

# Opening Doors, Elevating Futures: Launching Harper's Journey with Aspen's Unlocking Opportunity

Dr. Ruth Williams, Provost



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# The Challenge

- Students succeed in **getting in**, but:
  - Too many enroll in **undervalued pathways**
  - Limited connection to **living-wage jobs** or **strong transfer outcomes**
- Equity concern: First-gen and underserved students disproportionately affected



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# Harper joins national network advancing high-value credentials that lead to good jobs and bachelor's degrees

*Harper College News Bureau*

*August 19, 2025*

Harper College has joined the [Aspen Institute College Excellence Program's](#) expanded [Unlocking Opportunity network](#) – an initiative designed to help community colleges reform programs in ways that improve student outcomes – ensuring more students earn degrees that lead to good-paying jobs.



- What is Unlocking Opportunity?
- Why did we pursue this opportunity?
- How will this transform individuals and our community?



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# Aspen Institute Unlocking Opportunity

**COLLEGE  
EXCELLENCE  
PROGRAM**  
aspen institute



Pilot locations



Expansion locations



**CCRC** COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
RESEARCH CENTER  
Teachers College, Columbia University

**ASPEN  
PRIZE**  
FOR COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE  
aspen institute

**SEMIFINALIST**

**2025**

**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

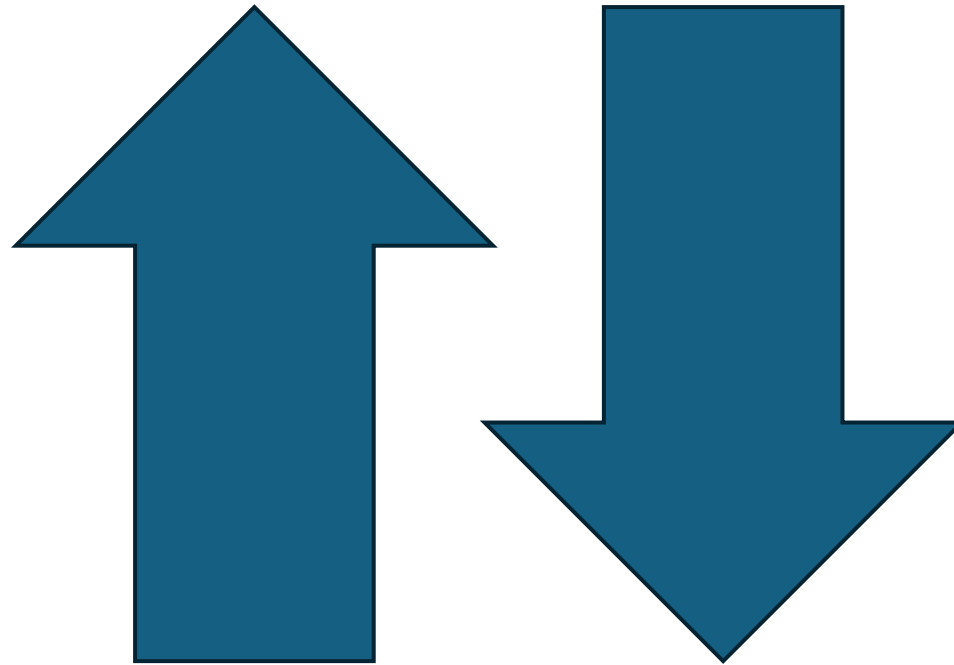
 Harper College

# How can we unlock opportunity?

**Strengthen the Program Portfolio**

**Strengthen Supports to Enter and Complete High-Opportunity Programs**

Increase number of students enrolled in and graduating from “high opportunity programs”



Decrease number of students in “undervalued pathways”



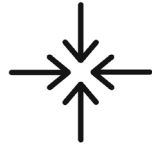
**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# Why this Matters to Us



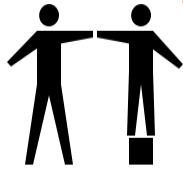
---

**Institutional excellence**



---

**Mission alignment**



---

**Equity imperative**



---

**Evidence-based strategies and tools**



---

**Financial benefits**



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# What will we do to unlock opportunity? Year 1

## Data-Informed Insights

- Living wage metric
- Program evaluation rubric

## Program Portfolio

- Curriculum audit with Aspen tools
- 3–5 strategies to get more students on high-opportunity pathways
- New | Modify | Sunset | Launch

## Alignment & Execution

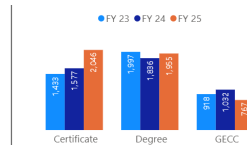
- ICCB + annual review integration
- Ops plan alignment
- Cross-functional accountability



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**



# Data-Informed Decision-Making



- Enrollment trends by program
- Completion rates by program
- Alignment of programs with:
  - living-wage jobs
  - bachelor's transfer success
- Employment Outcomes



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**



# Expected Outcomes



Improved student  
success outcomes



Enhanced institutional  
reputation



Strengthened  
organizational capacity

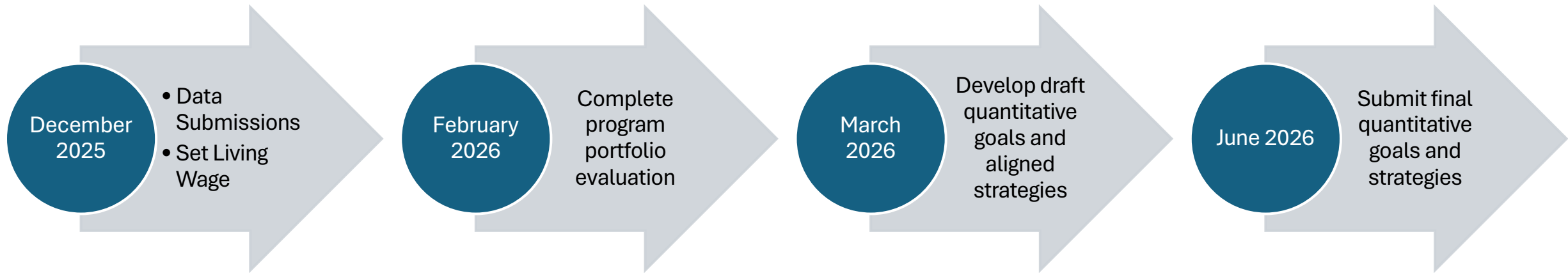


Sustainable  
competitive advantage



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

# Timeline and Key Milestones for 2025-2026



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**

Thank you

Any Questions?



**TOP 20** in the **NATION**