Harper College *Fact Book 2022-2023*, p. 8 and 72.
[30] Harper College *Fact Book 2022-2023*, p. 72.
[31] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/4/2024, Diversity, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.

Diversity (Race/Ethnicity) by Employee Group

Employee Group	Diverse		White		Unknown		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Academic Support	2	9.1%	19	86.4%	1	4.5%	22
Administrative	10	29.4%	24	70.6%	0	0.0%	34
Classified	44	27.8%	105	66.5%	9	5.7%	158
Custodial-Maintenance	33	45.8%	38	52.8%	1	1.4%	72
Professional-Technical	62	32.6%	124	65.3%	4	2.1%	190
Supervisory	20	18.3%	85	78.0%	4	3.7%	109
Teaching Faculty (Credit)	92	15.5%	435	73.4%	66	11.1%	593
Teaching Faculty (CE)	15	24.6%	28	45.9%	18	29.5%	61
Other	9	18.4%	25	51.0%	15	30.6%	49

Adapted from 2022-2023 Fact Book, Exhibit 7.7

The second IEM related to employee diversity compares the faculty diversity to the student body diversity. The gap between faculty and student diversity has grown from 31.3% in fall 2017 to 38.7% in fall 2022. Harper's gap at 37.9% as of fall 2021 (the most recent year with comparison data) is greater than the Illinois peer average (32.8%) and the Aspen comparison group average (27.8%).[32]

Diversity Gap Between Faculty and Students *						
Year	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Harper	31.3%	32.2%	32.7%	31.6%	37.9%	38.7%
Peer Average*	31.5%	32.1%	33.3%	31.1%	32.8%	Not Yet Available
Aspen**	26.0%	26.4%	26.6%	26.4%	27.8%	Not Yet Available

*Peer group: College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, Oakton College, Triton College

** Amarillo, Broward, Kennedy-King, Kingsborough, Indian River, Lake Area Technical, Miami Dade, Mississippi Gulf Coast, Odessa, Palo Alto, Pierce, San Antonio, San Jacinto, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe (Aspen comparison group includes colleges identified as prize winners or receiving special recognition.)

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[32] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Diversity, Peer Comparison,
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY
2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9

Weakness 2: Equity Gaps

Item Description:
While success rates have increased across most demographic groups, equity gaps still exist. Many programs and initiatives have been implemented to increase student success and reduce equity gaps. Despite much positive movement, gaps have not been reduced for all groups. Continued efforts to decrease equity gaps remain an institutional priority and are essential to providing equitable opportunities for all students.

Supporting Information:
When examining Harper's Institutional Effectiveness Measures (IEMs), equity gaps can be seen in several areas: gateway course success, persistence, credit accumulation, advancement, and completion. Gaps are most prominent for Black students and exist in several areas for Hispanic, first-generation, and Pell eligible students. Equity gaps were also identified as a weakness in both the 2014 and 2019 SWOT analyses.

Gaps in Gateway Course Success Rate (Five-year average fall 2018 - fall 2022)[33]
In both Gateway English and math, Black and Hispanic students successfully complete coursework (within their first year) at rates much lower than their White counterparts with gaps ranging from 10.8 to 29.7 percentage points. Additionally, first-generation students successfully complete both English and math gateway coursework at rates lower than students who are not first-generation. The same is true for Pell eligible students as compared to non-Pell students.

Ethnicity	Gateway English	Gap	Gateway Math	Gap
Black	53.4%	20.3 pp	34.5%	29.7 pp
Hispanic	62.9%	10.8 pp	51.8%	12.4 pp
White	73.7%		64.2%	
1st Generation	Gateway English	Gap	Gateway Math	Gap
1st Generation	65.7%	8.1 pp	54.6%	11.3 pp
Not 1st Gen	73.8%		65.9%	
Pell Eligibility	Gateway English	Gap	Gateway Math	Gap
Not Pell Eligible	77.7%		71.2%	
Pell Eligible	65.7%	12 pp	54.8%	16.4 pp

Definition – The percent of students who successfully completed a gateway math or English course within their first year.

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[33] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 9/1/2023, Gateway Completion, Equity Gaps
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.

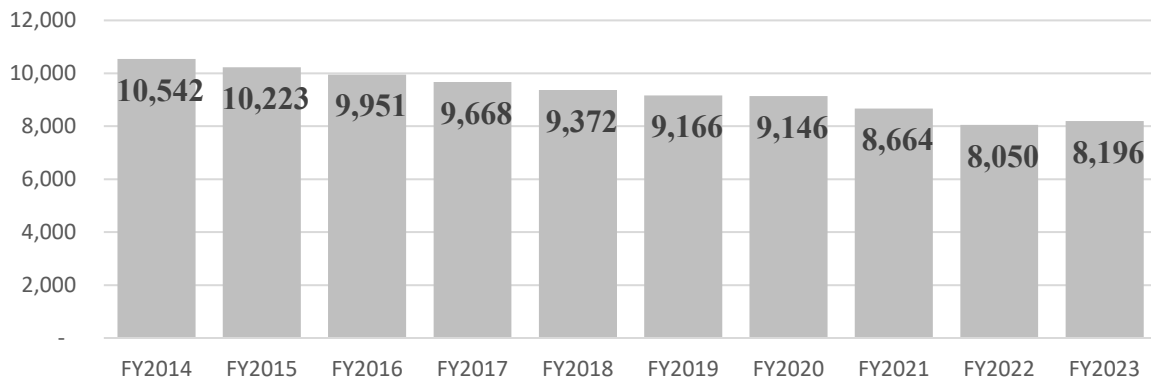**Gaps in Persistence Rate** (Five-year average fall 2018 - fall 2022)[34]
Equity gaps exist in both fall to spring and fall to fall persistence, for Black and Hispanic students. These gaps range from a small gap of 6.4 percentage points (Hispanic, fall to spring) to a large gap of 16.6 percentage points (Black, fall to fall). Smaller gaps exist for first-generation students in fall to spring and fall to fall persistence (6.6 percentage points). Pell eligible students also have lower fall to fall persistence rates than their non-Pell eligible peers, with a gap of 8.2 percentage points.

Ethnicity	Fall-to-Fall	Gap	Fall-to-Spring	Gap
Black	54.3%	16.6 pp	77.1%	7.8 pp
Hispanic	64.5%	6.4 pp	79.5%	5.4 pp
White	70.9%		84.9%	
1st Generation	Fall-to-Fall	Gap	Fall-to-Spring	Gap
1st Generation	65.8%	6.6 pp	80.3%	6.6 pp
Not 1st Gen	72.4%		86.9%	
Pell Eligibility	Fall-to-Fall	Gap		
Not Pell Eligible	75.2%			
Pell Eligible	67%	8.2 pp		

Definition – The percentage of first-time (full- and part-time), credential-seeking students who first enroll at Harper in the given fall semester and either register in the subsequent spring/fall semester or earn a credential.

Gaps in Credit Accumulation (Five-year average fall 2018 - fall 2022)[35]
The largest gaps in credit accumulation occur with full-time students. Full-time Black and Hispanic students accumulate 24 credit hours during their first year at Harper at rates significantly lower than White students (gaps of 25.5 and 16.0 percentage points, respectively). Gaps also exist for part-time Black and Hispanic students, but at lower rates. Both first-generation and Pell eligible students also experience gaps in full-time credit accumulation at 13.0 and 15.5 percentage points, respectively.

Ethnicity	Full-Time	Gap	Part-Time	Gap
Black	28.8%	25.5 pp	34.9%	8.4 pp
Hispanic	38.3%	16.0 pp	32.8%	10.5 pp
White	54.3%		43.3%	
1st Generation	Full-Time	Gap	Part-Time	Gap
1st Generation	43.2%	13.0 pp	36.5%	7.5 pp
Not 1st Gen	56.2%		44.0%	
Pell Eligibility	Full-Time	Gap		
Not Pell Eligible	59.5%			
Pell Eligible	44.0%	15.5 pp		

Definition – Full-time Credit Accumulation: The percentage of first-time, full-time, degree or certificate-seeking students who earned 24 or more credits (including developmental) within the first year.
Definition – Part-time Credit Accumulation: The percentage of first-time, part-time, degree or certificate-seeking students who earned 12 or more credits (including developmental) within the first year.

[34] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 9/1/2023, Persistence, Equity Gaps
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExZTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9
[35] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 9/1/2023, Credit Accumulation, Equity Gaps
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExZTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9

Gaps in Advancement Rate and Graduation Rate (Five-year average 2018 – 2022)[36]
The largest gaps in graduation and advancement exist for Black students, who complete or continue their education at rates much lower than their Hispanic and White counterparts. Gaps in graduation and advancement also exist for Pell eligible students who are less likely to complete or continue their education as compared to non-Pell students (gaps of 9.6 and 11.3 percentage points). Additionally, first-generation students advance at rates lower than those who are not first-generation students (gap of 10.1 percentage points).

Ethnicity	Advancement	Gap	Graduation	Gap
Black	54.6%	20.4 pp	14.7%	26 pp
Hispanic	63.2%	11.8 pp	33.3%	7.4 pp
White	75%		40.7%	
1st Generation	Advancement	Gap		
1st Generation	66.7%	10.1 pp		
Not 1st Gen	76.8%			
Pell Eligibility	Advancement	Gap	Graduation	Gap
Not Pell Eligible	78.1%		45.7%	
Pell Eligible	68.5%	9.6 pp	34.4%	11.3 pp

Definition – Advancement Rate: The percentage of first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who graduated, transferred, or continued to enroll at Harper after three years.
Definition – Graduation Rate: The percentage of first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who completed a credential within three years of enrolling at Harper.

Fiscal Year Success Rate by Student Grades Earned in Credit Courses

An additional commonly examined metric is successful course completion (earning a C or better). During FY2019 – FY2023, Black and Hispanic student success rates lagged the success rates for White students. Gaps for Hispanic students range from 7-11 percentage points, and for Black students from 14-16 percentage points.[37]

In addition to gaps identified in the IEMs, racial equity gaps have been identified in the Path for Success. The "Path" identifies five key momentum points that when completed within the first year, result in higher completion rates. Equity gaps do not exist for those who complete the momentum points but do exist in the completion of these five key momentum points. For new first time in college, credential seeking full-time students (fall 2019), 30% of White students met all first semester and first year momentum indicators in the 'Path for Success'. However, only 22% of Hispanic students and 7% of Black students achieved all five momentum points.[38]

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[36] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 9/1/2023, Advancement and Graduation Rate, Equity Gaps
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.
[37] Grades Dashboard, Accessed 1/11/2024, Student Detail, Fiscal Year, Ethnicity, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=1e0d6496-a4b6-47d6-8746-54024b720f9a&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7&config=eyJjbHVzdGGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWJpLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtaC1wcmltYXJ5LXJlZGlyZWN0LmFuYWx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0LyJ9.
[38] Ad Hoc Cognos Report, produced by Institutional Research, August 2023.

Weakness 3: Enrollment

Item Description:
Harper's credit enrollment has experienced consistent declines from FY2014 – FY2022. Enrollment declines place financial strain on the institution and impact the scope of the College's mission.

Supporting Information:
Apart from a slight bump in FY2023, Harper's credit student enrollment has steadily declined since FY2014. While Harper has experienced enrollment increases in many individual market segments, such as adult education, dual-credit, Hispanic student population, and the apprenticeship program, enrollment has continued to decrease over the past several years.

Annualized Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment

FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
10,542	10,223	9,951	9,668	9,372	9,166	9,146	8,664	8,050	8,196

Definition – Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment: The total credit hours enrolled divided by 30.[39]

Enrollment declines also are seen in the percent of students attending per 1,000 district residents.[40]

Students per 1,000 Population

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Harper	26.4%	26.4%	24.1%	22.9%	24.2%
Peer	23.7%	23.0%	19.5%	19.5%	19.7%
State	22.1%	21.3%	18.4%	18.0%	18.4%
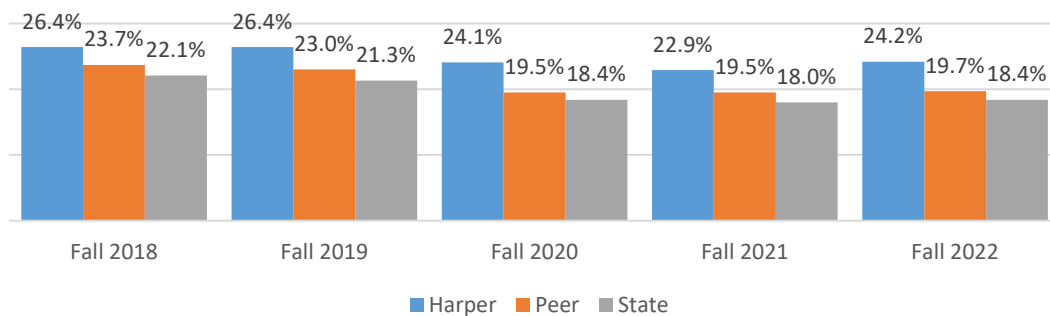
Definition – The proportion of district residents served by Harper College through credit instruction.
**Peers Include College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College, Moraine Valley Community College, Oakton Community College, Triton College

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[39] Five-Year Enrollment Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Enrollment Summary, Fiscal Year
https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId%3D26640187-c213-4c3e-a001-26fc30ca1c08%26autoAuth%3Dtrue%26ctid%3D41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7%26config%3DeyJjbHVzdGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWJpLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtcC1wcmltYXJ5LXJlZGlyZWN0LmFuYWx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0LyJ9=&data=04%7C01%7Ccnovak%40harpercollege.edu%7Cb30069a1d21f40b4bb4208d935bb17e6%7C41791c41ffcb45e49c1d11a6b502a6d7%7C0%7C0%7C637599899935881377%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=p0CPz9mm9gsEqoqb81kuluDvEdJq7kQsfV2H9mv4gX4%3D&reserved=0.
[40] IEM Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Enrollment, Overview
https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYWM4YjMzYWQtMWQ3MC00YjZjLTkyOTctMTVhOTUwYWRjMDA3IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2ItNDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.

In addition to the enrollment charts provided on the previous page, other enrollment data indicate declines:

- Fall headcount decreased by 3.4% from fall 2018 (13,530) to fall 2023 (13,069).[41]
- Annual headcount decreased by 7.3% from FY2018 (23,618) to FY2023 (21,901).[42]
- Fall FTE decreased by 6.9% from fall 2018 (7,740) to fall 2023 (7,208).[43]
- Full-time enrollment of continuing students deceased by 20.2% from fall 2018 (2,223) to fall 2023 (1,774).[44]
- Part-time enrollment of continuing students decreased by 19.6% from fall 2018 (3,897) to fall 2023 (3,132).[45]
- New high school graduate enrollment has decreased by 9.9% from fall 2018 (2,031) to fall 2023 (1,829).[46]
- In every fiscal year since FY2014 Harper has seen a decline in adults (age 25+) enrolling in tuition-bearing (non-adult education) annualized FTE. Over those 10 years, the total decrease has been 42.2%, from 2,543 in FY2014 to 1,470 in FY2023. The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated the decline in tuition-bearing annualized FTE. From FY2014 to FY2020, the average decline was 5.4%. From FY2021 to FY2023, the average decline was 8.2%.[47]
- Applications submitted have increased over the last several years, although the conversion rate has declined by 9%. In fall 2018, 5,773 applications were received with a conversion rate of 55% (3,178).[48] In fall 2023, 6,245 applications were received with a conversion rate of 46.0% (2,872).[49]

[41] Harper College *Fact Book 2023-2024,* Students (Credit), Enrollment Demographic, Years (All), Demographics (Age Groups), Fall Census, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDlhOGIzYWUtZGVmMS00N2VhLWE0YTItNDkzODM3NmI0OWU1IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2It NDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9
[42] Harper College *Fact Book 2023-2024,* Students (Credit), Enrollment Demographics, Year (All), Demographics (Age Group), Annual, https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDlhOGIzYWUtZGVmMS00N2VhLWE0YTItNDkzODM3NmI0OWU1IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2It NDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.
[43] Harper College *Fact Book 2022-2023,* p. 23 and data from Institutional Research pulled 2/15/2024.
[44] Harper College *Fact Book 2023-2024,* Students (Credit), Enrollment Totals, Year (All), Enrollment Status, Continuing Student https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDlhOGIzYWUtZGVmMS00N2VhLWE0YTItNDkzODM3NmI0OWU1IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2It NDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.
[45] Harper College *Fact Book 2023-2024,* Students (Credit), Enrollment Totals, Year (All), Enrollment Status, Continuing Student https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDlhOGIzYWUtZGVmMS00N2VhLWE0YTItNDkzODM3NmI0OWU1IiwidCI6IjQxNzkxYzQxLWZmY2It NDVlNC05YzFkLTExYTZiNTAyYTZkNyIsImMiOjN9.
[46] Current Enrollment Dashboard, Accessed 1/4/2023, New Students, New Student Source, Fall, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=565f0393-c076-4c2f-8abb-eceb520e308b&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d- 11a6b502a6d7&config=eyJjbHVzdGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWJpLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtcmVkaXJlY3QuYW5hbHlzaXMud2luZG93cy5uZXQifQ%3d%3d Wx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0LyJ9.
[47] Cognos report based on Banner data, reported by Institutional Research, Accessed February 16, 2024.
[48] Harper College *SWOT 2019,* p. 18.
[49] Current Enrollment Dashboard, Accessed 1/4/2023, New Students, Applications, Fall, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=565f0393- c076-4c2f-8abb-eceb520e308b&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d- 11a6b502a6d7&config=eyJjbHVzdGVyVXJsIjoiaHR0cHM6Ly93YWJpLXVzLW5vcnRoLWNlbnRyYWwtcmVkaXJlY3QuYW5hbHlzaXMud2luZG93cy5uZXQifQ%3d%3d Wx5c2lzLndpbmRvd3MubmV0LyJ9.

Weakness 4: Culture / Climate Concerns

Item Description:
Although Harper College has experienced improvements in climate and culture overall, when disaggregated, the data reveal lower rates for several groups. Additionally, results of the 2022 Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) identify a need for improvement in the institutional structure climate factor. Similar challenges, such as bureaucracy and hierarchy, were identified in the 2023 administration of the Cultural Values Assessment (CVA).

Supporting Information:
Harper College assesses culture and climate every three years using the CVA and the PACE survey. The CVA has been conducted on this cycle since 2013 and the PACE survey since 2005. The 2023 CVA reports a Cultural Entropy score of 24% (lower score indicates less entropy), classified as "Requiring Focused Efforts" (range 20%-28%).[50] While this is a marked improvement over the 2019 administration (34%; Critical state), the need for attention remains. According to the Barrett Center, Cultural Entropy score reveals the level of organizational dysfunction generated by the negative actions of leaders. As the Cultural Entropy score increases, the level of trust and unity decreases.[51] The Cultural Entropy score on the CVA is calculated by examining all potentially limiting values chosen by participants. Positively, only two potentially limiting values were in the top 10 values, however enough potentially limiting values were reported that collectively there is a negative impact on entropy.

Scores on CVA items are provided in several different breakout reports (number and percent of respondents in parentheses): Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity (N=51; 9%), Non-Heterosexual (N=97; 17%), Non-White (N=116; 21%), and Female (N=351; 63%). The Cultural Entropy score for these groups follows (reported from high to low; lower score being positive and indicating less entropy):
- Non-Heterosexual – 34% (critical state)
- Hispanic or Latino – 28% (requires attention)
- Non-White – 25% (requires attention)
- Female – 23% (requires attention)

Note: The female breakout group is 63% of all participants and is a large driver of the overall score.

Another improvement on the most recent CVA is the overall culture score. The 2023 score is 60 (high fair) and a marked increase from the score of 26 (poor) just four years ago. The overall culture score is a function of three components: alignment, dysfunction (cultural entropy), and balance. A higher score indicates a more positive culture. The current increase is largely a result of the increase in alignment between personal and current culture, and between current and desired culture as well as the improvement in cultural entropy. Collectively, these things led to a higher overall culture score, but there are wide variations among breakout groups.[52] The culture score for the breakout groups follows (from low to high, with a higher score indicating a more positive culture):
- Non-Heterosexual—23 (poor)
- Hispanic or Latino – 42 (low fair)
- Non-White – 53 (mid-fair)
- Female – 61 (good)

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[50] Barrett Values Centre, 2023, Harper College Culture Assessment 2023 Report, p. 3.
[51] https://www.valuescentre.com/blog/the-cultural-entropy-score retrieved on February 27, 2024.
[52] Barrett Values Centre, 2023, Harper College Culture Assessment 2023 Report, p. 2.

The CVA also revealed bureaucracy and hierarchy remain in the top five current culture values.[53] These are potentially limiting factors which impact the overall culture of the organization and may "lead to some element of fear behind how decisions are made or how people are managed."[54] These factors may also impact employee satisfaction, retention, and turnover.

The Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey shows Institutional Structure to be least favorable of the four climate factors with a mean score of 3.56 out of 5 for the 2022 administration.[55] The five lowest scoring items were:

- I am able to influence the direction of this institution (3.12).
- I have the opportunity for advancement within this institution (3.22).
- Administrative processes are clearly defined (3.23).
- Decisions are made at the appropriate level at this institution (3.30).
- This institution is appropriately organized (3.33).

Two custom Harper items from the PACE survey also had a mean score of lower than 3.5 out of 5:[56]

- The purpose for any change is effectively communicated to employees (3.29).
- I believe the institution cares about my well-being (3.45).

Employee feedback also identified the lack of institutional prioritization of sustainability initiatives as negatively impacting the workplace culture. Cited as examples are the lack of a sustainability coordinator since January 2022 and limited large scale sustainability efforts across campus such as composting, recycling, and green office initiatives.

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[53] Barrett Values Centre, 2023, Harper College Culture Assessment 2023 Report, p. 4.
[54] Barrett Values Centre, 2023, Harper College Culture Assessment 2023 Report, p. 3.
[55] PACE Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Results by Climate Category, Institutional Structure, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=c41e1c0a-1fe8-422f-b350-c238a85ab925&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7
[56] PACE Dashboard, Accessed 1/3/2024, Results by Climate Category, Harper Specific, https://app.powerbi.com/reportEmbed?reportId=c41e1c0a-1fe8-422f-b350-c238a85ab925&autoAuth=true&ctid=41791c41-ffcb-45e4-9c1d-11a6b502a6d7

OPPORTUNITIES

An opportunity is an external trend or situation that, if acted upon, may have a positive impact on the institution.

Opportunity 1: Alternative Methods of Providing Education

Item Description:
Increased value is being placed on nontraditional credentials and approaches to education. Students are demanding short-term, low-cost, outcome-based education that is not time- or place-bound. With growing access to technology, the desire to access personalized education from any place at any time is increasing. Traditional education providers must respond to these needs and adapt to current trends to remain relevant providers of education. [57, 58]

Supporting Information:
Nontraditional education options offer learners flexible, affordable, and practical ways to gain skills, knowledge, and a path to a good career.[59] Higher education institutions agree that there's a growing gap between where their business is and where it needs to be in order to be competitive.[60] With fewer students able or willing to manage the cost, structure, and time commitment of a traditional bachelor's degree, more institutions are reevaluating curricula, learning outcomes, and program formats.[61]

Apprenticeships are hands-on learning opportunities that couple paid work experiences with classroom instruction.[62] Apprenticeships bridge education and the workforce, providing excellent opportunities for both employers and students. Apprenticeships are rapidly growing, with more than 3,100 established in 2020, up 73% since 2009.[63] Apprenticeships provide pathways for entry into a variety of fields including healthcare, technology, hospitality, and finance.[64] To broaden the impact of apprenticeships they need to better connect with the higher education system and enable individuals to be both apprentices and college students.[65]

Bootcamps are intensive, short-term programs focused on skills needed for a job. These programs are designed to provide students with hands-on, real-world experience to quickly develop the skills needed for success in their career field.[66] For example, an individual desiring a career in computer coding can earn a certificate in a bootcamp in a few months, as opposed to four years in college at a much higher cost. Salaries are typically good after completion and job placement rates are equal to or

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[57] Arthur Levine, Scott VanPelt, "The Future of Higher Ed Is Occurring at the Margins," October 3, 2021, Accessed September 2023, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/10/04/higher-education-should-prepare-five-new-realities-opinion.

[58] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

[59] Ashley Meyer, "From Bootcamps to Apprenticeships: Exploring Nontraditional Education Methods for IT Jobs," March 30, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.redshiftrecruiting.com/career-blog/from-bootcamps-to-apprenticeships-exploring-nontraditional-education-methods-for-it-jobs#:~:text=Nontraditional%20education%20programs%20such%20as,experiences%2C%20flexible%20scheduling%2C%20and%20the.

[60] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

[61] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

[62] Mark J. Drozdowski, Ed.D "Apprenticeships gaining a Stronger Foothold in Higher Education," November 22, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/2021/09/03/apprenticeships-gaining-stronger-foothold-in-higher-education/.

[63] U.S. Department of Labor, FY2020 Data and Statistics, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/apprenticeship/about/statistics/2020.

[64] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[65] Mark J. Drozdowski, Ed.D "Apprenticeships gaining a Stronger Foothold in Higher Education," November 22, 2021, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/2021/09/03/apprenticeships-gaining-stronger-foothold-in-higher-education/.

[66] Ashley Meyer, "From Bootcamps to Apprenticeships: Exploring Nontraditional Education Methods for IT Jobs," March 30, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.redshiftrecruiting.com/career-blog/from-bootcamps-to-apprenticeships-exploring-nontraditional-education-methods-for-it-jobs#:~:text=Nontraditional%20education%20programs%20such%20as,experiences%2C%20flexible%20scheduling%2C%20and%20the.

greater than rates of top traditional universities.[67] Bootcamps often have partnerships with industry and employers which aids in achieving high placement rates for students. The affordability and accessibility of bootcamps along with their lower cost makes them a great option for students who have limited time or resources to commit to full-time traditional college.[68]

Microcredentials are short, skills-focused recognitions that demonstrate competency in a specific area.[69] Microcredentials help address the growing need for flexibility in education delivery. Microcredentials are a good fit for nontraditional students with limited time for education and the need to swiftly turn learning into earning allowing them to earn a credential, enter the workforce, and return to earn more microcredentials that can eventually lead to a degree.[70]

Microcredentials are becoming increasingly appealing and higher education must determine its role in offering such programs. A recent report by Credential Engine, indicated that more than one million unique credentials were offered in the United States during 2022, but less than half were offered by institutions of higher education.[71] With the right strategy and technology, institutions can leverage microcredentialling to increase enrollment and revenue while meeting the needs of students and the workforce.[72]

Online Education offers an alternative career path to a traditional full-time, on-campus college experience for both young adults and experienced professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted education to a primarily online platform. While most of higher education has returned to traditional in-person learning, the desire for online offerings remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. Online teaching has changed the way people learn and increased accessibility to higher education to a broader audience.[73] Online learning surpasses geographic boundaries and removes location related barriers for students and allows flexibility for students to learn around their schedule. [74, 75] An additional aspect of accessibility is affordability. Institutions can lessen the financial burden of college attendance by working to ensure the cost of earning an online degree is lower than face-to-face programming.[76]

Students want hybrid, hyflex, and online learning options, with 54% of all college students taking courses online in 2022[77]. Faculty and leadership, however, are not always on the same page. As institutions continue to offer hybrid and online programs, issues surrounding equity and accessibility, along with the ability to balance flexibility and the quality of the teaching and learning experience, continue to be in discussion.[78] Higher education institutions can address the demand for online

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[67] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[68] Ashley Meyer, "From Bootcamps to Apprenticeships: Exploring Nontraditional Education Methods for IT Jobs," March 30, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.redshiftrecruiting.com/career-blog/from-bootcamps-to-apprenticeships-exploring-nontraditional-education-methods-for-it-jobs#:~:text=Nontraditional%20education%20programs%20such%20as,experiences%2C%20flexible%20scheduling%2C%20and%20the.

[69] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 6.

[70] Andy Viano, "What's New with Mirocredentials in Higher Education," April 12, 2023, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2023/04/whats-new-microcredentials-higher-education-perfcon.

[71] "Microcredentials and Higher Education: Your Questions, Answered," Blog Ellucian, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.ellucian.com/blog/microcredentials-and-higher-education-your-questions-answered.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[74] Madeline Fitzgerald, "How Online Learning Is Reshaping Higher Education," February 15, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2022-02-15/how-online-learning-is-reshaping-higher-education.

[75] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[76] Madeline Fitzgerald, "How Online Learning Is Reshaping Higher Education," February 15, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2022-02-15/how-online-learning-is-reshaping-higher-education.

[77] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 12.

[78] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

learning by building more durable online learning platforms that meet the needs of learners.[79] The demand for online coursework is also addressed by adding leadership focused on online instruction as well as funding and training for faculty to improve course delivery. Upgrades to technology and renovated learning spaces can aid in supporting online course delivery and learning.[80]

Self-directed learning allows those who struggle with a traditional classroom setting or those who are limited in time or resources alternative opportunities to earn a credential. Self-directed learning requires each individual student to take responsibility for their own learning, using various resources such as books, online supports, online resources, and personal projects, to teach themselves.[81]

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[79] Madeline Fitzgerald, "How Online Learning Is Reshaping Higher Education," February 15, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2022-02-15/how-online-learning-is-reshaping-higher-education.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Madeline Fitzgerald, "How Online Learning Is Reshaping Higher Education," February 15, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2022-02-15/how-online-learning-is-reshaping-higher-education.

Opportunity 2: Strategies to Recruit and Retain Students

Item Description:
To recruit and retain students, colleges must focus on strategies that meet the specific needs of a diverse student population. Students are facing mental health challenges and require basic needs assistance and institutions must work to ensure they offer the supports students need to be successful.

Supporting Information:
Recruitment
To increase student inquiries and applications, institutions need to engage in research related to strategic enrollment management to examine enrollment patterns, analyze qualitative and quantitative data to provide context, use predictive modeling to inform approaches as well as geotargeting based on identified demographic trends.[82] The implementation of high-touch recruitment activities targeting priority populations and program areas is essential to growing enrollment. Further, providing a variety of experiences to connect prospective students with faculty and peers who can provide insights into overcoming barriers is impactful on enrollment.[83]

College and university marketing departments play an essential role in recruitment. A need to focus on reinventing brand and enrollment marketing efforts through innovative promotion and sophisticated campaigns is needed.[84] Departments can also investigate search engine trends to gauge real-time interests which can be incorporated into strategic enrollment management planning and will provide colleges with insights related to program opportunities.[85]

While retention rates appear to have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and enrollment has begun to see an uptick, fewer first-year students are enrolling and the number of traditional aged students are projected to decrease resulting in a shrinking recruitment pool.[86] As such, institutions need to shift their focus to potential students outside the traditional age market and put resources towards retaining current students.[87]

Recruitment of a more diverse cross-section of students will require institutions to meet prospective students on their terms. First-generation students, for example, may need a simple intuitive system to help guide them through the college enrollment process. Colleges can build a digital experience that provides diverse populations of prospective students what they need to navigate this experience.[88]

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, progress in college completion has stalled. Of all students who started college six years ago, nearly 38% have yet to earn any credential.[89] The number of students who began college but left without a credential grew to 39 million in 2020, up nearly 9% from 2018. That represents more than one in five people in the United States over the age of 18, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.[90] Institutions of higher education have an opportunity to recruit from this massive population. To do so, it is recommended that institutions sunset low enrollment programs and invest in increasing digital

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[82] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 6.
[83] Ibid, p. 7.
[84] Trends in Higher Education
[85] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 13.
[86] Ibid, p. 9.
[87] Ibid, p. 9.
[88] Ibid, p. 7.
[89] "National College Completion Progress Rate Stalls," National Student Clearinghouse, Blog, November 29, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/nscblog/national-college-completion-progress-rate-stalls/.
[90] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

offerings to attract new students looking for flexibility in completing a credential.[91] Adult students represent a substantial proportion of the potential enrollment at community colleges. As such, supports that include evening/weekend course offering and support services as well as childcare options are needed to address the needs of adult learners.

In addition to a focused approach on the adult population, including those with some college and no degree[92], colleges are focusing on broadening recruitment strategies to international students to address enrollment challenges. In 2022-23 U.S. higher education institutions hosted more than one million international students, a 12% increase over the previous year and the largest growth in 40 years.[93] International students now represent nearly six percent of the U.S. higher education population. Colleges can also attract non-English speaking adult students with dual-language programs that recognize linguistic diversity and meet the bilingual needs of the workforce.[94]

Additionally, as institutions continue to compete for a decreasing number of students, it becomes increasingly critical to appeal to the priorities and passions of this potential college student population. Environmental sustainability continues to be an important issue for college students with 81% at least somewhat worried about climate change.[95] This concern could become a significant factor in the college choice process. When asked how important it is that their college prioritizes environmental sustainability, 87% of two-year college students indicate this is very or somewhat important.[96]

Retention

At the same time, campuses need to provide a full range of supports to keep students enrolled.[97] One in three currently enrolled undergraduates reported they have considered withdrawing for a semester or more in the past six months.[98] Many factors impact these decisions including finances, mental health, basic needs, connection to the institution, and sense of belonging. Institutions need to ensure they are providing the support and services that will make the biggest difference in retention efforts.[99]

Mental Health Support

Experts often use the term 'crisis' or 'epidemic' to describe the mental health challenges impacting college students. National Center for Education Statistics 2019 data indicated that of the 19.9 million enrolled in institutions of higher learning a large percentage had mental health challenges.[100] These challenges included anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and addiction. According to the American College Health Association, 60% of college students suffer with anxiety and 40% of college students suffer with depression.[101]

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[91] Ibid.
[92] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.
[93] Liam Knox, 'Near Record' International Student Surge, November 13, 2023, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/global/international-students-us/2023/11/13/international-enrollment-rockets-past-pre-pandemic.
[94] https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-08-15-can-u-s-colleges-serve-people-who-primarily-speak-spanish
[95] Diane White Husic, "Reframing sustainability initiatives in higher education," February 14, 2024, Accessed April 30, 2024, https://sustainableearthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s42055-024-00076-9
[96] College Pulse Sustainable Campuses Survey, December 2022, Accessed May 5, 2024, https://insights.collegepulse.com/vault/question/636bbd2c7cec11001967708b?token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJpc3MiOiI2M2EwOTFmYTBlYjQwMDAwMTliOTgxMTMiLCJleHAiOjI1MzU0Njc1MTQ3MzZ9.qsBGPIrm5YTgRmN2qjPvjsvmw4yfsISK8vJKUj_X4Jo&submissionGuid=02c03231-da65-44f5-b859-4aa23076343b
[97] Steve Mintz, "The Forces That Are Shaping the Future of Higher Education, December 22, 2022,Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/forces-are-shaping-future-higher-education.
[98] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 15.
[99] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 9.
[100] Imagine America, "The Deteriorating Mental Health of U.S. College Students: Part I," March 2, 2022, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.imagine-america.org/deteriorating-mental-health-u-s-college-students-part/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Center,suicidal%20ideation%20and%20substance%20abuse.
[101] "American College Health Association National College Health Assessment, Spring 2019 Reference Group Executive Summary," Accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-II_SPRING_2019_US_REFERENCE_GROUP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY.pdf.

The mental health crisis compels colleges and universities to generate innovative approaches, resources, and programs to increase mental health awareness. Colleges are proactively dealing with the issues early by sharing mental health information with students including panel discussions, testimonials, and videos.[102] Providing mental health interventions can positively impact the behavioral and emotional well-being of students.[103] Additionally, offering free mental health screenings can encourage the monitoring of mental health and counter stigma.[104]

Faced with a surge of mental health concerns among students, institutions continue to seek ways to provide acute and preventive services, resources, and activities to meet the needs of learners who may be in distress or at risk of disengaging.[105] Recent results from the Fall 2022 Trellis Student Financial Wellness Survey[106] indicate the following related to student mental health:
- 80% described feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge at least several times in the 14 days prior to taking the survey, with 23% feeling this way nearly every day.
- 62% know the mental health and counseling services available to them, but those with mental health concerns are less aware of these resources, with only 40% of students experiencing depression knowing their school has mental health services available.
- Nearly 66% felt down, depressed, or hopeless in the 14 days prior to taking the survey.
- Nearly 36% indicated they were likely experiencing depression.
- Anxiety is the leading mental health concern among students, with 46% of respondents having screened positive for Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Basic Needs Support
In addition to providing support for mental health challenges, colleges and universities need to provide support and services for students facing lack of basic needs that increase the likelihood that students will withdraw from college. Recent results from the Fall 2022 Trellis Student Financial Wellness Survey[107] indicate the following basic needs concerns for students:
- 10% experienced all three forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year: food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness.
- A majority reported they would have difficulty finding $500 in cash or credit in case of an emergency.
- 48% with financial challenges while enrolled indicated they had difficulty concentrating on schoolwork because of their financial situation.
- More than 40% of parenting students reported receiving medical assistance and food assistance.
- Those with student loans reported experiencing key indicators of distress at higher rates compared to all respondents.
- 26% ran out of money eight or more times during the year.
- 46% experienced food insecurity within the 30 days prior to the survey.
- 47% attending two-year institutions reported housing insecurity.
- 15% experienced homelessness at some point since starting college or within the last year.

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[102] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2024 Data, Insights & Predictions," February 8, 2024, Accessed February 25, 2024, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.
[103] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2024 Data, Insights & Predictions," February 8, 2024, Accessed February 25, 2024, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.
[104] Ibid.
[105] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 15.
[106] Carla Fletcher, Allyson Cornett, Jeff Webster, & Bryan Ashton, "Student Financial Wellness Survey, Fall 2022 Semester Results," May 2023 p. 14.
[107] Ibid, p. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Support for Inclusion and Belonging

A strong link between student belonging and persistence drives institutions to ramp up diverse offerings in student-centered support and success services to ensure every enrollee is mentally, socially, and academically prepared for college life.[108] As mentioned in the section on mental health supports, students report mounting challenges with mental health. Colleges and universities can support students to help reduce anxiety and roadblocks to success and foster a stronger sense of belonging and well-being on campus. These strategies may range from addressing basic needs to counseling and groups that help students find their place with their peers and at the institution.[109] Some institutions choose to focus on maximizing the amount of time students spend on-campus to increase student engagement and sense of belonging that decreases the likelihood of students withdrawing from college.[110]

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[108] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 4
[109] Ibid, p. 15
[110] Ibid, p. 15

Opportunity 3: Job Readiness Training / Meeting Workforce Needs

Item Description:
Education must adapt to the changing workforce to offer relevant programming that meets the needs of employers and provides students with the skills and training needed to succeed in the workforce.

Supporting Information:
The needs of the workforce are rapidly changing. As a result, 80% of employers had difficulty finding the skilled talent needed in 2023.[111] Employers are eager to hire people with any level of training, which frequently includes those without a college degree. Instead, successful applicants bring with them a variety of microcredentials or certificates which prove their competency to potential employers and puts them in a position to quickly earn a job.[112] These opportunities will result in a generation of workers, equipped with marketable credentials, who have discovered that traditional college is not the sole point of entry into the job market.[113]

Forty-five percent of companies plan to remove bachelor's degree requirements from some roles in 2024.[114] Many private sector and government jobs are also dropping the requirement for a college degree in favor of skill sets and microcredentials.[115] Additionally, 76% of employers are more likely to hire a candidate with a specialized certificate.[116] This provides a tremendous opportunity for associate degrees, certificates, and other credentials to be recognized by employers. Colleges can address the skills gap employers are facing by prioritizing programs that help to close the gaps between the number of completed degrees and certificates and the regional employer demand. Examining these data can help to identify underserved professions in which there are not enough graduates to fill empty positions.[117]

Institutions of higher education can focus on developing future employees by conveying the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are in demand in the labor market.[118] Colleges and universities desire to appeal to students' growing expectations for direct and immediate pathways to gainful employment. To do so, they must focus on renewing academic programs to meet market demand for more specific, flexible learning that connects to labor market needs.[119] There is an urgent need to reimagine programs, courses, and curricula to better meet the needs of learners and keep pace with the evolving workforce.[120] Programs that emphasize job readiness or career training are appealing to both students and employers. These programs also help institutions grow enrollment by responding to the demand for targeted skills and flexible scheduling.[121]

Technological advancements, or the Fourth Industrial Revolution, are resulting in rapid advancements in robotics, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies and creating large skills gaps across industries.[122] In addition to providing skills-based learning, institutions of higher

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[111] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 12.
[112] Andy Viano, "What's New with Microcredentials in Higher Education?", April 12, 2023, Accessed February 23, 2024, https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2023/04/whats-new-microcredentials-higher-education-perfcon.
[113] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/
[114] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 12.
[115] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 6.
[116] Ibid, p. 6.
[117] "2024 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2024, p. 13.
[118] "2020 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report Teaching and Learning Edition," Educause, p. 10.
[119] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 5.
[120] "2020 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report Teaching and Learning Edition," Educause, p. 10.
[121] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 6.
[122] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2023 Data, Insights & Predication," July 28, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.

education can focus on reskilling and upskilling both alumni and the community to align with current needs. In fact, 37% of the top twenty skills considered necessary for the average job today are different than the skills needed in 2016, while 20% of skills are entirely new.[123]

The most relevant and useful skills needed for the modern workforce continue to evolve. As a result, competency-based education is gaining traction as a desired way to meet student and workforce skills needs.[124] Additionally, microcredentials provide a flexible way for employees to keep pace with changing skills. Higher education institutions can identify the subjects and competencies that align with existing efforts and resources to develop programs that attract and benefit enrollees and the workforce.[125] Microcredentials rely on partnerships with the workforce to identify specific skillset needs and supply the learning opportunity. The short time period and narrow scope of microcredentials allow institutions to offer timely and relevant training employers need.[126] From creating specific learning that connects directly to labor market needs, to stackable microcredentials, colleges and universities are finding opportunities to create stronger pathways from education to the workforce and gainful employment.[127]

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[123] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 2: The value of the degree undergoes further questioning," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/value-of-college-degree.html.
[124] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2023 Data, Insights & Predication," July 28, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education
[125] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 6.
[126] Ellucian
[127] "2023 Trends in Higher Education," Hanover Research, 2023, p. 6.

THREATS

A threat is an external trend or situation that, if not acted upon, may have a negative impact on the institution.

Threat 1: Competitive Market

Item Description:
Increased competition from education providers outside traditional higher education including corporate and non-profit organizations, the founding of new colleges, and the undertaking of new innovations has increased the need to stay relevant and meet the needs of students and employers. Additionally, the forecasted decline or stagnation in student enrollment for many higher education institutions is a significant challenge that necessitates proactive and strategic planning. Addressing competition for a declining population is crucial for institutions to increase enrollment and remain relevant.

Supporting Information:
An increase in educational providers, strong job market, and enrollment declines continue to create an increasingly competitive market. Federal data shows that while institutions of higher education have been increasing the number of degree or certificate programs between 2012 and 2018, enrollment has continued to decline over the last 10 years.[128, 129] While the number of non-traditional students has increased, the number of traditional college-age students has decreased. "Many states will see a 15% or greater decline in traditional college-age students between 2026 and 2029."[130]

The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted priorities for students after high school. Preparing students for a college education has taken a back seat to helping students develop practical skills. A recent survey by the Strada Education Foundation found that one in three students who earned a bachelor's degree say the education was not worth the cost.[131] Students want affordable, convenient, personalized education, and colleges and universities need to develop strategic, future-forward approaches to attract them to their institutions.[132, 133,134]

From libraires and museums, to corporate media companies, a growing number of educational providers have abandoned traditional higher education practice like time and place-based education, and have created competency-based education, low-cost degrees and focus on the growing populations underrepresented students in traditional higher education. Enrollment at these institutions continues to increase as they offer more accessible or more convenient alternatives than traditional colleges and universities.[135]

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[128] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.
[129] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 1: College enrollment reaches its peak," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/enrollment-rates-in-higher-education.html.
[132] Steven Mintz, "The Forces That Are Shaping the Future of Higher Education," December 22, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/forces-are-shaping-future-higher-education.
[133] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.
[134] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.
[135] Arthur Levine, Scott VanPelt, "The Future of Higher Ed Is Occurring at the Margins," October 3, 2021, Accessed September 2023, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/10/04/higher-education-should-prepare-five-new-realities-opinion.

Various companies in the private sector, including Google and Apple, have removed bachelor's degree requirements in favor of skill-based hiring. Many of these companies now offer in-house certifications, many of which can be earned in six months with students earning $60,000 upon certification.[136]

Increased competition also comes from mega-online providers, such as Southern New Hampshire University where education has been reinvented to meet the needs of working students. Additionally, Western Governors University emphasizes competency-based online education, focus on learning outcomes rather than seat-time, and allows for 24/7 course access, and "just-in-time" instruction.[137] Purdue University Global, a merger between for-profit and nonprofit higher education, offers accessibility and affordability under the tutelage of a brand-name institution.[138]

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are open online courses that are highly focused on specific higher education topics with the benefit of unlimited enrollment and minimal cost. These courses can be accessed anytime, anywhere and by anyone as long as they have internet access.[139] As of January 2023, more than 950 institutions worldwide are providing more than 20,000 MOOCs.[140] The growth of MOOCs is due to their many advantages including low cost, high-quality, flexibility in time and offerings.[141]

Nontraditional partnerships are creating additional new competition. Partnership between higher education and for-profits have increased in areas such as bootcamps, online program management, and workforce credentialing. These partnerships have also led to the absorption of for-profit units by large universities such as Purdue University and the University of Arizona."[142]

New content producers and distributors will continue to impact traditional higher education providers, driving up competition and choice, and driving down cost. These providers are focused on providing educational options that are accessible, convenient, agile, and affordable.[143] This competition, coupled with student demand for low-cost education, competency- or outcome-based education, and education that is not time- or place-based continue to provide a threat for traditional higher education providers as institutional control will decrease and consumers' power will increase.

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[136] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 2: The value of the degree undergoes further questioning," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/value-of-college-degree.html.

[137] Arthur Levine, Scott VanPelt, "The Future of Higher Ed Is Occurring at the Margins," October 3, 2021, Accessed September 2023, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/10/04/higher-education-should-prepare-five-new-realities-opinion.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2023 Data, Insights & Predication," July 28, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.

[140] Broderick Thomas, "Featured Online Programs," Available from: https://oedb.org/open.

[141] Abdullah M. Mutawa, "Perspective Chapter: MOOCS at Higher Education – Current State and Future Trends," March 28, 2023, Accessed February 24, 2024, https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/1129171#B3.

[142] Arthur Levine, Scott VanPelt, "The Future of Higher Ed Is Occurring at the Margins," October 3, 2021, Accessed September 2023, https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/10/04/higher-education-should-prepare-five-new-realities-opinion.

[143] Ibid.

Threat 2: Changing Landscape of Higher Education

Item Description:
The landscape of higher education is evolving and is no longer the exclusive gateway to the job market. This shift is evident in changing societal attitudes towards higher education. The diminishing perceived value of higher education, compounded by escalating costs and the burden of student debt, alongside the emergence of alternative pathways for job and career preparation, will significantly impact the college's capacity to attract and retain students. Today's students are increasingly scrutinizing the return on investment (ROI) of a college degree, exploring alternative avenues, and demanding enhanced alignment of skill development with market needs.

Supporting Information:
Demographic Cliff
Declines in birth rates, also known as the demographic cliff, are projected to lead to a smaller pool of potential college students, leading to a 15% or greater decline in traditional-age colleges students between 2026 and 2029.[144, 145, 146] The number of high school graduates is expected to decline through 2035 due to the lower birth rates occurring during the Great Recession.[147] For those traditional-age students who do pursue higher education, colleges and universities will be faced with a population who have experienced learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[148]

Demographic shifts, such as aging populations, can impact the number of college-aged individuals within a given population. Community colleges have typically been able to boost enrollment by attracting older students. But according to data from the National Center for Educational Statistics the number of students aged 25 and over is also steadily declining and has decreased by 25% from 2011 to 2021.[149]

Another source of college enrollment, international students, has been declining since 2012 when it last experienced an increase.[150] Beginning in 2016, many colleges and universities have seen steady declines in this population.[151]

Demand and Value-Perception Declines
Changing attitudes towards higher education are posing a significant challenge, evident in the demand decline witnessed across colleges. Community colleges experienced a 12.3% enrollment decline between 2019-2021.[152] While the pandemic had an impact on this decline, overall college enrollment has been declining since 2011.[153] This shift stems from a perceived decline in value, with students questioning the return on investment (ROI) of a degree due a disconnect between offered

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[144] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[145] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

[146] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 1: College enrollment reaches its peak," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/enrollment-rates-in-higher-education.html.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Liam Knox, "Is 'Gen P' Ready for College?" Inside Higher Ed, October 23, 2023, Accessed June 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/traditional-age/2023/10/23/assessing-college-readiness-pandemic-generation

[149] National Center for Education Statistics, Accessed February 2024, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/trendgenerator/app/answer/2/8.

[150] Imed Bouchrika, "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2023 Data, Insights & Predication," July 28, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Drozdowski, Mark. "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education | BestColleges." *Www.bestcolleges.com*, June 27, 2022, www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[153] Ibid.

education and desired career outcomes. The Strada Education Foundation report, "The Value of Community Colleges: Recent Students' Motivations and Outcomes," highlights this disconnect, where only 49% of career-seeking community college students felt their education helped them achieve their goals.[154] Similarly, a recent Pew study showed that only half of Americans believe colleges benefit the nation. These beliefs transcend political party lines as both Republicans and Democrats positive feelings about higher education have declined by 12 percentage points over the past decade.[155]

Affordability Concerns
Only half of Americans (53%) think that accessing higher education is affordable.[156] Since 1980, the cost of full-time attendance at a four-year college has risen more than 180%.[157] The amount of college debt in this country contributes to that perception of lack of affordability. Student college debt, adjusted for inflation, has ballooned 317% since 1970. Forty-four million Americans owe more than $1.75 trillion in student loans, with an average debt balance of more than $37,000.[158] University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, as referenced in '*Managing the Demand Cliff*', showed in a recent survey that only one-third of Americans aged 18-29 thought college would be worth it if a student needed a loan to attend.[159]

Because of the cost involved in higher education, Americans see higher education as an investment. A survey from New American cites that 92% of the almost 1,500 adults surveyed, believe colleges need to provide publicly available data on indicators of ROI, including graduates' rates of employment and earnings.[160] Additionally, perceptions on the ROI of college is much lower among first generation college students at 54% versus 74% for continuing generation and those earning less than $48,000 at 53% versus 75% for those earning more.[161]

Skills Gap and Skills-Based Hiring
The traditional higher education model is increasingly facing scrutiny due to a perceived skills gap between graduates and market demands.[162] Alternative options like bootcamps, employer-developed programs, and specific skill certifications are emerging as faster and more affordable paths to career readiness, often offering comparable ROI.[163] In response, there's a growing trend towards skills-based hiring, where employers prioritize demonstrably relevant skills over traditional degree requirements, as exemplified by the recent elimination of degrees requirements for over 90% of state jobs in

[154] "The Value of Community Colleges: Recent Students' Motivations and Outcomes," Strada Education Foundation, September 7, 2023, Accessed February 2024, https://stradaeducation.org/report/the-value-of-community-colleges-recent-students-motivations-and-outcomes/.
[155] Drozdowski, Mark. "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education | BestColleges." Www.bestcolleges.com, June 27, 2022, www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.
[156] Palmer, Kathryn. Americans See College's Value but Question Its Price. Inside Higher Ed, August 9, 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/business/2023/08/09/americans-see-value-college-question-its-price.
[157] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.
[158] Drozdowski, Mark. "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education | BestColleges." Www.bestcolleges.com, June 27 ,2022, www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.
[159] Mathews, Rebecca, et al. Managing the Demand Cliff. Inside Higher Ed, October 16. 2023, www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2023/10/16/managing-other-enrollment-cliff-opinion.
[160] Palmer, Kathryn. Americans See College's Value but Question Its Price. Inside Higher Ed, August 9, 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/business/2023/08/09/americans-see-value-college-question-its-price.
[161] The Value of Community Colleges: Recent Students' Motivations and Outcomes. Strada Education Foundation, September 7, 2023, stradaeducation.org/report/the-value-of-community-colleges-recent-students-motivations-and-outcomes/.
[162] Ibid
[163] Drozdowski, Mark. "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education | BestColleges." Www.bestcolleges.com, June 27, 2022, www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

Massachusetts.[164] Similarly, Google considers having one of their career certificates as equal to having a four-year college degree in the hiring process.[165]

Political Landscape

The political landscape heavily influences the funding and budgetary allocations for higher education. Changes in government priorities and policies can impact the amount of public funding available to universities and colleges.[166] Political decisions regarding education budgets can affect tuition fees, student financial aid, and the overall accessibility of higher education.[167, 168]

Government policies and legislation also play a crucial role in shaping higher education. Changes in laws related to student loans, accreditation, research funding, and affirmative action can have a profound impact on universities and their students.[169, 170] Political ideologies often shape education policies, including debates over the role of government in higher education, the balance between public and private institutions, and the emphasis on vocational versus liberal arts education.

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[164] Thier, Jane. Massachusetts Governor Leans into the Skills-Based Hiring Revolution by Axing Degree Requirements for State Jobs. The Private Sector Is up Next. Fortune, 26 Jan. 2024, fortune.com/2024/01/26/maura-healey-massachusetts-skills-based-hiring-no-college-degree-required/. Accessed February 1, 2024.

[165] Drozdowski, Mark. "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education | Best Colleges." Www.bestcolleges.com, June 27, 2022, www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[166] Katherine Knott, "Higher Education in Political Crosshairs as 2024 Election Heats Up," January 16, 2024, Accessed February 1, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2024/01/16/enormous-stakes-higher-education-2024-election.

[167] Katherine Knott, "Higher Education in Political Crosshairs as 2024 Election Heats Up," January 16, 2024, Accessed February 1, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2024/01/16/enormous-stakes-higher-education-2024-election.

[168] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/

[169] Ibid.

[170] Katherine Knott, "Higher Education in Political Crosshairs as 2024 Election Heats Up," January 16, 2024, Accessed February 1, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2024/01/16/enormous-stakes-higher-education-2024-election.

Threat 3: Student Mental Health Crisis

Item Description:
Mental health challenges among college students are reaching alarming levels and often referred to as a 'crisis' or 'epidemic.'[171] Ignoring this crisis can lead to increased student withdrawal, lower graduation rates, overall lower enrollment, and a less vibrant learning environment.[172]

Supporting Documentation:
More than 60% of college students met the criteria for one or more mental health conditions in 2020-2021, representing a nearly 50% increase since 2013.[173] This trend threatens student well-being, academic success, and the overall health of college communities.

Prevalence of Mental Health Challenges
Multiple studies show a high rate of anxiety and depression among college students. In separate surveys developed by Harvard's Graduate School of Education and the University of Michigan, both show that at least 36% of college students suffer from anxiety, and rates of depression range from 29% to 41%.[174, 175] The research from the University of Michigan's Healthy Minds Survey also shows that these rates have doubled over the past decade.[176] Other sources cite even higher rates of college student anxiety. The American College Health Association report that 60% of college student suffer from anxiety and their data about the prevalence of student depression is aligned with other surveys showing that 40% suffer from depression.[177] Additionally, the Harvard study shows that 34% of college students feel lonely, 44% feel unimportant, and 45% have a general sense of things falling apart.[178]

Impact of Mental Health Challenges
Mental health challenges and chronic stress significantly impact academic success. Over 44% of associate degree students considered dropping out in the past six months, citing emotional stress and personal mental health as the top reasons.[179] These factors now rank ahead of cost, course difficulty or physical health for reasons for withdrawal.[180] Similarly, three out of four students report stress negatively affecting their learning and focus.[181]

Mental Health Barriers to Higher Education
Emotional stress and mental health concerns also impede access to higher education. In fact, 63% of never-enrolled adults say emotional stress is a very (31%) or moderately (32%) important reason they

[171] Bouchrika, Imed. "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2020/2021 Data, Insights & Predictions." Research.com, July 28, 2023, research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.
[172] "Ahead of the Curve: Navigating 10 Key Imperatives for Community Colleges Across the Next Decade". EAB, 2024.
[173] 2023 Trends in Higher Education. Hanover Research, 2023, www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/2023-trends-in-higher-education. Accessed 31 Jan. 2024.
[174] Mowreader, Ashley. "Young People Feel Meaningless. How Can Higher Ed Help?" *Inside Higher Ed*, November 3, 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/11/03/three-strategies-prevent-young-adult-mental-health#:~:text=Cultivate%20meaning%20and%20purpose.&text=Older%20adults%20can%20cultivate%20meaningful. Accessed January 31, 2024.
[175] The Healthy Minds Network, University of Michigan, healthymindsnetwork.org/data/. Accessed January 31, 2024.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Bouchrika, Imed. "11 Top Trends in Higher Education: 2020/2021 Data, Insights & Predictions." Research.com, July 28, 2023, research.com/education/trends-in-higher-education.
[178] Mowreader, Ashley. "Young People Feel Meaningless. How Can Higher Ed Help?" *Inside Higher Ed*, 3 November 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/11/03/three-strategies-prevent-young-adult-mental-health#:~:text=Cultivate%20meaning%20and%20purpose.&text=Older%20adults%20can%20cultivate%20meaningful. Accessed January 31, 2024.
[179] "Stressed out and Stopping Out: The Mental Health Crisis in Higher Education." Gallup / Lumina, March 21. 2023.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Flaherty, Colleen. "Student Health and Wellness Survey: The Top 10 Takeaways." Inside Higher Ed, August 7, 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/08/07/10-takeaways-college-student-health-and-wellness.

are not currently enrolled, and 55% say the same about personal mental health reasons.[182] A similar trend is seen with high school students. Among those who indicate they are not planning to pursue higher education after high school graduation, the top reason cited is 'not mentally ready,' which is even ranked above affordability and value.[183]

Student Demand for Mental Health Support
Recognizing the importance of mental health support, prospective students are increasingly prioritizing mental health care options when choosing colleges. Inside Higher Ed's 2023 Student Voice survey shows that 29% of students consider mental health support the top wellness factor influencing their college choice.[184]

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[182] "Stressed out and Stopping Out: The Mental Health Crisis in Higher Education." Gallup / Lumina, March 21, 2023.

[183] Donaher (Project Director), Lizzy. *Recruiting "Gen P" 6 Insights into How the Pandemic Has Altered College Search Behavior from EAB's Survey of 20,000+ Students*. EAB, 2023.

[184] Flaherty, Colleen. "Student Health and Wellness Survey: The Top 10 Takeaways." Inside Higher Ed, August 7, 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/08/07/10-takeaways-college-student-health-and-wellness.

Threat 4: "Great Resignation" and Migration

<u>Item Description</u>:
Institutions of higher education have experienced significant challenges in the retention and recruitment of employees. Declining budgets, unsupportive and/or unhealthy work environments, and the desire for remote or hybrid work, are reasons why staff, administrators, and faculty are looking outside of education for employment.[185]

<u>Supporting Information</u>:
Both the economy and political interference have impacted tenured faculty at colleges and universities. Given the education required for most tenure-track positions, pay is relatively low, and more Ph.D. recipients are opting for opportunities outside of higher education.[186] In 2023, there was a 2.3% decrease in salaries of tenure-track faculty. Many state legislators have been critical of tenure, citing it as an outdated practice. Additionally, adjunct faculty allow for greater flexibility and lower cost than full-time, tenured faculty.[187] As a result, colleges and universities have continued to shift from tenured positions to contingent faculty and part-time faculty that now account for 40% of the academic workforce.[188] Many faculty are choosing to work in the private sector which provides a variety of opportunities for them to make an impact in their field with access to funding and less bureaucracy.[189]

As remote and hybrid work opportunities have increased, so has job market competition. Institutions of higher education that have not embraced hybrid or remote work for their employees have had trouble filling vacant positions.[190] While many departments at an institution may offer flexible scheduling, this may not be offered for every department which could hurt employee retention and engagement. Of employees seeking new work opportunities, 27% cite primary or completely remote work as their reason for doing so, and 41% prefer a hybrid working option.[191]

Employees in leadership and administrative roles have also been leaving the educational workforce. Retirements and resignations due to burnout and unhealthy or unsupportive work environments have contributed to this trend. In addition, employees hired to fill these roles may have less knowledge and experience or the employees who left are not being replaced. This increases the workload on other employees or leads to outsourcing and contracting outside of the institution.[192]

Additionally, gaps in leadership and succession planning impedes ability to develop talent strategies and retain employees. The overall percentage of college and university employees looking to switch jobs is greater than that of those likely to stay.[193] "More than three-quarters of higher education

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[185] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

[186] Mark Drozdowski, "7 Challenges Threatening the Future of Higher Education," May 3, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/7-challenges-threatening-future-of-higher-education/.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 4: Talent management becomes a strategy," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/talent-management-in-higher-education.html.

[190] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

[191] Apryl Motley, "Trends for Higher Education," spring 2023, The Society for College and University Planning, p. 17.

[192] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

[193] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 4: Talent management becomes a strategy," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/talent-management-in-higher-education.html.

employees think the sector is a less appealing place to work than it was a year ago."[194] While it is important to ensure the student experience is of primary focus, in order to attract and retain quality faculty and staff, attention is needed on the employee experience.

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[194] Cole Clark, Megan Cluver, Jeffrey Selingo, "Trend No. 4: Talent management becomes a strategy," May 17, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/articles-on-higher-education/talent-management-in-higher-education.html.

Threat 5: Changing Technology Landscape

Item Description:
Enhancing technological advancement in higher education is crucial for institutions to provide high-quality education, improve student outcomes, and remain competitive in a rapidly changing landscape. The largest threats to technological advancement include data security, aging infrastructure, resistance/challenges to digital transformation, and artificial intelligence.

Supporting Documentation

Cybersecurity

Privacy and cybersecurity are among the top 10 issues facing higher education.[195] Due to the wealth of sensitive information, ranging from personal and financial data of students and staff to valuable research data, higher education as an industry experienced a 43% increase in cyber-attacks in 2022 compared to 2021.[196] The cybersecurity threat landscape is continuously changing, with attackers developing new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) at a rapid pace. The range of threats are varied and includes increased sophistication of attackers, rapidly changing types of threats, phishing and social engineering, and the open academic environment.[197] Higher education institutions must respond with enhanced data security and protection against threats as well as an informed workforce with appropriate expertise and competencies to support the organization's needs.[198]

Aging Infrastructure

Much of the inefficiency in higher education is a result of the use of antiquated (legacy) systems, outdated technology, and the lack of coordination of multiple systems.[199, 200] Approximately two-thirds of higher education leaders indicate that institutional data is somewhat or completely siloed and this lack of coordination across systems can lead to an increase in manual processes and decrease in operational optimization.[201] In addition, as colleges and universities become more data informed to improve student success, integrated systems become increasingly vital.[202]

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation in higher education refers to the integration and adoption of digital technologies and processes to enhance teaching, learning, administration, and overall campus operations. While digital transformation in higher education is an ongoing process, the degree to which digital daily operations have been adopted is the lowest among all industries with only 5% of higher education leaders indicating that at least half of operations are digitized.[203] An institution's failure to digitally evolve hinders its efficiency and security.

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[195] Ashley Caron, Nicole Muscanell, "2023 Higher Education Trend Watch," October 31, 2022, Accessed September 2023, https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/higher-education-trend-watch/2023.

[196] Apryl Motley, "Trends for Higher Education," spring 2023, The Society for College and University Planning, p. 12.

[197] Ibid, p. 12.

[198] Nicole Muscanell, "The Cybersecurity and Privacy Workfor5ce in Higher Education, 2023, Accessed February 21, 2024 ,https://www.educause.edu/ecar/research-publications/2023/the-cybersecurity-and-privacy-workforce-in-higher-education/introduction-and-key-findings.

[199] Wendy Kilgore, Ph.D., "60-Second Survey Results: October 2023, Operational efficiency in academic operations," The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, p. 10.

[200] "The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

[201] Ibid.

[202] "Reimagining the Role of Technology in Higher Education, A supplement to the National Education Technology Plan, January 2017, p. 46."

[203] T The Future of Higher Education: 5 Trends to Watch," Blog, March 2, 2023, Accessed September 2023, https://blog.workday.com/en-us/2023/future-higher-education-5-trends-watch.html#:~:text=From.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI in higher education brings both opportunities and challenges. The potential challenges are discussed in this section. Generative AI is the most used artificial intelligence in higher education and is define as AI that learns from existing information to create new and relevant content.[204] Data indicate that students are already using generative AI to help craft essays and complete assignments however, inherent risks are present with the use of generative AI. These risks include unreliable accuracy, biased outputs, fraud, and a lack of data governance.[205] Additionally, generative AI can impact the learning environment and depersonalize interaction between students and faculty and has the possibility of restricting intellectual growth in students.[206] Institutions of higher education must find ways to capitalize on the benefits of generative AI while addressing its' inherent risks.

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[204] "Benefits, Challenges, and Sample Use Case of Artificial Intelligence in Higher," Hanover Research, September 2023, p. 3.
[205] Gartner Experts Answer the Top Generative AI Questions for Your Enterprise, Accessed June 2024 https://www.gartner.com/en/topics/generative-ai#q5.
[206] "Benefits, Challenges, and Sample Use Case of Artificial Intelligence in Higher," Hanover Research, September 2023, p. 3.