



May 2020

Dear Colleagues:

While the way in which we commemorate the end of spring semester may have changed due to the pandemic, the traditional hallmarks—the energy, excitement and celebration of our graduating Class of 2020—are stronger than ever! Congratulations to our graduates, who have persevered in what are truly unprecedented times. And to the faculty and staff who supported our students as they crossed the finish line, your skill, expertise, and dedication are remarkable. Thank you for making sure that no matter what obstacles we faced, we worked collaboratively to ensure our students completed their goals. We are Harper; we did this together!

Our senior leadership team is planning for the uncertainty that lies ahead. We are analyzing and evaluating our best paths forward for strategically managing enrollment as well as the ambiguity in our funding sources. The state of Illinois is projecting a \$6.2-7.4B shortfall for next year's budget while conversations are ongoing at the state and local level about providing property tax relief to citizens. Meanwhile we have seen better trends in our summer enrollment numbers, but there is still room to improve. We will be using a surgical, calculated approach to preparing the FY21 budget to ensure that we:

- Prepare for **long-term uncertainty in funding sources**;
- Keep students whole and **on track to completion**;
- Create new programs to **address emerging workforce needs**;
- Avoid making **drastic cuts**;
- Maintain a **strong workforce** to deliver our programs.

Per my recent announcement, the 2020 fall semester will be taught primarily online, with some courses using an online with scheduled chat modality. We are still awaiting state guidance on labs and practica, but our hope is to conduct those in a blended modality observing safety measures and physical distancing. Registration will open on May 29. We will require a limited number of employees to return to work on campus to ready us for the fall 2020 semester; the college will contact those employees as we finalize plans. Based on our knowledge today, most employees will continue to work remotely until our region has moved into future phases of the governor's [Restore Illinois](#) framework.

I thank you all for your acts of kindness, generosity, and love for your fellow colleagues, our students and our community members. I am inspired by you and hopeful for what lies ahead in our future. Regardless, we will face it together. We are Harper!

Campus News . . .

[Student Success](#)

[Finance and Administrative Services](#)

[Advancement, Marketing and](#)

[Communications](#)

[Institutional Planning and Strategic](#)

[Alliances](#)

[Workforce Solutions](#)

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)

Student Success

Student Development

- Since we began accepting fall applicants on May 1, 120 new students completed the orientation program; a 55% increase from the first week the previous year. Orientation currently includes an online module focused on acclimating students to the College, an overview of resources, and success strategies; as well as a one-on-one, phone advising appointment.
- The official IPEDS fall-to-fall retention rate for first time in college, credential-seeking full time students was recently released for the cohort that began in fall 2018. 75.44% of those students were enrolled at Harper a year later in fall 2019 or had earned a credential within one year. This retention rate represents a record high and an over 7% increase from the fall 2013 cohort.
- Created, for the first time, a graduation profile of first-time-in college, degree-seeking students who began Harper in fall 2016 and who earned a credential within three years. These students, along with those who did not graduate within three years, were analyzed among nine student characteristics. There is no doubt that 'starting strong' is critical to student success and sets the tone from the very start. Among this cohort of students, graduation rates were double for those who either began Harper with college-level academic placement or became college-ready within one year, and completed the following within their first semester: successful participation in a Start Smart experience, development of an educational plan, and earning credit for every attempted first semester course.

COVID-19 Student Support Efforts

- Michele DeCanio and Jennifer Rojek, counseling faculty, created and posted a three-part *Mindfulness Matters* blog to continue to support students virtually. It included topics such as an introduction to mindfulness, breathing exercises for stress reduction and gratitude journaling.
- Configured Starfish to allow advisors to send additional nudges, above and beyond the standard case management communication standards, to provide extra support to students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 5,000 nudges were sent during the last week of the semester to encourage case managed students to finish strong and to consider summer enrollment.
- Created and implemented an improved tracking mechanism within Banner to document which students receive gift cards along with the corresponding value. Input was gathered from IT, Advising, the Registrar's Office and the Business Office, and associated tracking reports were developed.
- ADS Virtual Open House launched on May 1 on ADS website and the link was shared with more than 20 high school special education coordinators and teachers for them to share with their high school students with disabilities and their parents. There are two versions of the Open House: one in Spoken English and one with Spanish captioning.
 - ☐ English: <https://livestream.com/harpercollege/ads2020english>
 - ☐ Spanish: <https://livestream.com/harpercollege/ads2020spanish>
- Transition Autism Program currently has 11 students with autism spectrum disorder admitted into the FY21 cohort, and we anticipate the cohort to be full with 20 students by this summer.



- With the recent shift to institution-wide online learning, numerous students with disabilities have encountered inaccessible online courses and faculty not being prepared to address accommodation needs remotely which has impacted their education experience. In response to the issues, ADS and the Academy for Teaching Excellence have been meeting on a weekly basis to identify opportunities to improve the digital accessibility of the courses. The accessibility standards have been incorporated in the rubric that will be utilized to evaluate the quality of online course content. ADS and the Academy are currently working on developing digital accessibility workshops for this summer where the faculty will learn the existing resources that are available for them to create accessible course content and best practices in working with students with disabilities in a remote setting. For the new online Associate Degree program that will be launched this fall, all of the courses for the programs are expected to be fully accessible according to the rubric, and ADS and the faculty will be given professional development training on digital accessibility. A brief survey will be sent out this week to ADS students to assess their experience with the online courses and learn more about their accessibility needs. The data will provide us with some insight on how we can better serve students with disabilities and the gaps that we have not previously identified.

Fast Track Completion Rates/Spring and Summer 2020 Fast Track Graduates

- 123 students are earning 153 credentials (since some earned more than one)
- Breakdown of credentials is as follows:
 - Degrees: Total of 25 degrees and 6 types:
 - Associate in Applied Science in Business Administration: 15
 - Associate in Applied Science in Supply Chain Management: 2
 - Associate in Applied Science in Manufacturing Technology/Supply Chain Management Specialization: 2
 - Associate in Applied Science in Health Information Technology: 2
 - Associate in Arts: 1
 - Associate in General Studies: 3
 - Certificates: Total of 128 certificates and 7 types:
 - Business Management: 8
 - Health Information Technology Medical Coding: 8
 - Human Resource Management: 30
 - Inventory/Production Control: 15
 - Logistics: 14
 - Procurement: 39
 - Supply Chain Management: 14

Health Careers

- The Massage Therapy Program at Harper has been granted programmatic accreditation through the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA). While accreditation is standard in many health care professions, in the massage therapy field it is still new and is seen as the high-water mark toward which a school can aim. Harper becomes just the 50th massage therapy program school in the country and the third program in Illinois to be granted this level of recognition. The accreditation is in place until April 30, 2027.

Career and Technical Programs

- The Learning and Career Center celebrates Bobbi Pineda, who for the last two years has studied full time at Harper while working evenings at the Learning and Career Center. She just earned her associate's and Phi Theta Kappa designation!



- Student interns in LEJ were asked to select specific areas of assignment that they weren't allowed to experience before their internship abruptly ended. The host police agencies were then contacted and graciously scheduled the following personnel to call in to our virtual session through Bb Collaborate and present on the topics requested. The interns then wrote a report on what they learned from the presenter and these reports were not only part of their grade, but copies were emailed to that particular police employee to thank and encourage them for giving of their time. This not only satisfied the internship requirements but also provided value to the learning experience despite the situation. Here is a list of individuals who graciously participated: Arlington Heights Police Police Officer Ryan Butcher, Topic: K9 Unit; Elk Grove Village Police Detective Veronica Rohman, Topic: The Role of a Juvenile Officer; Prospect Heights Police Ms. Rebeca Rosario, Topic: Victim's Advocate in the Social Services Unit; and Wheeling Police Officer Laura Joschko, Topic: Perspective of a Female Police Officer.
- The Higher Learning Commission acknowledged Susanne Bajt in recognition of 10 years of service for her outstanding contribution to the Higher Learning Commission.

Finance and Administrative Services

Facilities Management

- The scope of work for the development of the Campus Master Plan will capture the spirit and character of the college while addressing the complexities of evolving enrollment and educational programs. The principal goal of the Master Plan is to guide the future development of the campus in a planned and orderly manner to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan, the College Mission and Vision Statements while integrating the Harper Core Values. The interview process is complete, and a recommendation is being made to authorize staff to negotiate terms and fees with the highest ranked firm.
- The scope of work for the Building M Gymnasium Floor Replacement Project will include the demolition and replacement of the new gymnasium flooring in Building M. The existing flooring has exceeded its life expectancy and requires replacement. The project is scheduled to start in March 2020 and be completed in August 2020. Phase I for the environmental remediation is complete. Phase II for the installation of the new flooring continues and is scheduled to be complete in August 2020.

Information Technology

- Employee Technical Skills Training: LinkedIn Learning Enterprise implemented and being used - Over 1,500 courses attended as of 5/11/2020.
- Service Desk averaging 150 contacts a day with technology support.
- Desktop Services:
 - IT staff members came to campus and did health checks and powered on 652 workstations.
 - Image and distribution of additional 48 laptops to staff and faculty
 - Ordered and delivered 50 loaner Chromebooks to library; ordered and delivered 80 Chromebook's to fulfill a grant

Advancement, Marketing and Communications

Advancement

- The Alumni Program, in partnership with Student Involvement, hosted a “Virtual Cap Décor” party for graduating students. Students had the opportunity to request a free cap and tassel and were tasked to decorate it and share it on social media and with the college the week leading up to graduation. Hundreds of cap orders came in and students showed pride in themselves and Harper College through pictures and creative décor on graduation caps. Alumni were invited to share “shout out” messages to graduating student on the Virtual Graduation website. Alumni submitted messages of congratulations, support and well wishes to the class of 2020.
- Since late March, over \$77,000 in donations have been secured for the Harper Student Emergency Relief Fund. These donations combined with resources from the Foundation and college, resulted in over \$254,000 in funding being available for Harper students. As of May 1, 554 students had received support from the Emergency Relief Fund.
- Harper student Joanna is the mother of a 2-year-old. She applied for support to help pay her rent and groceries after being told not to come to work due to Covid-19. She is not being paid. After receiving the Emergency Relief Fund Award, Joanne wrote, “I want to thank the people that made this possible for my son and me. This will help me buy groceries and help pay some of my bill. Thank you so much this will help a ton.”

Grants Office

- The Grants Office efficiently and effectively transitioned to a remote work environment without any disruption to operations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic response, many grant makers have shifted their funding to support organizations rapidly changing their operations to meet the needs of their communities. Letters of interest are pending which seek funding for emergency student relief. Many of Harper’s current grants, particularly state and federal government grants, have required budget modifications and extensions to reallocate funding to cover costs related to the shift to online learning and to allow additional time to meet grant requirements.
- Twelve proposals requesting more than \$180,000 were submitted for the Resource for Excellence (RFE) program and the top ten were selected for presentations. On April 28, the RFE Committee held a meeting via WebEx with the ten project teams for brief presentations and Q&A sessions. The committee recommended that all ten projects receive partial or full funding with a total of \$87,805 awarded. Summaries of the project can be found at <https://www.harpercollege.edu/grants/resource-for-excellence.php>. Projects will begin on July 1, 2020.
- The Grants Office designed and launched a new external-facing grants webpage (harpercollege.edu/grants) to serve as a comprehensive resource for the college community.
- In April, the college received a grant award of \$2,763,258 from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) through the U.S. Department of Education. This is the student portion of the CARES Act funding. The Act requires this funding be promptly provided directly to students who incurred expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, healthcare, and childcare expenses. The institutional portion of the funding (remaining \$2,763,258) will be awarded in May and can cover institutional costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus incurred after March 13, 2020.

- The Educational Foundation received a grant award of \$1,697.90 through the IBHE/ICCB/ISAC Student Emergency Needs Fund managed by the SIU Foundation. Funding for this initial allocation was from the Julian Grace Foundation, the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund, and Evans Family Philanthropy.
- The college received supplemental grant funds for the Adult Education program through ICCB in the amount of \$22,969. This competitive funding will be used to purchase Chromebooks for Adult Education student instruction.
- Harper's Office of International Education received a \$2,000 grant from the University of Illinois Center for Global Studies to support critical less commonly taught language (LCTL) and area studies development at Harper.

Marketing Services

- Marketing Services web team collaborated with the Honors Convocation and Graduation teams to create online graduation experiences for both ceremonies. This includes a series of ceremony videos, celebrity shout outs (for graduation), and interactive features that include opportunities for each grad to create profiles, and family, friends, faculty, and staff to leave congratulatory messages
 - Convocation was held on May 12. Approximately, 400 people viewed the pre-recorded ceremony live for more than 5,000 total minutes.
 - Graduation was held May 16. As of Wednesday, May 13, more than 900 people have left messages of congratulations online for grads, with 760 congratulatory comments left on individual graduate profiles.
- With graduation, the shift to online learning and other circumstances related to COVID-19, social media engagement and impressions have both significantly increased in the past month, with a 45% increase in impressions across all institutional channels. Popular posts from the past two weeks have included cap decoration and Dr. Proctor's message to students.
- Summer enrollment campaigns were completely revised and relaunched on April 16 to reflect the shift to online learning and services. This includes multi-segment campaigns across traditional and digital media. Since the campaign launch on April 16, traffic to the summer enrollment landing page has increased 189% over previous month (11,299 page views vs 3,911) and 33% over previous year (11,299 page views vs 8,523).

Community Relations

- Community Relations is seeing great success with the new bi-monthly newsletter, which is sent to Harper's community and civic partners including school districts, chambers of commerce, business associations, rotaries and nonprofit organizations. Community leaders are kept up-to-date on the status of the college, resources available to the community and ways Harper faculty, staff and students are giving back and lifting each other up during these challenging times.
- While we may not be able to meet in person, our partners are still connecting virtually. Community Relations has been attending virtual networking events sponsored by the different chambers of commerce, weekly meetings with the Rotary Club of Elk Grove Village and monthly board meetings for the Greater O'Hare Association. Even during a pandemic, we still find a way to connect.



Media Relations

- Professor Richard Johnson wrote a column for the *Community College Journal* about Harper's efforts to incorporate internationalization into curriculum and preparing students for a global workforce.
- The *Daily Herald* ran an article on Harper's COVID-19 student emergency relief fund, which is helping students to keep focus on their studies. Harper student Esmeralda Zamora was featured.
- The *Daily Herald* ran an article on how community colleges are supporting students through the CARES Act stimulus funding. Harper's allocation is \$5.5 million, at least half of which must directly support students. The article was distributed on the Illinois Community College Trustees Association listserv.
- The *Daily Herald* ran a regional article on how community colleges are helping students in need during the pandemic. It mentioned Harper's student emergency relief fund and the Finish Line grant. The article was also featured on the *Community Colleges News Now* site.
- *The New York Times* ran an article about virtual study abroad that mentions how Harper Professor Richard Johnson plans to incorporate videos from Rome in a fall humanities class. The effort is part of a virtual curriculum infusion project he's working on with the Study Abroad Association. The Hechinger Report ran the article as well.
- The *Daily Herald* ran an article on how Harper's Small Business Development Center is helping businesses navigate challenges related to the pandemic.
- *Insurance Journal* ran an article on apprenticeship programs and highlighted Harper's partnership with Zurich.
- The *Daily Herald* ran an article on Harper offering its summer classes online.
- The *Chicago Tribune* ran an article on high school graduates making college plans in the wake of the pandemic uncertainty. Harper was mentioned as an alternative to a four-year institution.
- *Journal and Topics* ran an article on Harper's partnership with District 214 to produce personal protective equipment to help front-line workers.
- The *Daily Herald* ran an article on how some schools are projecting enrollment drops. It mentions how Harper is preparing for a variety of scenarios.

Legislative Affairs

State

- On May 5, Governor J.B. Pritzker introduced Restore Illinois, a five-phase regional plan to reopen the state's economy on a regional basis in accordance with key public health metrics. The Northeast Illinois region will certainly be the last of the four regions to reopen. Schools fall into phase 4, Revitalization, which is characterized by allowing gatherings of 50 people or fewer; restaurants and bars reopening; travel resuming; and childcare and schools reopening under guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health. In this phase, face coverings and social distancing are the norm.
- The General Assembly will reconvene in Springfield on May 20-22 for the first time in two months. It is likely that the legislature will consider providing property tax relief; however, by how much and in what form remains uncertain. Legislators also face pressure to pass a budget for fiscal year 2021; any vote after May

31 will require a three-fifths majority, though Democrats have supermajorities in both chambers and can act without Republican support.

- State revenue projections are bleak. The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability in its April report said state revenue fell by more than \$2.7 billion. The governor's financial team is now projecting a \$10 billion budget hole over two years due to the pandemic.

Federal

- House Democrats have proposed a new, \$3 trillion pandemic relief bill that would provide direct payments to individuals and households, relief for state and local governments, hazard pay for essential workers, and funding for testing and contact tracing, among other provisions.
- The U.S. Department of Education announced sweeping changes to Title IX regulations on how colleges must handle sexual-assault and sexual-harassment complaints, bolstering protections for accused students and employees.

Internal Communications

- The college held its second Town Hall via WebEx. This event included presentations by Dr. Proctor, Dr. Coons, Roger Spayer, Beth Ripperger and Biology Professor Dr. Tong Cheng. Dr. Cheng, who is from Wuhan, China, shared an overview of the scientific data about COVID-19 and used the analogy of Typhoid Mary to help employees understand asymptomatic transmission. Additionally, all members of the Incident Command team were panelists for the Q & A section of the presentation. Nearly 600 employees tuned in for this event and, due to their high interest, we extended the Q & A section an additional ten minutes to address as many questions as possible. A copy of the Town Hall is available on Harper's intranet, HIP, for anyone who could not attend, and the FAQs on HIP have been expanded to incorporate the content shared at the Town Hall.
- In collaboration with Human Resources, we reimagined the way we could present the Employee Recognition and Service Awards under the current remote-work conditions. We used WebEx to present the event online and brought it to life with stories from four employees who represented four different employee classifications and varying lengths of service. The event also provided the opportunity to honor our retirees who will be leaving the college in the next few months. While not the in-person send-off they may have hoped for, the recognition was greatly appreciated. The event attracted nearly 250 attendees. Attendance exceeded previous on-campus versions by more than 50% and survey data shows that the event was very well-received.
- Last October, Internal Communication collaborated with Harper Wellness to launch the Harper Wellness Yammer group as part of the Internal Communication 3-year plan. Yammer is an internal social network platform that supports conversations among employees. When the college switched to remote work, Yammer became a place for colleagues to congregate, share stories and support one another. Information about emotional, physical and social well-being is being shared by employees from across the organization with articles about stress, photos of new "furry" office mates along with fun challenges, including an "exercising with toilet paper" throw down between the wellness manager and a faculty member, for example. The Academy for Teaching Excellence has since launched a Yammer group to support online instruction.



Institutional Planning and Strategic Alliances

- The Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) has provided the 2020 Environmental Scan. The purpose of the Environmental Scan is to identify the trends and drivers of change that will shape the Harper landscape in the next three to five years. The broad trend and issue areas covered are economic, demographic, technological, social and educational. The scan highlights major issues facing community colleges. Beginning with this scan, CGS conducted a program gap analysis to identify programs with room to expand and new program opportunities.
- The Outcomes Assessment Office published the annual Outcomes Assessment Report. This report summarizes the assessment work of faculty and staff, highlighting the use of assessment results to improve student learning and department effectiveness. General education assessment information is also included in the report.

Workforce Solutions

- The Job Placement Resource Center has successfully transitioned to fully online services: Some of their activities include:
 - Offering virtual appointments and phone calls to students and alumni to help with resume reviews for classroom assignments and job search preparations.
 - Engaging students through social media (Instagram and Facebook) about JPRC offerings and latest information.
 - Completed series of 3 instructional videos on registering, posting a resume and job search on Hire a Hawk on JPRC website.
 - Created "Job Search in a Pandemic" and "How to Prepare for a Video Interview" information sheets for the JPRC website.
- Harper's Small Business Development Center continues to help small business owners understand and apply for emergency funding options, explore alternate revenue sources when possible, and provide general support and training during the pandemic. The Center hosted an email marketing webinar with 60 participants.
- The Office of Apprenticeships continues to conduct outreach to employers and student candidates for the fall 2020 cohort of apprentices. The Office hosted a student information session with 30 participants. Additionally, there are 27 new employers registered for the employer virtual information session in May.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Dr. Michele Smith and Dr. Claudia Mercado served as panelists for the Greater Chicago Midwest Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) regarding the role of ombuds in higher education. The panel covered the following topics: the process of implementing the role of an ombudsperson, and the challenges and triumphs met with this new role; illustrating the needs of employees met with this role in place; and how conflicts of diversity, equity, and inclusion are resolved.
- Dr. Mercado participated in the recording of a documentary hosted by Harper student organization UNICEF. UNICEF was collecting stories and interviews of the impact of food insecurity locally as well as internationally.

- The Office of DEI is currently working with Bhattar Consulting to assess the area of DEI and provide feedback and recommendations by the end of the fiscal year. Meetings include various groups such as shared governance, the Diverse Faculty Fellows, former Special Assistants and the President's Cabinet. In addition, the consultants will host two open forums in early June to include all employee groups and students.
- The Office of DEI will host a DEI Lunch and Learn Virtual Series starting the week of May 26th. Harper faculty and staff will present on topics of trans-identified folks, white fragility, equity and equality in the virtual classroom, and the connection of the Community Cultural Wealth Model and Harper students.
- An additional 50 WiFi hot spot units were ordered for distribution to those in need of WiFi or stronger connections. Those interested in WiFi hot spots should contact Njambi Kamoche in the library. Many thanks to the library team for managing the technology loaner program!
- The Basic Needs Project completed the employee survey. In an effort to gauge student basic needs, a survey was sent out to employees asking them to share their experiences and interactions that they have had with students regarding basic needs concerns. The survey was administered by Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness in April. One hundred and fifty-four (N=154) employees responded to the survey as of April 13. 45% of respondents were faculty and 56% were staff.