



PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

February 2025

Dear Harper College Community:

February was filled with engaging activities to advance our mission at the local, state and national levels! As I shared with faculty, staff and students [last week](#), we have been working diligently to navigate the numerous changes and policy shifts coming from the federal government over the past few weeks. I know this is causing anxiety and concerns for many in our college community. I assure you that the Executive Cabinet and I are staying on top of the news and working with our colleagues, legal experts and national associations to understand the implications and take action as needed. Earlier this month, I attended the Association of Community College Trustees National Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C., along with members of our Board of Trustees. These advocacy efforts are important now more than ever as we help our elected officials understand the importance of federal funding and programs like Pell and Perkins to help us achieve our mission. I also attended a virtual meeting with Deputy Governor Martin Torres and my fellow community college presidents to discuss the recent "Dear Colleague" letter. I will continue to work with my colleagues to advocate for our collective needs as a community college system.

I attended Governor JB Pritzker's State of the State address and celebrated the Governor's announcement of his support for Illinois becoming the 25th state to offer community college baccalaureate (CCB) degrees. Through my many years in the Florida college community system, I know firsthand the importance of offering this pathway to bachelor's degrees to students who can't easily access the traditional path for a variety of reasons including cost, travel or other challenges. Harper has been on the forefront of advocacy for community college bachelor's degrees in Illinois and this time is no different as one of our state representatives, Tracy Katz Muhl, is sponsoring the bill in the House. We are working closely with our fellow community colleges in a coordinated effort to help our communities, elected officials and business partners understand the benefits of CCBs. While this may be a difficult endeavor, it will be worth it to ensure improved career pathways for all students, especially our adult learners and prospective students who aren't currently pursuing a bachelor's degree for various reasons including geographical barriers.

Each February, I await news of our three-year graduation rate from the Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness team. I'm happy to report that our improvement continues as Harper's official three-year graduation rate for the fall 2021 cohort of first-time, full-time, credential-seeking students is confirmed at 47.6%, surpassing the previous highest rate from the fall 2020 cohort by two percentage points. The targeted scaled interventions that we have implemented continue to pay dividends for our students as they are succeeding at higher rates. Outcomes like this were driven in large part by our last strategic plan. I look forward to our Strategic Planning conference later this week as we develop our next plan and continue transforming lives and improving our student success outcomes.

Finally, our celebration of [Black History Month](#) has included outstanding events such as our third Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration with over 150 attendees, which was hosted by our Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Harper's History Department sponsored two events covering Black inventors, the Great Migration, Civil Rights-era music and quilt designs that guided participants in the Underground Railroad. Other events included Black Futures: Inspiration to Innovation in Emerging Technologies and Black Entrepreneurship



Day. Harper's Library also featured a Black History Month Display. I hope you were inspired as you participated in the excellent programming offered by our teams!



Academic Updates

By the Numbers

- Academy for Teaching Excellence
 - The Academy for Teaching Excellence has been working diligently with Harper faculty over the past year to support the transition from Blackboard Original to Blackboard Ultra. To date:
 - 329 spring 2025 courses are being taught in the Ultra format.
 - 200 faculty are enrolled in the self-paced Ultra Teaching Essentials online course.
 - More than 200 faculty will be teaching at least one course in Ultra this semester.
 - More information can be found [here](#).
- Advising Services
 - Fall 2024 Cumulative Appointment/Phone Data
 - Our collective Advising Services offices made a total of 32,878 phone calls and held a total of 8,148 appointments in the fall 2024 semester.
 - Out of 4,808 Starfish flags that were raised by faculty, staff, and students, our advisors had an average clear rate of 98%.
 - Over 7,200 Starfish “Kudos” were sent to students to reinforce and provide proactive support for their progress, and to engage them on staying on track with their Path for Success at Harper.
 - Raise Your Hand Launch Updates
 - In May 2024, we implemented a soft launch of a student-initiated request for help flag that lives in the student portal appearing in the form of an “I need help” button. It is a student-initiated request for help that is an extension to the referral and communication process and creates a safe space to advocate for help.
 - Since the launch, 725 student-initiated requests have been submitted by students.
 - Our One Stop office had over 583 requests for help, with flags focused on help with registration, paying for college, or connection with other departments.
 - 95 requests for help were submitted to Advising Services for help with courses and program of study.
- Counseling Services
 - Counseling Services held 39 appointments in the month of January to support student mental health and academic success.
- Enrollment Services
 - So far in FY25, the Testing Center has delivered 3,644 tests to students, which is a 10% increase compared to this point in FY24. Five hundred ninety-three of those tests were delivered during the week of final exams and the preceding week – a 26% increase compared to 2023. This continues the trend of year-over-year increases of the Testing Center’s services since the pandemic.
 - In January, the CRM provided support through multiple communication channels, ensuring efficient assistance for students and stakeholders. Below is a summary of the activities during this period:
 - 4,581 phone calls were logged.
 - 1,171 in-person visits were recorded.
 - 7,038 inquiries were submitted via email and information forms.
 - 2,023 chat interactions took place, with chatbots handling 56% of the conversations.

- Harper Wellness
 - Harper Wellness collaborated with Campus Recreation and Kinesiology students to provide free fitness assessments to 30 employees, students and community members where participants were able to receive baseline health and wellness data.
- Hawks Care
 - In the month of January, 186 students accessed the food pantry; 62 students met with staff; 40 students received dinners on-the-go; five students visited the career closet.
 - In January, the Lyft Program served 194 unique riders, and 422 rides were completed.
- Resources for Learning
 - Library Building Traffic
 - In January, 12,894 patrons visited the library.
 - Semester Loan Technology
 - In January, the library checked out 252 Library Chromebooks, 356 graphing calculators, and 134 Wi-Fi hotspots to students.
 - Adult Education Development (AED) Chromebook Distributions
 - In January, the library facilitated the checkout of 125 AED Chromebooks for AED students at the main campus, Learning and Career Center (LCC), and Education and Work Center (EWC) locations.
 - Academic Support Center (ASC)
 - Through week four of the spring 2025 semester:
 - The Academic Support Center has had over 2,500 tutoring visits. This is an increase of over 700 visits from the same time in spring 2024.
 - Supplemental Instruction has almost doubled the number of visits from the same time in fall 2024 – from 191 in fall 2024 to 362 in spring 2025.
 - Since the beginning of the semester, more in-person tutoring hours have been added to meet student demand in math, chemistry, computers, and accounting.

Events

- Academy for Teaching Excellence
 - TechXpo 2025: The Academy for Teaching Excellence is hosting an engaging event showcasing AI innovations, emerging technologies, and practical ideas that faculty can implement right away.
 - Friday, February 28, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
 - On campus in the Academy (Building F, Room F319) and virtually via Webex. (Webex session will start at 9:30 a.m.).
 - 0.3 CEUs will be available.
 - Registration and more information can be found [here](#).
- Harper Wellness
 - In January, Harper Wellness hosted BINGO with the Buddy System to welcome students back to campus. Over 55 students participated and were able to win a prize.
 - Last month, Harper Wellness hosted a Speed Friending event where students were able to socialize and meet other Harper students through a series of questions and activities. Over 35 students participated in the event.
- Hawks Care
 - In January, Hawks Care wrapped up the Warm & Fuzzy Collection in partnership with the Center for New Students (CNSO), and the gracious donations received throughout the drive were picked up by students who needed them. Thank you to everyone who purchased or hand-made items - each item was greatly appreciated!



- Start Smart & Learning Communities
 - The Interdisciplinary Programs Office is planning upcoming professional development opportunities for faculty.
 - On March 5, we will host a Share and Learn event for faculty teaching Learning Communities to discuss strategies for fostering student connections and belonging.
 - On March 14, we will host the annual Spring Start Smart training to engage in discussion with Start Smart faculty on relevant topics including updates on resources available to support our students, how AI impacts our students, and enrollment strategies.
 - The Interdisciplinary Programs Office will participate in several upcoming events to share with students the benefits of taking learning community courses. This includes engaging with prospective students at Areas of Interest (Aoi) Experience Night on March 19 and with current students at the Resources to the Rescue event on March 17.

- Student Engagement
 - Student Engagement and Harper Dining collaborated to bring what is hoped to be the first of many coffeehouse concerts to the Building D Starbucks. Over fifty students enjoyed the musical talents of Angie K, a former contestant on The Voice and current Country Music Television (CMT) star. Angie shared her original songs and took multilingual requests from Harper students, including a duet with a Harper student for “Pink Pony Club” by Chappell Roan. Harper Dining offered students in attendance 25% off a Starbucks beverage of their choice for the event.
 - The Black Student Union kicked off the semester with its annual *Meet the Black Faculty and Staff* event last month, in the Building D Rotunda. Open to all, this gathering provided students, faculty, and staff a meaningful opportunity to connect through thoughtful conversations, shared experiences, and refreshments. The Black Student Union Executive Board emphasized the club’s role in fostering community, representation, and advocacy, while faculty and staff engaged with students, offering insights and encouragement. Their presence reinforced a strong sense of belonging, leaving a lasting impact on the Harper community.
 - The Center for Student Veterans and Military Connected Students hosted a spring open house in January, to welcome new and returning students to the Center. Additionally, the open house featured on-campus Department of Veterans Affairs staff from the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) program and from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to speak with students regarding their individual benefits and access to mental health and academic support.

Highlights

- Division/Program Highlights
 - Business and Social Science
 - This month, the Early Childhood Education department welcomed 50 students from Schaumburg High School. These students are considering education-related career paths. ECE Support Specialist Lauri Marmorstone created an exciting morning including a campus tour, info session on education pathways, Lab School interactive tour and a mini college class session. This is our third high school visit this year with several more in the works for later in the spring.
 - Career and Technical Programs
 - Siser North America visited the Graphic Arts Design and Technology (GRA) department to donate a Romeo and Juliet cutting machine, marking the first partnership of its kind with a community college. VP of Product Development Dave Wheatley and Patrick Boyle led a demonstration and presentation, showcasing the machine's capabilities to GRA students.

- Counseling Services
 - In January, Counseling Services welcomed Andrew Shelton, LCSW, and Elizabeth Dunn, LCPC, to the team. They will provide clinical mental health services to support student mental health and well-being.

- Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
 - Honors and PTK students volunteered at Feed My Starving Children in January and at the Elgin Crisis Center this month.
 - In January and February, the Honors Program sponsored a clothing drive on Harper's campus, with all donations going to WINGS.
 - PTK students completed and submitted a College Project and an Honors in Action Project, thus maintaining our status as a five-star chapter.
 - The Honors in Action project involved:
 - Researching the benefits of community narratives and digital storytelling.
 - Applying this research at Harper by conducting interviews with students, staff, faculty, and administrators about life at the college, which were posted to the Honors/PTK Instagram.
 - The College Project involved:
 - Organizing an outreach event that advertised Honors and PTK as a welcoming community for incoming Harper students.
 - Laying the groundwork for a future mentorship program for new Honors students.

- Student Highlights
 - Business and Social Science
 - Harper College's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Certificate program is helping graduates find success in a growing field, as demonstrated by alumna Carolina Szoepé, who now works as a GIS project assistant for the city of Aurora.
 - Harper's GIS program equips students with valuable skills for a dynamic industry. The 18-credit hour academic program has graduated 29 students to date, with about 10 more expected to complete the certificate this academic year.
 - See more details here: [Harper's GIS program graduates find success in an expanding field: Harper College](#)

 - Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
 - Yosephine Lee and Thomas Scheele were named as members of the PTK All-Illinois Academic Team. They will be recognized at a banquet in Springfield this April.

Advancement

- Harper College Alumni Relations is engaging alumni, faculty/staff, and students through events:
 - The inaugural Business and Social Science Alumni Reception was held this month. The guest list included alumni from the division, faculty, and college/division leadership.
 - The third annual Career Connections with Harper Alumni, hosted in partnership with Student Engagement and the Job Placement Resource Center, will be held on March 5 and 6. This program, open to all Harper students, features alumni speakers from a variety of careers and backgrounds in panel discussion and offers professional development opportunities such as a Professional Leadership Dinner with Harper College Alumni.
 - On March 20, the annual Alumni and Friends Social will be hosted at Top Golf. Alumni will have the opportunity to connect with fellow alumni and Harper College.

- As of January 31, the Foundation has awarded \$1,940,635 in scholarship funding to 1,038 students. Sixty-three students attended the spring scholarship orientations. During the sessions, students learned about the impact of philanthropy, received a presentation from the Director of Alumni Relations on alumni events and staying connected, and reviewed their scholarship requirements.
- As of January 31, the Foundation is 84% to its goal for donor retention. Stewardship activities such as 142 scholarship recipients sending Valentine's Day notes to their donors; and thank you notes, calls, and videos from board members and students to donors continue to play a large role in our stewardship plan.
- The HOPE Giving Circle "10 for 10" campaign achieved its goal of raising additional funds to provide ten \$10,000 scholarships during the 2025-2026 academic year in honor of HOPE's 10th anniversary. Since its inception, the scholarship has provided \$320,000 in funding to 32 students.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- The Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Harper Wellness co-sponsored a "Shining Light on Hope and Justice" campaign. Hope Stations were available for colleagues and students to acknowledge the positive contributions of others on campus. Additionally, posters that highlighted quotes from activists, leaders and community members who advocated for positive change were displayed in Buildings A, D, M and Avante.
- The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sponsored our third Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration with over 150 attendees. Infinite Hope was the theme for this year's celebration. Highlights included the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Service Award was presented to Michelle Mabry; Professor of Sociology at Northwestern University Dr. Mary Pattillo served as our keynote speaker; the audience enjoyed a performance by Harper's student dance group Triple H, and LEAD Faculty Fellow Kirby Fellis, Department of Music, led creative renditions of traditional musical selections. Our sincere thanks to all those that attended, volunteered, and participated in the program.
- The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is delighted to share that nine of our 11 Guiding Learners to Intentionally Develop Efficacy (GLIDE) mentors achieved a 3.0 GPA or higher for the fall semester and 21 of our 40 mentees achieved a 3.0 GPA or higher! Special thanks to our colleagues that continue to support GLIDE students both inside and outside of the classroom. Earlier this month, the GLIDE academic session featured our very own LEAD Faculty Fellows, Martinez E-B Garcias and Ashley Palmer. They provided inspirational words, sharing their journeys and experiences as professionals in higher education.

External Affairs

Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement, and/or helped facilitate nine articles that appeared in local and national media publications. Media mentions include:
 - *Community College Daily*, *Diverse Issues in Education*, *University Business* and other publications reported on Achieving the Dream's release that highlighted Harper's Path for Success initiative.
 - The *Illinois Business Journal*, the Illinois Community College Trustees Association listserv and Sen. Dick Durbin's website posted a release about Durbin and Sen. Tammy Duckworth meeting in Washington, D.C. with representatives from Harper as part of a delegation organized by the ICCTA.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published an article about successful alumni from Harper's Geographic Information Systems Program.



- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran stories previewing Harper's Black History Month events, with a focus on programming sponsored by the History Department.
- *Forbes* magazine, *NewsPub.live*, the *Peoria Journal Star* and other publications reported that *Forbes* named Harper one of the best employers in the U.S.
- The *Daily Herald*, WAND-TV and other Illinois media sources reported about Harper and other Illinois community colleges receiving grant funds to support students' mental health.
- Columbia College's website profiled Harper alum Katherine Iorio, a news producer at CNN who recently won an Emmy Award for her work on breaking news coverage.
- *Journal & Topics* newspapers and *Spot On Illinois* previewed the upcoming Harper Board of Trustees election and profiled the candidates.
- The *Daily Herald* profiled Brandon Waller, who works for Sodexo at Harper and will be competing as a member of the U.S. team at the upcoming Special Olympics in Italy.
- *Patch* posted a piece about Harper employee Michelle Mabry receiving the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Service Award at Harper's annual King Celebration.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* posted a story about Harper's Digital Sonography Programs seeking volunteers for free ultrasounds.
- The *Daily Herald* reported that Harper alum Isabella Wojciechowski was named the 2024 National Junior College Athletic Association Division III Women's Cross Country Scholar-Athlete of the Year by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association.
- *Daily Herald*, *Research Pool* and *Patch* published an article about how Harper has maintained the top Aaa rating from Moody's Investor Services.

Community Relations

- Community Relations is partnering with Partners for our Communities and ICompete to provide enrichment activities for families at the Edgebrook Community Center. Harper volunteers will visit the community center one to two times per month and conduct fun, family-friendly activities. The Edgebrook Community Center is located in the Baldwin Green apartment complex and serves as one of the locations for the ICompete After School Club which provides academic support and recreational activities for young students and their families.

Legislative Affairs

- Dr. Proctor, Provost Ruth Williams and Chief of Staff and VP of External Affairs Jeff Julian attended a roundtable on the future of the quantum workforce hosted by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi and the Chicago Quantum Exchange.
- Dr. Proctor, Chair Bill Kelley, Trustee Herb Johnson, Student Trustee Liman Lei and Chief of Staff and VP of External Affairs Jeff Julian attended the National Legislative Summit (NLS) in Washington, D.C., advocating for higher education priorities with other community college leaders from across the country.

During the NLS, the Harper delegation attended several sessions geared toward understanding the impact of the new administration's Executive Orders and other potential policy changes. The team also met with Congressman Mike Quigley as well as with the staffs of Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, and Congresswoman Delia Ramirez. Harper's delegation advocated for maintaining federal funding; increasing the Pell Grant, making it tax-free and making it available for short-term workforce programs; supporting funding for the Strengthening Community College training grants; and simplifying SNAP benefit access for community college students.

Additionally, the Harper team joined other Illinois community college leaders for a meeting with Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth.



- Dr. Proctor attended the Governor’s State of the State address in Springfield witnessing Governor Pritzker’s historic announcement of support for offering community college baccalaureate degrees in Illinois, something Harper has been on the forefront of advocating for many years.

Marketing Services

- In January, the University and College Designers Association (UCDA) awarded Honorable Mention to our Find it* digital ad series in the 2024 Design Awards. UCDA is one of the most challenging and prestigious competitions to win among higher ed designers, marketers, and communicators.
- The Web Team fielded a record 137 web update requests in January 2025, representing a +73% increase from the same period last year. These are often text changes to the website and come from departments across the college. Web Student Aides Marissa Parchim (Graphic Design student) and Ugur Sahinoglu (Engineering student) completed a majority of the requests, often within one business day.
- Organic traffic (from search engines) for Areas of Interest pages increased 15%, and 18% sitewide versus last year for spring semester. The increase reflects increased investment in search engine optimization, with a new part-time SEO Specialist and SEO software, along with targeted content updates and technical upgrades to the site. Student aides were integrally involved in the effort, performing hundreds of content and metadata updates across the site over the past several months.

Finance and Administrative Services

Facilities Management

- Canning Student Center and University Center: The fencing is in place, and mobilization is complete. Excavation is scheduled to begin within the next two weeks.
- Business and Social Sciences Building (BSSB): Phase I of the BSSB project includes the demolition of Building J and the J Theater, along with the buildout of temporary space in Building I. The temporary space package is currently out to bid and is scheduled for a recommendation to award at the May Board meeting. The final bid package for the project is set for release in March 2025, with an anticipated award at the June Board meeting.

Risk Management

- The Department of Risk Management created a procedure for interacting with Federal Officials on campus. Several presentations and education were provided to faculty, students, and staff.

Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- As part of the Student Success Goal Team’s work from the most recent Strategic Plan, a new course withdrawal survey has been implemented to capture the reason(s) students may be withdrawing. Students will be presented with this survey when withdrawing from a course, and if they request follow-up, the One Stop team will reach out to offer support. This is just one more way we’re using data to improve student success, helping us identify and remove barriers, better serve our students, and make Harper a place where all students can thrive.
- As part of ongoing efforts to engage students in the strategic planning process, the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Division launched a Student Data Gallery Walk featuring 12 posters placed in



high-traffic areas on campus. Each poster highlighted key student success metrics as well as insights gathered from various student surveys, inviting student feedback through QR codes.

- The Outcomes Assessment Office and the Learning Assessment Committee are working with faculty to conduct assessments of two general education outcomes, Information Literacy and Diverse Perspectives and Cultures. Courses that address these outcomes and have a substantial percentage of students with 45+ credit hours are selected for assessment. Results will be compiled summer 2025.
- The 2024-2025 interactive [Fact Book](#) is now available on the public website, offering a centralized, user-friendly hub for Harper College's key institutional data. The Fact Book provides current and historical insights into student demographics, district trends, employee statistics, financial aid, institutional finances, and student support services. The interactive format utilizes various filters for disaggregating data and identifying trends, making it a powerful tool for institutional planning, accreditation, and community engagement. By increasing transparency and accessibility, the Fact Book reinforces Harper's commitment to data-informed decision-making that advances student success.

Strategic Alliances and Innovation

Grants Office

- The SCC3 Employer Engagement Coordinator Sheila Cheripka secured free student tickets to a cybersecurity industry event, where three Harper cybersecurity degree program students took advantage of the opportunity to connect with industry professionals and Harper's Cybersecurity Business Industry Leadership Team (BILT) members, kickstarting the development of their professional networks.
- The college's AI/Cloud BILT worked diligently with faculty to finalize the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) to be integrated into the new AI/Cloud curriculum.
- Harper was awarded three additional grants from the ICCB. Two of these grants continue last year's grants for expanding training opportunities through noncredit offerings (Noncredit Workforce Training Initiative Grant) and for Adult Education students (Integrated English Language Acquisition and Civics Education). We received a new grant for the Scaling and Assessing Developmental Education Reform Act. With this support, Harper's English faculty will utilize a community of practice to scale faculty collaboration and professional development in departmental English, leading to the development of a guided placement process.

Workforce Solutions

- In the calendar year 2024, the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Harper College provided expert business guidance to 309 unique clients. Forty-two percent of these clients (130/309) were MBEs. Our support helped create and retain 74 local jobs and assisted clients in securing \$1,954,650 in funding to start or grow their business. In addition to one-on-one business advising, we hosted 18 workshops with a total of 300 registrants, equipping small business owners with valuable knowledge and resources.
- The Apprenticeship Program welcomed ATS Automation from Rolling Meadows and Sunstar Americas from Schaumburg as new employer partners to participate in the Registered Mechatronics Apprenticeship Program.

Manager of Workforce Initiatives Besa Sadiku attended the second Annual Apprenticeship for America



Summit in Washington DC this month. The event brought together national leaders, policymakers, and workforce professionals to discuss strategies for expanding and strengthening apprenticeship programs across industries. Key discussions focused on federal policy, scaling apprenticeship opportunities, and innovative workforce solutions. This summit provided valuable insights and networking opportunities to support ongoing workforce development initiatives.

- Earlier this month, the Job Placement Resource Center (JPRC) hosted a Resume Day. Thirty-two students learned about best practices when creating a resume, and they were introduced to an AI Resume Tool, VMock, during the sessions. VMock was purchased through a collaboration with the JPRC and the Workforce Career Center using Illinois Bridge to Transition and Resources for Excellence Grant funds.

In Memoriam

- Sadly, founding faculty member Dr. John Muchmore passed away in January. The Board of Trustees will recognize him with a resolution at its February meeting. Dr. Muchmore was the first full-time faculty member of the Speech and Theatre department and spent 28 years in the Harper College Speech-Communications department from 1967 to 1995.

