



## PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

October 2024

Dear Harper College Community:

The past month has been filled with high levels of strategic engagement for our college at the local, state and national levels. We just celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Education and Work Center (EWC) in Hanover Park with an open house and program featuring champions for the center - State Representative Fred Crespo and Hanover Park Mayor Rodney Craig, one of our Distinguished Alumni. The EWC is a perfect example of the role community colleges can play as conveners in our communities, especially when we collaborate as Elgin Community College (ECC) and Harper did 10 years ago to serve an area of our districts that had gone underserved for so long. Now the EWC is a robust community resource serving a record-high **762** students from over **30** different countries last year. EWC is a success story, and I am thankful to our board of trustees for their continued support of this partnership and to ECC, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Illinois workNet Center, Hanover Park and the state of Illinois for their enthusiasm and steadfast commitment to us cultivating a thriving community together.

Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to dominate the headlines nationally and many of the conversations at Harper College. This month, our Director of Marketing Mike Barzacchini hosted a CASE panel on AI for marketing and advancement professionals featuring our very own Patrick Kelly, web content manager, and two executives from the TDH Creative, a Chicago advertising agency. The panel, which was hosted on campus, was attended by community college marketing and advancement professionals from our peer institutions, including staff from ICCB. Thanks to Mike and Patrick for another example of Harper leading the discussion on important topics in higher education.

The use of AI in teaching and learning is another terrain we have embraced by inviting José Antonio Bowen, co-author of *Teaching with AI – A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning*, to be our keynote speaker for our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Outcomes and Assessment Conference and Share Fair. Bowen, a Senior Fellow for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, led a frank discussion on embracing AI in the classroom and broadened perspectives on the variety of AI tools that are readily available for faculty and staff to adapt and adopt new approaches that bring efficiencies to how they work, deepen student learning, assess student knowledge in new ways, and achieve better outcomes while ensuring students are demonstrating their knowledge of the learning objectives. He also highlighted the need to manage the risks of AI in and out of the classroom. Hats off to Darlene Schlenbecker, VP of planning, research and institutional effectiveness, Deann Surdo, director of outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness, and their teams for this excellent conference.

In addition to pedagogy, we are also making improvements to our physical spaces. This month we celebrated the new Building E Film Lab with a ribbon cutting ceremony. This project finished early and under budget - a testament to the diligence of our Facilities team led by Nancy Medina, executive director of facilities management, Steve Petersen, campus architect, and Nuri Akdeniz, senior project manager, and Jennifer Kulbida, project manager. Along with Associate Professor Brian Shelton, who provided the vision for the lab and garnered support from Dean Riewerts and Provost Williams, this team executed at a high level and delivered a film lab space that will help our students pursuing careers in the film and TV industry as well as a



space for our community to enjoy the magic of cinema. The community is excited to attend our Fall and Spring Film Series and find other opportunities to use the space.

As Vice Chair of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP), I co-chair the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Taskforce that was responsible for collaboratively planning a statewide BEP Summit held at Prairie State College on September 27. We convened more than 70 participants (fellow presidents, CFOs and procurement officers) to learn from a representative from Governor Pritzker's Commission on Equity and Inclusion, share what is working well within our institutions to achieve the state's BEP goal and collectively strategize on best practices and next steps to improve outcomes. Taskforce recommendations will be shared with ICCCP to inform future efforts at the institutional and legislative levels for our system.

Last, but not least, it is important to celebrate individual and institutional achievements. First, I would like to share some good news and a wonderful recognition for our retiring Executive Vice President of Finance and Administrative Service, Rob Galick. Rob was recognized by his peers as the Community College Business Officers (CCBO) Outstanding Chief Business Officer. He has been an integral member of this national organization for business officers at community colleges serving as its president and providing tremendous leadership at a critical time for CCBO. As you may know, Rob announced his retirement effective June 30, 2025, and continues to provide outstanding leadership, including sound fiscal management with balanced budgets, shepherding the institution through an ERP implementation, and overseeing major construction projects on campus. Rob truly deserves this honor. Congratulations Rob!

Finally, we're proud to receive the national Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award once again! Thanks to Dr. Johnson for collaborating with others across the institution to submit the award-winning application! I do want to emphasize, this work is not about the awards, but it is about assessing our strengths, identifying opportunities for improvement in our institutional strategies to achieve our DEI goals, cultivating an environment in which all our students and employees can thrive and more!



## Academic Updates

### *By the Numbers*

- Counseling Services
  - Counseling Services held 44 appointments in September.
  - Twenty-nine students/staff/faculty attended the Mental Health First Aid/Mental Health Awareness training in September.
- Enrollment Services
  - Despite the complicated FAFSA Simplification and new FAFSA rollout, Harper College is in great shape. The excellent collaborative efforts by all Enrollment Services Offices, Advising team, Business Office, Marketing Services and IT teams has resulted in great FAFSA and award outcomes.
    - We are down less than 1% (.765) in FAFSAs from last year to this year.
    - We are up 15.26% for students completing financial aid paperwork.
    - We are up 76.85% for students packaged with federal and state grant awards.
  - In September, the chatbot handled 59% (585) of all inquiries, while the remaining 41% (401) were managed by front-line staff. The most frequent topics were inquiries about "Health Science Programs" (73), "Course Schedules" (68), and "Registering for a Class" (67).
  - We sent over 63,000 broadcast emails to students and clients, including invitations to PASO events, targeted Advising communications, and Promise commitment reminders.
  - Staff logged interactions with students in the CRM, which included 3,998 cases and 2,392 calls across multiple departments. Additionally, we tracked 1,683 in-person visits from the One Stop, Admissions Outreach, Testing Center, and Cultural Center.
  - Admissions Processing has introduced an acknowledgment statement for programs designated as gainful employment on the online student application for credit program applicants. This enhancement enables the college to accurately collect and report data in line with current federal regulations. These changes will support the college in ensuring compliance and transparency when communicating program outcomes to students and the public.
  - Admissions Processing also introduced new values in the Military Status and Student Services sections of the student application to improve data collection for the Student Engagement office. These updates will enhance support for military-connected students.
- Hawks Care
  - In September, 63 students met with staff; 217 students accessed the food pantry; one student visited the career closet.
- Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
  - We have welcomed 73 new students into PTK since fall enrollment opened a month ago, and we expect many more before it closes on December 31. Our PTK information session in September was very well attended, and we look forward to welcoming new members at our Fall Welcome Reception this month.
  - We have admitted 20 new students to the Honors Program since the start of the fall semester.
- Resources for Learning
  - Library Building Traffic
    - In September, 21,006 patrons visited the library.
  - Semester Loan Technology
    - The library checked out 108 Library Chromebooks, 81 graphing calculators, and 21 Wi-Fi hotspots to students in September.
  - Adult Education Development (AED) Chromebook Distribution

- The library facilitated the checkout of 334 AED Chromebooks for AED students at the main campus, Learning and Career Center (LCC), and Education and Work Center locations during September.
- Academic Support Center (ASC)
  - Through week six of the fall 2024 term, the ASC has logged 5,474 student visits, almost a thousand more than this time last year. At the six-week mark in the fall 2023 semester, the ASC had logged 4,574 visits.
  - The Anatomy Room has seen some of the greatest gains, logging 1,404 student visits so far this fall compared to 1,003 at this point during fall 2023.
  - Through the end of September, the ASC has conducted 32 presentations for courses and organizations, including workshops, tours and class visits. The ASC has also participated in five campus-wide events this fall.

## Events

- Enrollment Services
  - In September, Admissions Outreach in collaboration with the Project Assistance, Surpassing Obstacles (PASO) committee hosted our second annual Harper Fiesta. Ninety-three students attended with their families (315 attendees total). Compared to last year, we had a 22% increase in student participants.
  - Admissions Outreach will be hosting our annual High School Open House on Wednesday, October 30, 2024. New this year will be an early access event for seniors who have enrolled in Harper dual credit courses to promote dual credit pathways to Harper.
- Harper Wellness
  - The Thrive @ Harper Well-Being Bash took place in September. Over 200 students participated in the event and 83% of students who participated in the scavenger hunt were able to correctly list the three-digit suicide/crisis lifeline number (988) that they can text/call.
  - Twenty-five staff and faculty participated in the Nutrition Lunch N' Learn last month. The session was led and facilitated by a Harper Nutrition Intern, who is currently completing a community wellness rotation with Harper Wellness. Sixty-five percent of participants mentioned that they felt more motivated as a result of the presentation.
- Hawks Care
  - September is Hunger Action Month and National Student Parent Month. Hawks Care hosted "Thank a Food Hero" tables in Avanté each Monday where our Harper stakeholders could write a note of thanks to local pantry workers, and we featured family-friendly spaces on campus via social media.
- Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
  - Honors and PTK students volunteered at Feed My Starving Children and at Deer Grove Forest Preserve in September, collecting seeds to help with prairie restoration.
  - We brought 17 Honors and PTK students to a performance of *Inherit the Wind* at the Goodman Theater in Chicago last month.
  - The Honors Program hosted a table at Hullabaloo in September to help market the program.
  - We held our first meeting of the Honors Student Advisory Board at the end of last month, a place for students to recommend changes and developments to the Honors Program, with an equity lens.
- Specialized Advising
  - The One Million Degrees (OMD) Scholar Development Session (SDS) kicked off the academic year in September. There were 104 students in attendance at the event. The topic of the session was professionalism. It gave scholars the opportunity to prepare for the upcoming October session which will introduce the coaches (community members, faculty and staff).



- Start Smart and Learning Communities
  - Harper College is hosting the National Learning Communities Conference from November 6 to 8, 2024, at the Loew's Hotel in Rosemont. Over 150 administrators, faculty and staff from more than 35 colleges and universities across over 20 states are registered to attend. Final planning is underway, including the finalization of the breakout session schedule and securing sponsors for the event.
- Student Engagement
  - Women's Veteran and Military Connected Student Luncheon: The Center for Student Veterans and Military Connected Students hosted a Women's Luncheon in September. Thirty student and employee veterans, active service members, dependents and spouses were invited to network, connect with Harper College resources and hear from representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs including the Women's Program, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) program, and the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL).
  - The Black Student Union welcomed students back to campus with their annual Meet the Black Faculty and Staff event in the Building D Rotunda last month. This was a unique opportunity for new and returning students and employees to connect and bond through crafted intentional prompts and enjoy a snack together. Dr. Avis Proctor's inspirational message was a call to action for all in attendance, urging us to continue building these connections at Harper and achieve greatness together. The presence of our esteemed Black faculty and staff was tremendous. Their willingness to connect with and encourage our students made a meaningful difference, reinforcing the sense of community at Harper.
  - The Student Leadership Retreat is a program for student leaders in clubs and organizations to connect and learn about their unique leadership position within the college. Student Engagement welcomed over 50 student leaders to this year's retreat where they examined the topics of free speech and expressive activities, cultural competency, planning special events, and club recruitment. To begin the festivities, Provost Dr. Ruth Williams offered words of encouragement and aspiration for students to find their unique voice throughout their leadership journey and shared about her own journey. Associate Provost of Student Affairs Dr. Dennis Baskin left the students with parting words of encouragement to aspire to greatness and achieve their goals.

### Highlights

- Division/Program Highlights
  - Athletics
    - Harper's Coach Neberieza taking flight fast: The National Basketball Association (NBA) selected 12 current/former National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) student-athletes and employees for their 2024-25 Future Basketball Operations Stars Program (FBOS). Over 300 applications from within the NJCAA were received and Head Women's Basketball Coach Mari Neberieza emerged as one of the selected program participants. She will be a part of a six-month training program that will deliver professional development content on topics including scouting, roster construction, on-and-off-court player development, analytics, and the NBA Salary Cap. The program launched in September and runs through March 2025. Athletic Director Sherese Parker stated "I celebrate her selection and look forward to her using this opportunity to lead the young ladies on the Women's Basketball team and lead them WELL! #HawksFlyHIGH!" For more information, see [release](#).
    - The Hawks are making a successful transition to NJCAA DII: Several of our Hawks Athletic teams elevated from DIII to DII, providing athletic scholarships for the first time here at Harper! More than 90 student-athletes have been awarded financial assistance to help support their persistence towards their academic pursuits and athletic engagement. Student-athletes on the following teams transitioned to DII: Baseball, Basketball (Men's and Women's), Soccer (Men's & Women's), Softball, and Volleyball. Thank you to the Board of Trustees and our college leadership for this wonderful opportunity! #GoHawks!



- Career and Technical Programs
  - In September, the Learning and Career Center (LCC) was the site host for a Cook County Career Connector hiring event with same-day results of 247 attendees, 311 interviews, 47 second interview invitations and 10 conditional hires, with over 30 employer and job resource tables.
  - The LCC's Fall Resource Week, also held in September, familiarized LCC students with the college and community assets. Featured programs included Solar and CNA, the Reading Room, and LCC Hawks Care.
  - LCC fall headcount across Adult Education Development (AED), credit, CPE, and CE offerings is approximately 450. LCC Kids Care has supported the student success of 35 Harper student parents, with 50 of their children having attended at least one session this fall at LCC.
- Liberal Arts
  - In September, the Harper jazz faculty, under the leadership of Event Coordinator Kirby Fellis, proudly presented the inaugural Annual Harper College Jazz Honors Invitational. High school students from across the Midwest gathered on our campus for a day dedicated to music, mentorship, and community engagement with our esteemed jazz faculty.



- Start Smart and Learning Communities
  - We are collaborating with Technical Manager Dan Newbart, Security and Business Continuity Analyst Nannette Nefczyk, and Student Communication Manager Becki Suthers to promote participation in the new Student Security Awareness module developed in Blackboard. This semester, we will support this initiative by informing instructors and students in Start Smart courses about the new module. In future semesters, we plan to integrate this module into the First Year Seminar course material.

- Employee Highlights

- Career and Technical Programs
  - Hospitality Management Program Coordinator Dr. Jan Roy was appointed to the Meet Chicago Northwest Advisory Board.
- Liberal Arts
  - Professor of Art and Design Jason Peot was awarded a public art commission for the City of Elmhurst, Illinois. The large outdoor sculpture is the centerpiece of the new First Responders Memorial Plaza in front of the Elmhurst Fire Station. Peot's sculpture, titled "Vestige," incorporates a 13-foot-long steel beam pulled from the wreckage of the World Trade Center after 9-11. The project was unveiled and dedicated in a ceremony last month.



### *Supporting the Strategic Plan*

- Advising Services, OMD, and the Center for New Students and Orientation have begun classroom presentations on academic planning and Area of Interest (AOI) exploration to promote the first semester milestones in the Path for Success. These presentations will be offered throughout the semester.

## **Advancement**

- Alumni Relations, Latinos Unidos and the Office of DEI, cohosted a reunion for Latinos Unidos Club alumni. Over 50 guests attended, including alumni, current Latinos Unidos students and current and former faculty advisors to the club. Attendees were able to tour the Harper Cultural Center at the event.
- Nearly 50 guests attended the Harper College Educational Foundation's Interactive Tour in September. The Foundation hosted donors, HOPE Giving Circle members and supporters and prospects as they toured Harper facilities and learned more about Harper College's curricula and programming through faculty-led interactive presentations. Participating departments for this year's Interactive Tour included: AED, Drones, Fire Science and Graphic Arts.
- This month, the Foundation has awarded \$866,581 to 453 students for the 2024-2025 academic year. One new program fund has been established - the Mesmer Family Fund. This brings the total of new donor-sponsored scholarships created since July 1, 2024, to four.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

- For the second year in a row, Harper College received the HEED Award! This award recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion and creating an inclusive campus environment. We are pleased to be one of 16 community colleges nationwide to receive this distinction.
- Table Talk is a four-week series created in collaboration with Harper Wellness and the Office of DEI, offering students a space to discuss identity, values, and the first-generation college experience over a hot meal. The initiative aims to foster connections and enhance students' abilities to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Twenty-one students attended the first session on September 26, 2024.
- In celebration of Latine Heritage Month, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion displayed 51 posters of our Latine faculty, staff and administrators in the Rotunda. Please check out this link to get to know our community members better.



### Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement and/or helped facilitate nine articles that appeared in local and national media publications. Media mentions include:
  - The *Daily Herald* reported on the growing enrollment at Harper and other area community colleges, interviewing Dr. Ruth Williams, provost, and shooting photos at the Dental Hygiene Clinic.
  - *Forbes*, *Trustee Quarterly Magazine* and other publications reported on how community college trustees connect with technology opportunities, speaking with Board Chair Bill Kelley about how Harper supported its Innovation Accelerator and is leading a tech-focused consortium of institutions.
  - The *Chicago Tribune* profiled Harper student Aiden Branss, founder of Branss Books, a publishing house that prints books by young authors from the area.
  - The *Daily Herald*, *Patch* and other publications ran articles about Harper's Film Lab, film festivals and series, and a ribbon-cutting event officially opening the new facility.
  - The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Elmhurst Independent* reported on a new Elmhurst 9-11 memorial that was designed by Harper Arts Professor Jason Peot.
  - The *Daily Herald* profiled Harper alum and archeologist David Brown who seeks to find missing U.S. military personnel lost in warfare stretching back to World War II.
  - *Farm Week Now* and the Illinois Farm Bureau published a report about Rep. Nicolle Grasse bringing members of the Effingham County Farm Bureau to tour Harper and learn about its manufacturing training programs.
  - The *Daily Herald* reported on an assessment of Wheeling Township's mental health needs, prepared by Dr. Sean Bailey of Harper's Access to Growth Learning Solutions.
  - *Facility Safety Management*, *Safety Online* and the U.S. Department of Labor announced that Harper was among the educational institutions to receive Susan Harwood Training Grants.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published pieces announcing that Harper's sonography programs are seeking ultrasounds exam volunteers.
  - The *Daily Herald* ran a story about Dr. Ribhi Salhi, adjunct political science instructor, speaking as part of a virtual event centered on U.S. elections at Elgin Community College.
  - *Patch* previewed a Faith & Blue event co-hosted by Harper Police and the college's Campus Crusade for Christ student club.
  - The *Daily Herald* reported that Dr. Proctor was among the outstanding women leaders honored by the Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce Women's Biz Net.

### Community Relations

- The FY25 school tours are in full swing. Over the past three weeks more than 500 young students from CCSD59 have visited campus. During the tour, students participate in interactive activities hosted by faculty and staff including fire science, graphic design, HVAC, manufacturing and metal fabrication, health sciences, marketing, wellness, world languages, chemistry and more. Students also talk with Harper students about their classes, career goals and what it is like to be in college.

### Legislative Affairs

- Dr. Proctor and Jeff Julian, chief of staff and vice president of external affairs, attended the AACC's Advocates in Action conference in Washington, D.C., where they learned more about the AACC's higher ed federal agenda and met with staff members from the offices of Sens. Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, and Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi, Mike Quigley, Delia Ramirez, and Jan Schakowsky.
- Jeff Julian attended legislative breakfasts hosted by the Hoffman Estates Chamber of Commerce and the Barrington Chamber of Commerce interacting with state legislators including State Senators Cristina Castro, Dan McConchie and Laura Murphy, and State Representatives Marty McLaughlin, Anna Moeller, Michelle Mussman, and Nabeela Syed.



- Dr. Proctor and Jeff Julian held a meeting with State Rep. Tracy Katz Muhl to discuss support for community college baccalaureate degrees. Rep. Katz Muhl also attended the college's strategic plan dialogue session on *The Changing Landscape of Work*.

#### *Marketing Services*

- Marketing Services provided a fresh new exterior wall and door design for one of the most popular destinations for students on campus, the Gaming Lounge on the ground floor of the Foglia Foundation Health and Recreation Center (Building M).



### **Finance and Administrative Services**

#### *Facilities Management*

- The scope of work for the Emergency Services Training Center (ESTC) Study includes architectural and engineering services required for the program analysis of the new Emergency Services Training Center. Bids opening in November. The award recommendation is scheduled to go to the December Board.

#### *Human Resources*

- In September, members of Human Resources, Information Technology and Accounting Services departments attended Oracle CloudWorld to learn about new features and enhancements to our current Human Capital Management (HCM) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Oracle products.
- Human Resources Professional Development has rolled out two new cohorts for current leaders and aspiring leaders to build their skills. Leading the Harper Way has been redesigned and updated. Emergent Leaders is a new cohort designed to work with employees who desire to move into a leadership position and build their skills to achieve this.
- With the rollout of the new 2024 Title IX regulations, all Harper College employees are required to complete "Preventing Harassment & Discrimination: Non-Supervisors Clery Act and Title IX (Illinois)" before October 31, 2024. As of October 1, we are 37% complete. The Title IX team continues to work on updates to the college policy, procedures and campus education.

#### *Risk Management*

- The Department of Risk Management conducted Emergency Operations Center (EOC) training covering the Incident Command System (ICS), the Planning Process and EOC equipment and orientation.



## Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- The Learning Assessment Committee and the Academy for Teaching Excellence held the 16th Annual Harper College Assessment Conference and Share Fair. More than 90 faculty and staff attended the conference. The conference, focusing on student learning assessment, included the keynote address Teaching and Thinking with AI, presented by José Antonio Bowen, a Senior Fellow at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and co-author of Teaching with AI. Other sessions included Guardrails for AI: Guiding Appropriate Use in Student Assessments where participants explored the opportunities and challenges generative AI tools have in assessment design and evaluation of student learning and Coming Through Loud and Clear: Assessing Harper Student Communication Skills where results of the spring 2024 assessment were reviewed and participants engaged in discussion on how to improve students' communication skills.
- An analysis of transfer outcomes was conducted for students pursuing a transfer degree at Harper, tracking cohorts from fall 2015 to fall 2017 over six years. Results indicated a strong correlation between transferring and earning a bachelor's degree after first earning an associate degree, reflecting national trends. Students who earn an associate degree prior to transferring have higher bachelor's degree completion rates than those who transfer before completing their Harper degree.
- The strategic plan dialogue session *The Changing Landscape of Work* was held in September and was attended by 145 staff, faculty, and community members. Attendees heard from panelists regarding the rapidly evolving employment landscape. Discussion included the need to prepare workers for future careers that may not exist today, the role of artificial intelligence and automation in the workforce, the impact of remote work, and the importance of diversity and inclusion in a global working environment.

## Workforce Solutions

- Harper was funded for another year of the Susan Harwood OSHA grant. This year's Targeted Topic is Temperature Extremes in the Workplace: Extreme Heat and Extreme Cold. Starting January 2025, Occupational Safety and Health programming that Harper had previously developed will be offered directly to companies as part of Harper Business Solutions (rather than as open enrollment through Community Education).
- Last month, Manager of Workforce Initiatives Besa Sadiku participated in the annual Apprenticeship Bootcamp in Joliet, Illinois, a key event bringing together employers, educators, and apprenticeship leaders from across the state. The event provided valuable networking opportunities and insights into best practices for expanding apprenticeship programs. Harper's involvement highlights our commitment to strengthening partnerships and enhancing workforce development through innovative apprenticeship initiatives.
- In September, Vice President of Workforce Solutions Dr. Michelé Smith, Senior Director of Workforce Solutions and Job Placement Darice Trout, Manager of Workforce Initiatives Besa Sadiku, Workforce Coordinators Ann Garoon, and Nancie Mohedano from the Workforce Solutions Division attended Zurich's Apprentice Graduation event in Schaumburg, Illinois. Zurich celebrated its largest nationwide cohort of apprentices since the program's inception in 2016. Out of 59 graduates from locations such as California, New York, and Harold Washington College; 33 were proud graduates from the Harper College cohort, underscoring Harper's strong partnership with Zurich and commitment to workforce development.