



Dear Harper College Community:

It is indeed a “race to the finish line” as students and faculty members hustle to finish the fall semester strongly during finals week. Then a well-deserved Winter Break for them as well as our staff members who have worked so diligently this year in service of our students. Along with my Executive Cabinet team, I participated in the distribution of snacks to students across campus who were studying for their finals. I always enjoy interacting with students, hearing about their experiences at Harper and learning more about their experiences on campus so we can continue to improve our programs and services. One of my favorite parts of wrapping up the semester is celebrating our employees and their incredible generosity. During Winterfest, our employees brought gifts and made monetary donations to support children at three of our elementary school partners as part of the Celebration of Giving toy drive.

This month, I was invited to serve on Governor Pritzker’s Higher Education Futures Table held at the University of Illinois Chicago. In light of the recent Supreme Court decision on university admissions, it was a timely and important discussion about how Illinois’ higher education system can function as a collaborative and cohesive ecosystem to ensure equitable access to university programs and to strategically address the workforce needs of the future. Three additional statewide dialogues are scheduled for four working groups to devise strategies that address equity, affordability, and campus/institutional culture by May 2024.

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I was proud to represent Harper as an honorary chair and host a table of employees at the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance Dinner organized by the Illinois Commission on Diversity and Human Relations Commission. Dr. Timothy Killeen, president of the University of Illinois System, served as keynote speaker for the event, which was themed “Dr. King: Education, the Next Battleground.” It was fitting for Dr. Killeen, our May 2023 commencement speaker, to receive The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Leadership Honor and it was great to hear his remarks about the care, character and critical thinking needed to increase educational attainment, especially as he and I have had several discussions about the importance of the collaboration between Harper, our sister community colleges and the University of Illinois system.

We celebrated the retirement of Laura Brown, chief advancement officer and VP, with a fun and meaningful dinner with family and friends, colleagues and Educational Foundation and Board of Trustees members, all of whom have worked with Laura in one way or another over the years to support our students. Laura’s accomplishments include leading the Promise and Inspire Scholarship Campaigns, guiding the creation of 110 new scholarships, and establishing the HOPE Giving Circle program. With Laura’s retirement, I have selected Heather Zoldak to lead the Foundation as our new chief advancement officer, and Jeff Julian will lead the communications, community relations, and marketing functions in an expanded role as chief of staff and vice president of external affairs. Additionally, Dr. Michelé Smith has taken on expanded responsibilities to develop a centralized model of events management and facility use/rentals.

In closing, I wish you all a restful break and holidays and a Happy New Year!



## Academic Updates

### *By the Numbers*

#### • **Enrollment Services**

- Our Salesforce Chatbot handled 50.7% (500) of the 986 chats received last month, while a live staff member answered 49.3% (486). The top three topics asked by contacts were “Register for a class” (103), “General course/schedule information” (81), “Health science programs information” (78), and “Password issue” (61).
- The staff captured and processed student interactions in Salesforce, including over 1,288 emails/inquiry forms, 1,656 phone calls, and 741 in-person visits.

#### • **Student Engagement**

- The Hawks Care Pantry was accessed 60 times by students in the month of November, the Career Closet was accessed six times, and 80 meetings with the manager or resource specialist were held.
- Counseling Services held 105 appointments in November; 42 of those appointments were with new clients.

### *Events*

#### • **Business and Social Sciences**

- The Early Childhood Education (ECE) department held a Student and Childcare Provider event in November. Including students, local childcare providers, and our representatives, we hosted 150 people. Spring registration and campus connections were the focus. In addition to our ECE team, we had representatives from Harper Wellness, Office of DEI, Academic Advising, Hawks Care, and the Job Placement Resource Center (JPRC). Transfer representatives from Illinois State University and National Louis University shared information, as well as our Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) regional navigators that connected students to the state scholarship. Our students, faculty, staff, and community members enjoyed great food, wonderful company, and a wealth of information!

#### • **Career and Technical Programs**

- In late November, Harper College’s PASO (Project Assistance, Surpassing Obstacles/Proyecto de Apoyo, Superando Obstáculos) team welcomed 64 attendees, including 33 high school students and their families, to an informative and engaging event about Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities at Harper. PASO is a team of dedicated staff members who support Latinx students and families in their academic journey at Harper by providing information, guidance, and resources.
  - The event featured:
    - A presentation titled “From Harper to a Career in Two Years or Less”, which showcased the benefits and opportunities of enrolling in Harper’s CTE programs. These programs offer stackable certificates and degrees that can lead to quick entry into high-demand and well-paying careers in several fields, including HVAC, manufacturing, graphic design, health care, education, business administration, and information technology. The presentation also highlighted the availability of apprenticeships, career services, and financial aid for eligible students.
    - A tour of some of the state-of-the-art labs and facilities that Harper offers for CTE students, such as the HVAC, manufacturing, graphic design, health simulation, early childhood, Emerging Tech’s Innovation Accelerator, and Makerspace and Entrepreneur Center labs. The attendees learned more about the hands-on learning experiences and cutting-edge technology that Harper provides and interacted with some of the faculty and staff members who teach and mentor CTE students.





### *Highlights: Division/Program Highlights*

- **Business and Social Sciences**

- In the past year, the Business Department at Harper College has reached a significant milestone of being accepted into the Everyday Entrepreneur Program and Fund (EEVF). This innovative initiative, tailored to empower student entrepreneurs, has proven instrumental in surmounting challenges within the entrepreneurial landscape. Through a collaborative effort with the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), we integrated the EEVF into our academic framework, extending beyond mere financial support to provide invaluable mentorship and access to industry experts. Emphasizing inclusivity, the program aligns seamlessly with our dedication to supporting underrepresented groups and fostering environmentally conscious, socially responsible ventures. As we celebrate our inaugural semester with the EEVF program, we take pride in the strides made in cultivating a supportive environment for the growth of local startups. Additionally, we are excited to announce our Student Pitch Competition that took place earlier this month—a testament to our commitment to showcasing and empowering the diverse and innovative entrepreneurial spirit emerging from Harper College. Looking ahead, we remain enthusiastic about further empowering the next generation of successful, diverse, and socially responsible entrepreneurs. You can view the new webpage for our EEVF program here: <https://harpercollege.edu/maker/everyday-entrepreneur.php>.

- **Student Engagement**

- Hawks Care will serve as the home for Harper's Student Parent Success Program, the official name of our Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant. Our award began October 1, and Hawks Care has laid the groundwork for a spring 2024 launch. One new position, childcare case manager, will be added to the Hawks Care staff.

### *Highlights: Student Highlights - Student News and Achievements*

- **Honors and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)**

- Four PTK students presented at the regional PTK conference in Robinson, IL.
- Three honors students presented their work at the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Chicago, IL.
- Honors and PTK students have had outings at the Inspiration Cafe, the Forest Preserve, the National Museum of Mexican Art, and the University of Chicago Special Collections.

### *Supporting the Strategic Plan*

- **Advising Services**

- Harper Arc Program
  - The Arc Program continues to provide opportunities to engage and support Arc Program members. Our Arc advisors hosted three workshops to support students in November: Career Exploration, Preparing for Transfer, and a Wellness Workshop focused on success during finals week.
  - To ensure that students are supported during finals week, the Arc advising team will host a week-long Pop In for Support event where students can grab snacks and treats throughout each day and connect with advising for motivation with the collective Arc advising team.
  - The Arc Program was approved as an additional initiative to support Hispanic students under our Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) grant. A spring 2024 cohort of students will also begin their journey in the program. Applications will be shared with new, degree or certificate seeking students prior to the winter break. The fall 2023 cohort will continue in the program with new outcomes to support their persistence and graduation.

## Advancement, Marketing and Communications

### *Advancement*

- As of December 4, the Foundation has awarded \$1,474,065 in scholarships to 913 students for the 2023-2024 academic year.
- Two new scholarships were established in the Foundation: the Nancy Minich Benedict Interior Design Scholarship and the Laura J. Brown Endowed Scholarship. This brings the total of new donor-sponsored scholarships created since July 1, 2020, to sixty-seven.
- As of November 30, the total amount donated to the Inspire Scholarship Campaign is \$32,166,418.17.
- The HOPE Giving Circle will host its winter social event Charcuterie Made Easy! on Thursday, January 11, 2024, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Wojcik Conference Center. Guests will learn about the HOPE Giving Circle followed by participating in a class that teaches tricks and tips for constructing charcuterie boards. More information can be found at [harpercollege.edu/hope](https://harpercollege.edu/hope).

### *Community Relations*

- This fall semester, the Community Relations team has been busy hosting events, connecting with the community and collaborating with internal departments. Since August, the team has coordinated or participated in more than 35 partner events. They hosted the annual Experience Day, collaborated with the Core Values Goal Team to assist with Harper Helping Hands Month, collaborated with Admissions Outreach to assist with the Fall Open House and Latino Summit, partnered with the Harper College Police and Campus Recreation to host the second annual Trunk or Treat, and hosted more than 1,400 young students on campus through the school tour program. We have also supported multiple department events and initiatives by supplying goody bags, giveaways, and information packets. Spring is gearing up to be just as exciting with more school tours, internal collaboration, and partner events.

### *Marketing Services*

- Organic search traffic is up 36% versus last year to Harper's Areas of Interest (Aol) web pages, and search traffic is up on almost all the Aol pages. The change is in part the result of significant template improvements and other technical Search Engine Optimization (SEO) measures that Harper's web team has rolled out over the past year. We are hoping to build on this success with content improvements over the next year.
- Mike Barzacchini has been appointed to a two-year term on the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Board of Trustees. The CASE Board of Trustees is the primary governing body for the association. It sets policy, establishes, and monitors the annual budget, oversees CASE assets, and ensures sound management of the association in service to its 3,000+ international members. As a trustee at large, representing CASE's community college members, Mike Barzacchini serves on the board along with 19 other trustees from institutions that include Brown University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Glasgow, the National University of Singapore, and the University of Chicago.

### *Media Relations*

- The *Daily Herald*, *Journal & Topics* newspapers and *Patch* ran articles about Teaching Africa Today, an 18-month faculty development project led by Harper professors Dr. Richard Johnson and Mukila Maitha.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published pieces about Harper's Lifelong Learning Institute and the myriad benefits it offers to older adults.





- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran stories about the Harper Cross Country teams sweeping nationals, sophomore Lily Alberts topping the leaderboard, and Coach Jim Macnider being named U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association (USTFCCA) National Coach of the Year.
- *Evolution: A Modern Campus Illumination* posted an opinion piece by Scott Cashman, senior manager of Community, Career and Corporate Education, about engaging with our community.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published articles about the Harper College Educational Foundation surpassing its \$30 million dollar goal for the Inspire Scholarship Campaign and creating more than 65 new scholarships.
- The *Elgin Observer* wrote a piece about Monika Gadek-Stephan, senior director of the Education and Work Center, about her experience as an immigrant.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran stories about the Harper Esports team and how members are learning lessons in leadership and teamwork that impact their education.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- In early December, members of the Staff, Administrators and Faculty for Equality (SAFE) Employee Resource Group (ERG) are supporting Chicago's PR!DEArts by attending their annual holiday play. PR!DEArts is the premiere not-for-profit organization that exhibits, promotes, and champions LGBTQ artists through all media and art forms.
- The third annual ERG/DEI OMG Semester is Almost Over Winter Celebration takes place on Thursday, December 14, at 2 p.m. in the Cultural Center. There will be food, music, an ugly sweater contest, cookie and hat decorating, and much more!

## Finance and Administrative Services

### *Human Resources*

- The Oracle implementation went live in mid-November. Human Resources has been hosting training sessions for users. This is a great step in our digital transformation, and it is wonderful to see the fruits of our labor from the project that started back in March 2023.

### *Information Technology*

- We have reinforced security for Google student email services by implementing multi-factor authentication and placing restrictions on the volume of outgoing emails.

## Legislative Affairs

- Chief of Staff Jeff Julian and VP of Strategic Alliances Dr. Maria Coons met with Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor and State Sen. Ann Gillespie to update them on the college's transportation initiative with Township partners and the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Agency (CMAP).
- State Representative Theresa Mah, who serves Illinois' 24th District, which includes Bridgeport, Chinatown, Pilsen, visited Jennifer Bell's Adult Education HSE Language Arts class and Andrew Wilson's Honors LIT 223



class, Multicultural American Literature. State Rep. Mah also met with Dr. Proctor to discuss important higher education issues including basic needs supports for students and access to community college baccalaureate degrees in Illinois for select high-demand fields and to expand access for place-bound prospective students.

- Invitations were sent to the college's state elected officials to attend the webinar *CCB in Illinois: FAQs, Data, and Policy Prospects*, featuring research findings from the Joyce Foundation regarding a policy approach for Illinois community colleges to make a case for community college baccalaureate degrees for in-demand occupations. Harper continues to be a leader in educating and advocating on community college bachelor's degrees in Illinois.

## Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- Institutional Research collaborated with Student Engagement and Student Communications to administer the Trellis Student Financial Wellness Survey in October/November 2023. This nationwide survey begins to explore the connection between student finances and academic success. Almost 2,000 students responded to the survey which yielded a 17% response rate. Survey results will be delivered mid-spring and will be used to better understand how student financial stress, including food and housing insecurity, impacts student success at Harper and provide insights on how Harper might better serve our students.
- Outcomes Assessment updated general education outcomes information on the public website. This update includes the recent results from the Critical Thinking and Information Literacy assessments highlighting where students are meeting criteria for success and where improvements are needed.
- Student Success Strategy and Decision Support collaborated with Marketing Services to update the Search, Onboard, Advance, Realize (SOAR) student lifecycle overview document. The revisions include placing a greater emphasis on post-completion outcomes and the economic value of earning a Harper credential. The critical first-year Path for Success momentum indicators were also embedded into the updated copy.

## Strategic Alliances and Innovation

### Grants Office

- In November, Harper was awarded \$150,000 for the Nursing School Grant Program through the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). This grant supports students transitioning from an Associate Degree in Nursing to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) or a Registered Nurse-BSN program at a four-year institution.
- In November, the Grants Office submitted a proposal requesting \$1.75 million from the U.S. Department of Labor's Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant program (round four). This project titled, Women in Advanced Manufacturing: Fostering Academic Careers Through Opportunities and Resources (FACTOR), seeks to modernize the Mechatronics program, develop a new Advanced Manufacturing specialization in Smart Manufacturing and Digital Integration, and to increase enrollment of underrepresented groups in these career pathways. There is a particular focus on addressing the lack of women in the advanced manufacturing field.
- In November, the Innovation Accelerator hosted the Cloud Computing Business & Industry Leadership Team (BILT) Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) validation and prioritization meeting with 10 employers/industry professionals. The BILT input will inform the new Cloud curriculum being developed at Harper as part of the Department of Labor SCC3 grant program.



## Workforce Solutions

### *Business Development*

- In CY2023, the Illinois Small Business Development Center advised 128 unique MBE clients which represents 43% of all clients advised this year (301).

### *Community Education*

- The Learning Resources Network's (LERN) Annual Virtual Conference was held in November. LERN is the world's largest association in continuing education and lifelong learning, offering information and consulting expertise to providers of continuing education and customized training. The annual conference had 1,491 individuals login to the conference. Each participant attended an average of eight and a half sessions. Harper College sent 13 people to the conference. Five staff members presented: Scott Cashman, Billie Diaz, Kevin Hahn, Kiel Cross, and Darby Lanpher. As Dr. Cashman is currently serving as the chairperson of the board, he gave the Opening Session comments. In total, Harper staff were represented in seven panel or presentation sessions: Opening Session, Digital Marketing for 2024, Community Events, Improving Customer Service, Community Colleges Discussion Session, Reinvention and The Next Generation of Analytics. This means that 1,896 individuals attended sessions led by Harper College staff. The sharing of cutting-edge information that goes on at the conference is invaluable to schools across North America as they continue to innovate and respond to our communities' continually changing needs.

### *Workforce Solutions & Apprenticeships*

- In November, Besa Sadiku attended the German Apprenticeship Conference in Rosemont, IL. During the event, Harper College received the Certificate of Recognition from the German Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest, Inc. and ICATT for developing a highly skilled workforce.
- Also in November, the Apprenticeship Office organized a special Apprentice Information Session in celebration of the ninth Annual Apprenticeship Week. More than 50 interested candidates and parents attended the session. Employer partner representatives from Zurich North America, LMT Onsrud, Schultes Precision Machining, Crafts Technology, Barrington Bank and Trust, and Sodick, Inc. were present and discussed the program with the candidates and potential apprentices.
- Last month, to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week, the Harper College Marketing Department released 10 Questions featuring Jonathan O'Grady, an apprentice with Wieland Group. For our 10th question, "What do you love most about the apprenticeship program at Harper College?", Jonathan responded, "I love the support and infrastructure it provides. I do not really have to fight for what classes to take, or what books I need. It's all built into the program to help me succeed both in the classroom and in my career."