



## PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

July & August 2024

Dear Harper College Community:

This summer report is filled with great student, employee and community engagement and reflects our steadfast commitment to enriching the lives of our students and community. I certainly trust that you have had a restful summer and are ready to start our new academic year! The beginning of the fall semester always signals new opportunities and expanding horizons! We celebrated a wonderful start to our semester with our collegewide meeting and a keynote from futurist and author Jack Uldrich. I appreciated that Jack emphasized the need to use our hearts and minds as we get ready for exciting new prospects with Artificial Intelligence and quantum computing. I'm excited to continue our work in these spaces, which includes my forming a collegewide AI Task Force to ensure that we're embracing the creative possibilities in the classroom and in our workspaces, while mitigating risks to the institution.

We also began our new strategic planning process with Dialogue Session #1: The Changing Landscape of Higher Education, which featured an insightful panel of experts facilitated by Professor Maham Khan and planned by EC members Dr. Tamara Johnson, Jeff Julian and Dr. Ruth Williams. I enjoyed hearing our panelists share what they expect the future of higher education needs to be for our students, faculty and staff. We are expecting more transformation in how we deliver instruction and services to our future students. That same day, we also celebrated the closing of our FY21-24 *Forward Together* strategic plan recognizing the leadership of our Strategic Planning and Accountability committee, our goal leaders and their executive sponsors, administrative assistants and Darlene Schlenbecker. They all played critical roles in us achieving major strides toward increasing credentials earned and achieving our highest graduation rate, while reducing six of nine equity gaps by at least 20%. I am Harper Proud of everyone collaboratively moving *Forward Together* despite the significant shifts in the landscape including the pandemic. Our students, their families and our community will benefit for many years to come. Our second strategic plan dialogue session will focus on the Changing Landscape of Work.

Despite the challenging rollout of the simplified FAFSA, fall enrollment as of August 19 is up with headcount at 11,418, 5.4% higher than last year, and Total FTE (CE and Credit) for today is 6,953.2, 5.0% higher than fall 2023. A big thank you to the Financial Aid Office, and many other offices on campus including IT, Marketing, for their leadership in minimizing the harm to our students caused by delays and difficulties at the federal level. And we've made significant progress with *85% more students packaged with Federal and State grants as compared to this time last year*. Kudos to all involved in supporting our students in accessing federal financial aid.

This month, I attended the AACC Board of Directors' retreat in Washington, D.C. AACC's advocacy for our colleges continues to serve us well as they lift up our collective voice to influence policy decisions in Congress. FAFSA, distance education, gainful employment regulations and Title IX changes were just some of the policy issues examined. We were also fortunate to hear Jennifer Engle discuss the US Department of Education's Raise the Bar effort on college excellence and equity and Dr. Angel Royal report on how AI is being used in California to evaluate and advance transfer outcomes for students to minimize loss of credits. Our higher education landscape continues to evolve, and we are working diligently to stay ahead of these changes and create new meaningful opportunities for our students and our region.

Last year, in my role as Secretary/Treasurer for the Illinois Community College Council of Presidents (ICCCP), I chaired a planning committee for the upcoming presidents' retreat on September 5-6 in Monticello. We have a robust agenda focused on the future of higher education, state funding model, dual credit, legislative priorities and more. I am looking forward to us bolstering our strategic efforts as a Council. I am also co-chairing a state-wide ICCCP BEP Task Force with Jim Reed, ICCTA's Executive Director. BEP is the state's "Business Enterprise for minorities, females, and persons with disabilities Program Act (30 ILCS 575)" established in 1984 to increase "economic inclusion" in state contracts. The state has recently set a new 30% compliance target for community colleges to meet, and we have work to do to reach that goal. I'm hoping that through this task force and other efforts, including prioritizing BEP spending across the college, that we can examine the current metrics for our colleges, identify what is working well, illuminate challenges institutions are facing and shape state policy to make a difference in this important inclusion work.

Again, this time of year brings excitement as we embark upon a new academic year to help our students SOAR on the Path to Success. Student success is our number one priority! I wish you all the best for the new semester.



## Academic Updates

### *By the Numbers*

- Advising Services
  - Spring 2024 Cumulative Appointment/Phone Data: Our collective Advising Services offices made 36,098 phone calls and held 8,568 appointments in the Spring 2024 semester.
- Counseling Services
  - In June and July, 65 appointments were held to support student success.
- Enrollment Services – CRM Department
  - The chatbot successfully managed a sizable portion of inquiries, addressing 55% of the total chats received. Out of 1,466 chats, the chatbot handled 807, while live staff members managed the remaining 44%, totaling 659 chats. The primary topics of inquiry included "Fall 2024 Registration" (130 inquiries), "Course Schedule" (115 inquiries), and "Registering for a Class" (114 inquiries).
  - Staff members effectively managed a high volume of cases, calls, and in-person visits, ensuring seamless operations across various communication channels. Our team processed over 6,000 CRM cases, including emails and forms, handled 2,817 calls, and facilitated 2,114 in-person visits across the One Stop, Admissions Outreach, and the Testing Center.
  - Over 15,000 broadcast emails were sent to students and clients, including invitations to Adult Information Sessions and confirmations of diploma dispatch. This effort aims to communicate clearly and proactively with our students and partners.
  - We have successfully integrated Formstack forms from the Registrar's Office and Apprenticeships with the CRM. This integration has streamlined our processes by allowing for the automatic creation of cases, improving efficiencies in our business practices, and providing a more secure means of communication for students and staff.
- Hawks Care
  - In June and July, 97 students met with staff; 145 students accessed the food pantry; five students visited the career closet.

### *Events*

- Center for New Students and Orientation
  - Admissions Outreach and the Center for New Students and Orientation have partnered over the summer to host smaller Future Hawk celebrations to foster a sense of belonging to the college, promote resources and involvement, and assist students through the enrollment process. These sessions have been held monthly since June and have been attended by over 300 students and their families.
- Counseling Services
  - Community partner, Barrington Youth & Family Services, provided in-person, bilingual clinical mental health services on campus this summer with upcoming workshop sessions to support student parents.
- Start Smart & Learning Communities
  - Harper College will be hosting the 2024 National Learning Communities Conference November 6 - 8 at the Loew's Hotel in Rosemont. The theme of the conference is Community of Voices.



- Wellness
  - One hundred twelve faculty, staff, and students participated in the Summer Wellness Road Trip Program, with 10 teams competing in various wellness challenges over five weeks. The program kicked off the first week of July.
  - Harper Wellness hosted Harperpalooza in Avanté at the end of July to help educate students on bystander intervention, harm reduction approaches, and strategies to keep safe during summer festivals.

### Highlights

- Division/Program Highlights
  - Hawks Care
    - Over the summer, Hawks Care benefitted from a partnership with Harper Grows through faculty and staff donations from their personal gardens. The campus pantry was able to offer a variety of fresh produce, fruits, and herbs along with favorite recipes, and food preparation information to our student shoppers.
  - Start Smart & Learning Communities
    - For fall 2024, there will be eight learning communities offered. This includes a variety of options for students including several for first-semester students plus options for current students. The Interdisciplinary Programs Office has been working with the Center for New Students and Advising to promote these learning communities and share the benefits for students.
    - For fall 2024, there will be 127 sections of Start Smart classes offered, including 46 First Year Seminar Classes. The Interdisciplinary Programs Office has been working with the Center for New Students and Advising to encourage students to complete their Start Smart requirements as part of their Path to Success.
- Employee Highlights
  - Liberal Arts
    - Earlier this month, Professor Kevin Long received the Illinois Theatre Association (ITA) Award: Excellence in College Theatre Teaching.
      - Each year, ITA recognizes individuals and organizations for promoting quality theatre throughout Illinois. Recipients are nominated by the Illinois theatre community, approved by the ITA's divisional representatives, and accepted by the ITA's Board of Directors. We are delighted to see Kevin recognized for his dedication to the field!
- Student Highlights
  - Math and Science
    - Harper Society of Engineers students Vera Valenti, Rohan Sharma, and Tirth Patel competed in the Urban Search and Rescue Robotics competition at the SkillsUSA conference in Peoria, IL in April.
      - The students built and programmed two robots that they could remotely operate via camera to traverse different types of terrain and collect and dispose of simulated explosive materials.
      - The students earned medals at the award ceremony but more importantly, they learned a ton and had a great overall experience.
      - Many thanks to Kristyn Meyer from the Harper Foundation and Melanie Duchaj and Erin Graff from Student Engagement for helping our students succeed.

### Supporting the Strategic Plan

- Harper ARC (Advancing Retention through Connected Advising) Program in Advising Services



- Final results of the spring 2024 semester of the ARC Program to support reducing equity gaps for Black and Latine students showed the following:
  - Completion of Program Requirements: 80% of students successfully completed programmatic requirements to earn a \$250 stipend for the spring 2024 semester. This exceeds our targeted goal of 60% by 20 percentage points.
  - Persistence Rate: 83% of students persisted and registered for 6+ credit hours in the fall 2024 semester. This rate exceeds our targeted goal of 60% by 23%.
  - Credit Momentum: 89% of all students enrolled and completed at least 6+ credit hours in the spring 2024 semester. This rate exceeds our targeted goal of 60% by 29 percentage points.
  - Faculty Mentor Partnership: 86% of students engaged and participated in a new requirement to meet with an ARC Faculty Mentor in the spring 2024 semester to promote identify and greater sense of belonging in the classroom. This rate exceeded our targeted goal of 60% by 26 percentage points.
- The ARC Program will launch a new cohort of students as an integral component of the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Grant Milestones in fall 2024 and will continue to embed the Path to Success Framework to bolster success and completion for our Black and Latine students.

## Advancement

- The Foundation awarded nearly \$3.4 million in scholarships to over 1,063 students for the 2023-2024 academic year.
- As of August 8, the Foundation has awarded \$546,176 to 234 students for the 2024-2025 academic year. Two new scholarships were established this fiscal year; the Roxanne Bloom Memorial Endowed Scholarship and the ICCSF Allen A.H. and Ellen M. Blessman Foundation Scholarship.
- The Foundation hosted its INSPIRE Campaign closing event at the end of June. Featuring a performance by The Back Porch Revue, the event gathered approximately 130 campaign donors and friends of Harper for a celebration of the successful conclusion of the Foundation's \$33.2 million INSPIRE scholarship campaign.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is excited to welcome our new LEAD (Leveraging Equity in Academia through Diversity) Faculty Fellows: Elizabeth Barahona, Kirby Fellis, Ashley Palmer, and Dr. Alex Pergams! This fellowship increases faculty diversity and exposes our students and colleagues to a more diverse and richer environment. This program is intended to provide the experience that helps the Fellows become competitive candidates for faculty openings at Harper College and/or other community colleges.
- The DEI Team also welcomes Gerardo Cruz as he joins us as a JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Faculty Fellow! Gerardo is an assistant professor of Spanish in the Language Department at Harper College. He also serves as Faculty Chair-Elect for the Employee Resource Group DREAM (Diverse Relationships Engaged in Affirming Multiculturalism) and a Faculty Mentor for the ARC program.
- This month the 3rd Annual "ERG & DEI Welcome Back Celebration" was held in the Cultural Center. A collaboration between the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and DREAM (Diverse Relationships



Engaged in Affirming Multiculturalism), LAND (Learning About Abilities, not Disabilities), and SAFE (Staff Administrators and Faculty for Equality). This has become a delightful campus tradition.

## External Affairs

### Communications

- The Communications and Community Relations departments organized the Fall 2024 Marketplace and President's Collegewide Meeting to help kick off the fall semester. The Marketplace featured about 50 tables and allowed colleagues to reconnect and learn about programs and services available to the Harper community. The President's Collegewide Meeting drew an estimated 500 employees to the Health and Recreation Center gym; another 100 employees/participants streamed the event virtually.
- The Communications team pitched, secured placement, and/or helped facilitate 19 stories that appeared in local and national media publications. Among the highlights are:
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published articles about Harper's cybersecurity certificates and degree program that are launching this fall.
  - *AAAC's 21st Century Center*, the *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published stories about Harper's recent Illinois High School Diploma graduates.
  - *New America*, *Community College Daily* and others reported on innovation-focused federal grant programs and how they are supporting new offerings at Harper and other institutions.
  - *Patch* published an article about Harper's new certificates in hospitality and tourism and drone essentials.
  - ABC 7 and *MSN Money* reported on the FAFSA rollout delay and highlighted how Harper has been helping students.
  - WGN Radio, the *Daily Herald*, *Journal & Topics* newspapers and others reported on the Juneteenth Block Party co-hosted by Harper.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran articles about this year's Community Innovation Fund Grant recipients.
  - *New City*, *The Vedette* and other Illinois publications reported on Harper Professor Kevin Long winning the Illinois Theatre Association's 2024 Award of Excellence in College/University Theatre.
  - The *Daily Herald*, *Patch* and ICCTA listserv and social media channels posted articles about Harper student Nathan Johnson, who was named Soldier of the Year by the Illinois Army National Guard.
  - The *West Jordan Journal* published an interview with retiring Salt Lake Community College President Deneece Huftalin, who said her time as a Harper employee inspired her continued work at community colleges.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* previewed the Lifelong Learning Institute's upcoming Chautauqua.
  - The *Daily Herald*, *Patch* and the ICCTA's official social media channels ran reports about how recent retiree Dr. Maria Coons and Lab Assistant Nancy Marquez were honored by the ICCTA.
  - *The Visualist* reported on a new exhibition of work in Highland Park by LEAD Faculty Fellow Martinez E-B Garcias.

### Legislative Affairs

- State Rep. Nicolle Grasse, 53<sup>rd</sup> district, visited Harper College for the first time and met with Dr. Proctor, Chair Kelley, and other college leaders. A hospice chaplain, Rep. Grasse toured the health careers area including the dental hygiene clinic, surgical tech suite, and *the Center for Interprofessional Simulation and Innovation*.
- The college sent letters to its federal elected officials urging the Department of Education to delay institutional reporting requirements for the Gainful Employment (GE) and Financial Value Transparency (FVT) data. Currently, reporting of the GA/FVT data is due October 1, 2024. However, colleges across the country are requesting to adjust this reporting deadline to July 2025 due to the limited time for completion and delayed information that colleges received from the Department of Education for this





reporting, as well as the numerous complications related to the implementation of the simplified FAFSA.

### *Marketing Services*

- The fall 2024 enrollment advertising campaign launched in June and will extend through mid-semester start in October. In addition to the all-district direct mail postcard, organic social media, and email campaign, the college is running 1,400+ spots on Chicago's top six radio stations based on in-district listenership targeting 18-44. Early numbers look strong for our paid digital advertising campaign garnering more than 3,000 online engagement actions to date (August 1, 2024). We expect activity to continue to ramp up as we near semester start. Digital channels for the campaign include Google search and display, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Spotify.

## **Finance and Administrative Services**

### *Finance*

- The College has been awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for our fiscal year 2023 financial statement preparation. This prestigious award is a testament to the College's commitment to transparency, accountability, and high standards in financial reporting.
- The GFOA Certificate of Excellence is awarded to entities that go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure.

Attaining this certification reflects the following key achievements:

1. **Demonstrated Financial Accountability:** The rigorous review process for this award ensures that our financial reports provide a clear and accurate representation of the College's financial position. This level of scrutiny and subsequent recognition demonstrates our dedication to financial integrity and responsibility.
2. **Enhanced Transparency:** By meeting the high standards set by the GFOA, we assure stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and the community, that we are committed to maintaining transparent financial practices. This transparency builds trust and confidence in our institution.
3. **Benchmark of Excellence:** The Certificate of Excellence serves as a benchmark for financial reporting excellence. It signifies that our financial practices are among the best in the public sector, which can positively impact our reputation and operational effectiveness.
4. **Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness:** The process of preparing the annual comprehensive financial report in accordance with GFOA standards encourages efficiency and effectiveness in our financial management practices. This can lead to better decision-making and resource allocation, ultimately benefiting the entire College community.

### *Human Resources*

- The Human Resources Office rolled out new benefits for Classified, Supervisory/Manager and Administrators. Employees are now eligible for paid parental leave, elder care leave, and a sick leave bank.



### *Information Technology*

- The new My Harper Banner portal is now live. Currently, students and faculty can choose to explore the new portal or continue using the classic version. We've also made a feedback survey available, and so far, a dozen students have responded, all with positive feedback.

### *Risk Management*

- A meeting was held with Harper Police, Risk Management, the Palatine Police Department, and the Palatine Park District to better coordinate events held at the park district shelter adjacent to the dog park. The park district agreed to revisions regarding the information that they will share with Harper Police on rentals, inquiring as to the nature of the rental, providing an emergency contact roster, and placing restrictions on the returning of security deposits.

## **Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness**

- The FY2024 Accountability Report was completed and posted to the Harper website. The report summarizes the College's efforts related to the Presidential Priorities, Institutional Effectiveness Measures, Strategic Plan, and Operational Plan.
- Efforts have been focused on actively monitoring student progress to support key Institutional Effectiveness Measures and provide strategic decision support. Recent initiatives include identifying students eligible for summer graduation and tracking compliance with placement policies that directly impact Path for Success momentum metrics. Additionally, collaboration with the Advising Department to re-engage recent stop outs led to 83 out of 626 students in the campaign registering for fall 2024.
- The Office of Outcomes Assessment has begun analyzing data from the spring 2024 large-scale communication assessment (nearly 700 artifacts) and follow-up quantitative reasoning assessment (more than 1,000 artifacts). The results of these assessments will be shared during the fall 2024 semester.

## **Strategic Alliances and Innovation**

### *Grants Office*

- Last month, Harper College was awarded several grants through ICCB. These awards included \$841,096 for the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce. This grant provides funding to expand opportunities in nursing and select healthcare pathways. We were also awarded \$923,286 through ICCB for the Adult Education program. This funding supports areas such as adult basic skills, English language acquisition and high school equivalency instruction, workforce preparation, and family literacy. Lastly, we received \$746,511 through ICCB's Perkins grant program.
- Our Senior Director of Innovation and Development, Dr. Susanne Brock, has been busy representing Harper College both within the state and across the nation. Last month Dr. Brock served as a panelist for three sessions focused on Quantum Technology: Workforce Development in Quantum at the MxD Quantum Technology in Manufacturing: Unleashing Innovation and Exponential Change Summit in Chicago, IL, Quantum Leaps: Quantum Computing and the Future of Work at Jobs for the Future (JFF) 2024 Annual Horizons Summit in Washington, D.C., and Business and Industry Leadership Team Implementation Models at the NSF High Impact Technology Exchange Conference in Kansas City, MO.





## In Memoriam

- Vistex President and Harper Foundation board member Raju Datla passed away in July after suffering serious injuries in an accident that also claimed the life of Vistex Founder, CEO and Chief Architect Sanjay Shah.

