

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT #512
COUNTIES OF COOK, KANE, LAKE, AND McHENRY, STATE OF ILLINOIS

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of Wednesday, September 10, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District No. 512 was called to order by Chair Bill Kelley on Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the Wojcik Conference Center, 1200 W. Algonquin Road, Palatine, Illinois.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Bill Kelley, Eric Knox, James Meyer, Walt Mundt, Nancy Robb, Pat Stack, and Student Member Adekunbi Aransiola

Absent: Member Diane Hill

Present via Webex: Dr. Avis Proctor, President

Also present: Dr. Jason Altmann, Interim Dean of Students; Mike Barzacchini, Director of Marketing Services; Dr. Yolonda Barnes, Dean - Business and Social Science; Dr. Dennis Baskin, Associate Provost of Student Affairs; Dr. Courtney Bolhous, Associate Dean - Career and Technical Programs; Tony Butler, Director of Risk Management; Orlando Cabrera, Tech Support Specialist; Scott Cashman, Senior Manager, Community, Career and Corporate Education; Craig Duetsch, EVP Finance and Administrative Services; Amanda Duval-Norwood, Chief Human Resources Officer; Marcia Frank, Senior Director - Innovation and Development; Dr. Kathleen Gorski, Associate Provost - Curriculum and Instruction; Bob Grapenthien, Controller; Erika Hartman, Administrative Coordinator; Michelle Harrell, Dean - Resources for Learning; Bob Hayley, Assistant Controller; Michele Jendreas, Interpreter; Jeff Julian, Chief of Staff/Vice President of External Affairs; Rick Kellerman, Network Specialist; Dr. Derek Leiter, Dean of Health Careers; Matt McLaughlin, Director of Insights, Planning and Decision Support; Nancy Medina, Executive Director of Facilities Management; Kristyn Meyer, Associate Executive Director Foundation; Veronica Mormino, Professor; Bob Parzy, Associate Provost Enrollment Services; Steve Petersen, Campus Architect; Gloria Plaza, Director, Business Operations and Security; Kimberley Polly, Dean Mathematics and Science; Colleen Rice, Executive Assistant Board of Trustees; Darlene Schlenbecker, Vice President of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness; Dr. Michelé Smith, Vice President of Workforce Solutions; Dr. Anna Strati, Director Institutional Research and Analytics; Deann Surdo, Director - Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness; Brian Thomason, Director of Client Systems; Darice Trout, Senior Director of Workforce Solutions and Job Placement; Dr. Sandra Villanueva, Dean - Teaching and Learning; Dr. Sean Warren-Crouch, Director - College Transitions; Dr. Roderica Williams, Dean of Student Success and Retention; Dr.

Ruth Williams, Provost; Riaz Yusuff, Chief Information Officer; Heather Zoldak, Chief Advancement Officer.

Guests: Kenneth Reyes, Harper Student Government Association.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION OF
FOLLOW UP ITEMS

Bob Grapenthien, Controller, presented updates to the FY2025 Budget Surplus since the previous exhibit was withdrawn last month. The projected surplus has decreased from \$10.9 million to \$6.7 million, primarily due to a substantial increase in property tax refunds issued by Cook County. Historically, these refunds have remained stable over the past decade, but this year they surged to \$5.9 million—\$3.7 million higher than earlier estimates.

In addition, the College implemented GASB Statement No. 101 as part of the FY25 audit for the year ending June 30, 2025. This new accounting standard updates the financial reporting for compensated absences such as vacation, sick leave, and compensatory time. Under GASB 101, the associated liability has been reclassified from the Education Fund to the GASB34 Fund. This reallocation has reduced the Education Fund's liabilities by \$2.6 million, thereby lowering the amount required to be transferred to the fund balance in order to maintain the 49.5% reserve threshold. This change does not alter the College's leave policies or result in new payouts to employees. Instead, it ensures that the cost of leave is recognized in the appropriate accounting period, aligning with when the benefit is earned.

Craig Duetsch, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services, explained that the Executive Cabinet worked collaboratively to assess the impact of this funding cut and realigned resources accordingly. Strategic initiatives were prioritized, and adjustments were made without compromising long-term goals. Given the multi-year nature of many initiatives, the Cabinet agreed that not all funding decisions needed to be finalized immediately. Some projects could be phased or modified over time, allowing for future adjustments as resources become available.

To mitigate a larger reduction in Student Success Initiatives, the Executive Cabinet identified opportunities to leverage approximately \$234,000 in Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) grant funds. This grant requires the College to scale at least two student success initiatives. To meet this requirement, smaller programs are being sunset while the new student success model and a strengthened financial wellness program are being expanded. For academic programs, residual funds from recently completed projects will be repurposed to replace

outdated equipment, ensuring continued program quality and excellence.

Reductions in Technology funding were made possible by strategically shifting certain external consulting work in-house and reevaluating equipment replacement plans. These strategies are designed to remain flexible and can be revisited as needed.

One project within Risk Management focused on campus emergency callboxes. Initial funding levels accounted for a range of scenarios, from replacing individual units to a full system-wide upgrade. By adopting a phased approach, the College will reduce immediate funding needs while continuing to ensure campus safety.

During the discussion, Trustee Mundt expressed concern about the complexity of the budget changes and requested a clearer summary of the sources of funding and the rationale behind each adjustment. He also asked for a reconciliation slide to show how the surplus is being balanced and where funds are being reallocated. In response, Dr. Proctor and Dr. Williams clarified that the HSI grant funds were not arbitrarily repurposed. Instead, they were used to scale initiatives already embedded in the grant, fulfilling federal commitments and supporting the student success model. The administration will provide a clearer summary of the funding sources and the reasoning behind each adjustment.

Dr. Proctor introduced Dr. Sean Warren-Crouch, Director of College Transitions, and gave an overview of the Harper Promise Scholarship. The Promise Scholarship is offered to every eligible incoming public high school student in Harper's district (High School Districts 211, 214 and 220). Students can earn up to two years of in-district tuition at Harper College if they:

- maintain solid grades and graduate college ready
- have good attendance
- don't repeat classes
- graduate on time
- provide service to your community

To date, 2,996 students have enrolled in the Harper Promise program. Of these, 841 students have completed all six years and earned a credential from Harper College. An additional 265 students earned credentials and transferred before completing the full program, bringing the total number of Harper credentials conferred to 1,106. According to National Student Clearinghouse data, 681 Promise students have gone on to earn bachelor's degrees. Collectively, Promise scholars have completed over 626,000 hours of community service.

Enrollment data was presented for high school classes from 2019 through 2028, showing steady participation across grade levels.

Notably, students were not dismissed for community service non-compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Class of 2025 had 711 students complete high school requirements, with similar patterns observed across other cohorts.

Enrollment and credential completion data were shared for each cohort. For example, of the 711 students in the Class of 2025 who completed high school requirements, 370 enrolled in Harper for their first semester. Completion rates across semesters and cohorts show consistent progression, with credential attainment ranging from 145 to 199 students per class.

Promise students consistently outperform their peers in academic metrics. Across four semesters, Promise scholars maintained higher GPAs, course success rates (grades of C or better), and average credit hours earned.

The Promise Advisory Committee implemented a policy change beginning with the Class of 2025, allowing prior credits to count toward the 60-credit Promise cap. This adjustment is expected to save approximately \$150,000 annually starting in FY26. Financial modeling assumes a 7% investment return and accounts for tuition increases. Attrition rates were noted: 30% from fall to spring (Term 1 to 2), 26% from spring to fall (Term 2 to 3), and 22% from fall to spring (Term 3 to 4).

Based on current projections and financial assumptions, the Promise Scholarship Program is positioned to support 30 graduating classes, from the Class of 2019 through the Class of 2048, which would end in fiscal year 2050, serving almost 13,000 students.

Trustees expressed their thanks and support for the Program.

Darlene Schlenbecker, Vice President of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness, overviewed the FY26 College Plan. Previously guided by six goals, the College now operates under three refined strategic goals: fostering a supportive and inclusive community, delivering innovative and responsive education, and ensuring strategic alignment across all initiatives.

Schlenbecker presented the FY26 College Plan, emphasizing its role as a comprehensive, 200+ page resource that integrates multiple institutional priorities. It is designed to serve as a centralized reference for board members and stakeholders, offering clarity on how various components of the College's operations align with broader strategic goals.

Key highlights of the plan include a continued emphasis on leading indicators of student success, diverse recruitment and retention of faculty and staff, and sustainability initiatives. These priorities reflect

direct input from the strategic planning process and are evident in ongoing construction projects and the integration of artificial intelligence into academic and administrative functions.

The FY26 College Plan will be available on Harper College's website after tonight's meeting. While electronic versions of the plan have been distributed to the Board of Trustees, printed copies are available upon request.

Trustee Mundt spoke on the Board's new implementation of BoardEffect, a board management software solution designed to improve efficiency and overall experience of board operations. The College Plan is now available in BoardEffect for the Board to review as well.

Harper College's upcoming reaffirmation of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is scheduled for 2028. Accreditation assures stakeholders that Harper College delivers high-quality education, maintains continuous improvement, and protects access to federal financial aid. It also ensures credit transferability, enhances employer recognition of Harper College's programs, and reinforces the institution's credibility.

Dr. Kathleen Gorski, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, explained that Harper College is currently on the HLC's Open Pathway, a designation for institutions with a strong history of accreditation. This pathway allows Harper to pursue strategic quality initiatives aligned with its institutional goals and student success priorities.

The reaffirmation process includes several major components. Harper will submit an assurance argument, which is a detailed, evidence-based narrative demonstrating alignment with HLC criteria. The college will also gather feedback through a student opinion survey, conduct a federal compliance review, and demonstrate adherence to assumed practices such as transparency, governance, and academic integrity. Finally, HLC representatives will conduct an on-site visit to engage directly with Harper's operations across all locations.

Professor Veronica Mormino outlined the four core criteria used by HLC to evaluate institutions. The first is mission, which must be clearly articulated and actively guide operations. The second is integrity, demonstrated through ethical governance and institutional support. The third is the quality of teaching and learning, which must be consistent across all programs and locations. The fourth is institutional effectiveness and sustainability, which involves strategic planning and resource management to meet future challenges.

A dedicated Steering Committee has been formed to lead efforts across each criterion. The committee includes experienced leaders

who will collect evidence, facilitate collaboration, and ensure alignment with Harper's mission and strategic goals. Dr. Gorski and Professor Mormino will serve as co-chairs of the Steering Committee, guiding the process and ensuring broad representation.

The reaffirmation journey officially began with a summer retreat. The committee reflected on the 2018 process, reviewed HLC criteria, and co-designed engagement strategies. The retreat culminated in the adoption of the unifying theme: "Once Upon A Mission: Celebrating Our Story." This theme frames accreditation not just as compliance, but as a celebration of Harper's identity, achievements, and shared history.

In fall 2025, campus-wide engagement has begun through presentations and forums. In spring 2026, the college will focus on collecting evidence and engaging stakeholders. The Steering Committee will also attend the HLC Annual Conference in March 2026 to stay current with expectations and best practices.

Student Trustee Aransiola asked how they plan to survey students. Dr. Gorski and Professor Mormino hosted an interactive table at the campus Hullabaloo event. Students participated in an activity where they answered potential HLC survey questions and learned about the importance of accreditation. A formal, full student survey will be conducted and analyzed by the Institutional Research office in the coming months.

Board members expressed appreciation for the clarity and passion of the presentation. They acknowledged the leadership quality of those involved and the importance of the reaffirmation process.

Jeff Julian reviewed the Board Packet.

FORMAL ACTIONS

Member Stack motioned, Member Mundt seconded to enter closed session to discuss OMA section 2(c)(1): The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body... at 6:04 p.m. In a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Closed session began at 6:12 p.m.

Attending via phone at 6:22 p.m., Attorney Phil Gerner, Robbins-Schwartz.

Present: Members Bill Kelley, Eric Knox, James Meyer, Walt Mundt, Nancy Robb, Pat Stack, and Student Member Adekunbi Aransiola.

Absent: Diane Hill

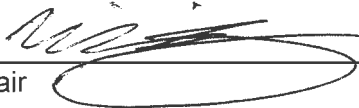
Member Stack motioned; Member Robb seconded to

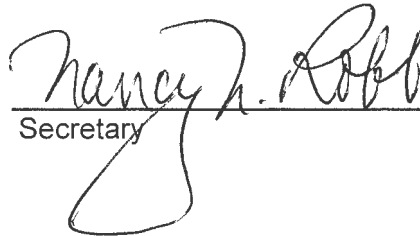
adjourn the closed session and re-enter the regular meeting at 6:49 p.m. In a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Robb moved, Member Mundt seconded, adjournment at 6:49 p.m.

In a voice vote, motion carried.


Chair


Secretary