

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, May 14, 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 Vice Chair Walt Mundt on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the Wojcik Conference Center, 1200 W. Algonquin Road, Palatine, Illinois.

ROLL CALL

Present: Members Eric Knox, James Meyer, Walt Mundt, Nancy Robb, Pat Stack

Absent: Members Diane Hill, Bill Kelley, and Student Member Adekunbi Aransiola

Also present: Dr. Jason Altmann, Interim Dean of Students; Dr. Yolanda Barnes, Dean of Business and Social Sciences; Mike Barzacchini, Director of Marketing Services; Dr. Dennis Baskin, Associate Provost of Student Affairs; Tony Butler, Director of Risk Management; Orlando Cabrera, Tech Support Specialist; Scott Cashman, Senior Manager, Community, Career and Corporate Education; Tom Cassell, Senior Director of Business Development and Event Operations; Amanda Duval-Norwood, Chief Human Resources Officer; Marcia Frank, Senior Director - Innovation and Development; Rob Galick, EVP Finance and Administrative Services; Dr. Kathleen Gorski, Associate Provost of Curriculum and Instruction; Bob Grapenthien, Controller; Erika Hartman, Administrative Coordinator; Bob Hayley, Assistant Controller; Dr. Joanne Ivory, Dean Career and Technical Programs; Dr. Tamara Johnson, Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Jeff Julian, Chief of Staff/Vice President of External Affairs; Rick Kellerman, Network Specialist; Matt McLaughlin, Director of Insights, Planning, and Decision Support; Nancy Medina, Executive Director of Facilities Management; Regan Myers, Director of Infrastructure Services; Bob Parzy, Associate Provost-Enrollment Services; Steve Petersen, Campus Architect; Gloria Plaza, Director, Business Operations and Security; Kim Pohl, Director of Communications; Colleen Rice, Executive Assistant Board of Trustees; Dr. Michelé Smith, Vice President of Workforce Solutions; Dr. Anna Strati, Director Institutional Research and Analytics; Brian Thomason, Director of Client Systems; Darice Trout, Senior Director of Workforce Solutions and Job Placement; Dr. Roderica Williams, Dean of Student Success and Retention; Dr. Ruth Williams, Provost; Riaz Yusuff, Chief Information Officer; Heather Zoldak, Chief Advancement Officer.

Guests: Lizzy A.R., Interpreter; Craig Duetsch, Citizen; Chris Gorman, Robbins Schwartz; Donna Stanton, Interpreter.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION OF
FOLLOW UP ITEMS

Dr. Proctor opened by introducing Bob Grapenthien, Controller, who provided a detailed financial update.

Grapenthien reviewed the FY25 budget performance and the framework for the FY26 budget. FY25 is projected to close with a \$6.9 million favorable variance. The total surplus is projected to be \$11.3 million, because this is the first time in recent memory that the college entered a fiscal year with a budgeted surplus, attributed to inflation-related revenue increases outpacing expenditures.

Revenue surplus included stronger-than-expected property tax collections driven by TIF district performance. Tuition and fees also exceeded projections. On the expense side, there were savings in salaries and benefits, with some of these funds strategically redirected to one-time purchases such as equipment (e.g., pianos) and deferred construction needs.

The projected FY25 operating surplus of \$11.3 million includes proposed allocations of \$1.1 million to support FY26 needs, \$800,000 for student success initiatives, and \$300,000 for digital advertising. The remaining \$10.2 million will be discussed further at the July Board Workshop.

A preview of the updated five-year financial plan was also presented. While current-year surpluses are strong, the plan projects a soft landing to avoid future structural deficits, particularly given the volatility of investment returns and long-term cost increases. The plan aligns with annual audited financial statements and serves as a strategic guide for budget and operational planning.

In FY26, the college plans to budget 100% of state revenue—a shift from previous years where only 75% was budgeted due to uncertainty. Tuition increases will be modest, at \$3 per credit hour, following shared governance input. This change was proposed to eliminate the distance learning fee, redistributing those costs across all students more equitably.

New and reallocated positions were also addressed. While efforts continue to limit FTE growth, some roles are being moved from grant or student fee funding to the operating budget, including a Student Engagement Manager and Dual Credit Advisor. These roles are considered essential and strategic, particularly as dual credit programs and student activity needs expand. Additionally, several state-mandated or revenue-generating positions are being added, such as Clinical Mental Health Therapists and International Recruitment and Admissions Specialist.

The board engaged in extended discussion around the sustainability and implications of moving positions from grants to operations. While some members expressed concern about long-term commitments, the administration clarified that these are often phased transitions driven by institutional needs and growing enrollment.

Trustee Meyer asked for more information on the international recruitment strategy, due to the International Recruitment & Admissions Specialist position. Bob Parzy, Associate Provost of Enrollment Services, stated the college is exploring new partnerships, scholarships funded by donors, and support systems to better serve this growing population.

In conclusion, the timeline for the final FY26 budget includes a 30-day public posting period, with a public hearing and final approval expected in August following a Preliminary Budget Presentation at the June Committee of the Whole meeting and more information provided at the July Board Workshop. The board expressed appreciation for the comprehensive update and thoughtful planning.

Dr. Proctor introduced Jeff Julian, Chief of Staff and Vice President of External Affairs. Over the past year, Harper College has significantly strengthened its legislative affairs strategy through sustained engagement with elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels. Julian, who leads this work, emphasized the importance of building strategic relationships that ensure Harper remains top-of-mind for policymakers, especially when the college seeks legislative or financial support.

Julian detailed the college's legislative approach, which is anchored around four pillars: building relationships with elected officials, educating them about the value and challenges of higher education, advocating for legislation that promotes student success, and ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations. These efforts are not only strategic but deeply mission-driven, supporting Harper's goal of being a leading institution in education policy and innovation.

At the federal level, Harper has had a highly visible year. The college participated in national events such as the Advocates in Action Conference and the ACCT National Legislative Summit and maintained active engagement with Illinois's congressional delegation. On-campus visits by federal representatives further helped elevate Harper's visibility.

The college has also been deeply involved in advocacy for federal issues affecting students, such as expanding Pell Grant access, supporting DACA and Dreamers, and opposing proposed cuts to TRIO, Federal Work-Study, and other vital programs.

At the state level, Harper has taken a leadership role in legislative efforts. Julian co-chaired a new legislative committee within the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP), focused on statewide priorities like the Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) degree. Harper has hosted multiple legislators on campus and participated in lobby days and legislative breakfasts that have proven to be impactful. A standout moment was the December legislative breakfast, hosted at Harper College, where Dr. Proctor and Chair Kelley made a compelling case for the CCB degree. That engagement directly led to Rep. Tracy Katz Muhl sponsoring the CCB bill in the Illinois House—demonstrating how education and relationship-building can translate into legislative action.

Progress was also made in securing funding: over \$900,000 in pending state funds for Harper's Emergency Services Training Center with support from Representatives Grasse and Syed. Harper also continued advocacy on other key issues, such as dual credit expansion, common course numbering, and student mental health initiatives.

To ensure its work is effective and measurable, the college implemented a rubric to track engagement with elected officials. The results are promising: every official at both the state and federal level has had contact with Harper in the past year, with many moving into higher levels of engagement.

Looking forward, Harper is preparing for FY26 by advancing its federal funding requests and continuing advocacy efforts. At the state level, efforts are focused on pushing the CCB legislation across the finish line. Dr. Proctor shared that agreements have been reached with universities to avoid duplication of programs, and efforts are underway to use labor market data to determine where community colleges can fill workforce gaps without competing with existing four-year programs.

Finally, the update underscored the critical role of students, particularly the student trustee, in legislative advocacy. Their personal stories have had a powerful impact on lawmakers, reinforcing the real-world value of Harper's legislative efforts.

Board members expressed appreciation for the comprehensive approach and the visible impact these efforts are having. The college's legislative affairs program was recognized as a high-touch, high-impact strategy that produces measurable results, from policy influence to funding success in service of Harper's mission to lead, serve, and advocate for students.

Jeff Julian reviewed the Board Packet.

FORMAL ACTIONS

Secretary Robb motioned, Member Stack seconded to enter closed session to discuss OMA section 2(c)(15): Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under the Open Meetings Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) at 6:00 p.m. In a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

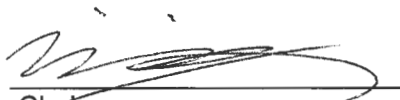
Closed session began at 6:02 p.m. Also in attendance were Chris Gorman, Robbins-Schwartz and Jeff Julian.

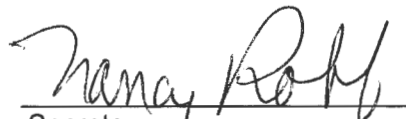
Member Stack motioned; Member Knox seconded to adjourn the closed session and re-enter the regular meeting at 6:12 p.m. In a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Secretary Robb moved, Member Stack seconded, adjournment at 6:12 p.m.

In a voice vote, motion carried.


Chair


Secretary