



PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

October 2025

Dear Harper College Community:

I am so pleased to be recognizing former Trustee James J. Hamill and his family at our October board meeting. As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the referendum that established Community College District 512, it is truly an honor to recognize Trustee Hamill, an original board member who played a critical role in the historic decision to create Harper College for our community. We thank Trustee Hamill and his colleagues for their vision, foresight and passion for education that established the foundation for Harper, the community's college. Trustee Hamill also shares deep family connections with Trustee Meyer and Chair Kelley through his relationships with their fathers. Thank you, Trustee Meyer and Chair Kelley, for suggesting and supporting this effort to honor Trustee Hamill for his work on the Board, and congratulations, Trustee Hamill, for your legacy of leadership and volunteerism.

This past month the college hosted its 17th Annual Assessment Conference and Share Fair continuing our wonderful legacy of leadership in the assessment space. A special thanks to VP Darlene Schlenbecker, and Deann Surdo, director of outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness, and their teams for putting together another phenomenal day of learning and sharing.

Over the last month, I had several opportunities to broadly share my student success reform agenda. This includes the fortunate opportunity that I had to participate in the Aspen Institute's Presidents Fellowship with more than 20 other presidents who are just as deeply committed to enacting transformational change for their communities as I am. Building upon that engagement, I fostered additional connections with our Faculty Senate, our Student Government President Kenneth Reyes and college employees (including those at our assessment conference) to strongly encourage them to regularly remind students to embrace their [Path for Success](#).

In support of our college's vision statement of being a national leader on student success, the college continues to receive national recognition for our impactful work. I want to recognize Dr. Tamara Johnson, VP of DEI, for her leadership in guiding the college to again receive the [2025 Higher Education Excellence and Distinction \(HEED\) Award](#) from Insight Into Academia magazine. We were the only community college in Illinois and one of just nine in the nation to earn this honor. This marks Harper's third consecutive and fifth overall HEED Award, reflecting the collective, daily commitment in supporting success for all students. Additionally, I was invited to speak and share insights on the great work we do at Harper at the Presidents' Roundtable Lakin Institute at Wayne Community College in Detroit and the [National Council for Workforce Education](#) in Norfolk, Virginia. Twenty years ago, I gained incredible insight and knowledge from my time with the NCBA Leadership Development Institute as a younger professional; now, as a mentor, I take great pride in giving back to the future leaders of our industry via the Lakin Institute and other leadership development programs. Further, in response to how presidents are meeting the moment in workforce education, I was able to raise awareness about our Innovation Accelerator, our regional workforce efforts via the Northern Illinois Workforce Coalition (NIWC) and the **VUCA** framework for community college leaders and industry partners: **V**ision for Volatility, **U**nderstanding in Uncertain times, **C**larity in a Complex environment, and the **A**gility that's needed for Ambiguity. I am passionate about lifting up the transformative power of community colleges and the

future-forward thinking we must employ to meet this moment. Student success, mentorship and leadership are intertwined, and this connection is key to our ongoing professional development and continuous improvement. It is in these times of intentional engagement and sharing that we certainly learn and grow our profession to meet our students where they are and help them thrive to be successful contributors in society. It is no accident that we are embedding mentorship in our new student success model. We've seen great gains from mentoring in other initiatives and know it will equip our current students and graduates to succeed in transfer and the workforce and pay it forward for societal benefits in our community and beyond.

Academic Updates

Events

- Enrollment Services
 - Admissions Outreach hosted our annual Harper Fiesta in September, and this year, we opened the event to the community at large! The event was a success, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Attendees enjoyed a resource fair, games including a piñata, photo opportunities, and performances by the Triple H Dance Troupe and singing by Harper student Anastasiia Rusnak. Prospective students even took to the stage to show off their musical skills!
- Harper Wellness
 - Harper Wellness hosted the Well-Being Bash in September in the Quad. Over 250 students participated in the event with 187 students completing the scavenger hunt. Of those students who completed the scavenger hunt, 90% were able to identify the three-digit number (988) that anyone having a mental health crisis can call or text. The top wellness or mental health resources students listed as available to them were Harper Wellness, Counseling Services, and Hawks Care.
 - Harper Wellness hosted Speed Friending last month in Building A to help students make connections and build a sense of belonging on campus. Over 50 students attended where they interacted with at least 10 different new students throughout the event.
 - Harper Wellness hosted the Buddy System Kickoff Event last month where students had the opportunity to paint their own mug and socialize with one another. Over 40 students attended, and over 20 new students joined the Buddy System during the event where they were able to connect to various wellness and on-campus resources.
- Liberal Arts
 - Movies, Plays, Musicals, and More: Adaptation Is in the Air (and Love Is Too)! In anticipation of Harper College's fall musical, *She Loves Me* (November 14–23, 2025), Theatre Professor Kevin Long is hosting two special film screenings celebrating the story's many adaptations.
 - *You've Got Mail* — Wednesday, October 29, 7:00 p.m., Harper College Film Lab (E109)
 - *The Shop Around the Corner* — Saturday, November 1, 1:00 p.m., Palatine Library (Meeting Room 1)
 - Each event will feature a film introduction, discussion with Professor Long and dramaturg Mary T. Christel, and a brief performance by cast members from *She Loves Me*.
- Resources for Learning
 - The Library celebrated Banned Books Week during the week of October 5 with a range of engaging activities. Visitors explored informative displays, searched for hidden rubber ducks to win prizes, created mini book keychains in the Make Shop, and more. Events ran throughout the week while the Library was open, and while supplies lasted — all in celebration of the fREADom to read!
 - The Academic Support Center celebrated Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leader Appreciation Week in September. Students left notes of appreciation for SI Leaders, thanking them for their dedication in helping students succeed in classes like BIO 260 and CHM 121.
 - The Library will host two book discussions in October:
 - *Ghostland* by Colin Dickey
 - *A Beautiful Rival* by Gill Paul
- Student Engagement
 - Approximately 2,000 students attended Harper Hullabaloo this year. Students were able to connect with student club and organization representatives, employees from Harper's valuable student resources, and watch in awe as the Jesse White Tumblers demonstrated their amazing skills.



- Eighty-six student leaders from Harper's student clubs and organizations joined Student Engagement for the annual student leader retreat. In a feedback survey, students reported they learned new information, felt encouraged to try new things, and enjoyed the experience.

Division/Program Highlights

- Athletics
 - In September, the Athletic Department welcomed Dr. Cedric Brown as the new Director of Athletics. Dr. Brown brings a unique blend of experience, commitment and caring to the department, and we look forward to his tenure bringing success to the college on the field and in the classroom.
 - Harper's Men's Cross Country was ranked 1st in the nation for the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), and Sebastian Welce was the United States Track and Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Athlete of the Week for Men's Cross Country for the week of September 15.
 - Ryan Golden and Natalia Pocica were NJCAA Division III Cross Country Runners of the Week on September 17 – 24.
 - The men's and women's soccer teams continue to work hard and build their programs. The women's soccer team went 2-0-1 recently with Grace Nikolakakis scoring four goals in that period. Men's soccer tied Kishwaukee last weekend with Ukiyo Takahashi leading the team with four goals this season.
- Enrollment Services
 - Harper College is now a Common Application Partner! The application will be open to first-time college students who plan to attend Harper directly from high school. The work is being led by Admissions Outreach and Processing, with support from Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Operations and IT. The teams will begin building and testing our application over the next few months and plan to go-live in spring 2026.
- Math and Science
 - This summer, Harper's Engineering Department welcomed 39 new students into the Engineering Pathways program, our transfer partnership with the Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This marks the third year in a row that Harper has more incoming Pathways students than any other community college in the state. Harper Engineering faculty held orientation sessions in May and June to greet the new students, connect them with their Harper advisors, and announce five Engineering Pathways scholarship recipients.
 - The LIFT Engineering program has accepted 12 students into its third cohort, the largest group thus far. These students come from underrepresented populations in engineering including women, Hispanic, Black, and low-income. The cohort is already enrolled and will begin a special section of Introduction to Engineering during the second eight weeks of the fall term.

Employee Highlights

- Student Success and Retention – Advising Services
 - Deena Ata, Coordinator - Advising Systems, Advising Services – successfully defended her dissertation in September. We look forward to congratulating her and calling her Dr. Deena Ata!
- Supporting the Strategic Plan
 - Student Success and Retention – Learning Communities
 - Spring 2025 Learning Community Student Survey highlights:
 - 100% of respondents said that having two instructors working collaboratively improved their learning.
 - 100% of respondents said they would recommend a Learning Community to others.
 - 87% of respondents said that the Learning Community increased their sense of belonging.



Advancement

- As of October 6, the Foundation has awarded \$889,241 to 511 students this academic year. Two new scholarships have been established, the Coach John R. Eliasik “Coach Eli” Scholarship and the Susan McDade Dental Hygiene Endowed Scholarship. This brings the total of new donor-sponsored scholarships created since July 1, 2025, to four.
- Harper College will honor five exceptional alumni at the 2025 Harper College Distinguished Alumni Awards. The reception and awards event will be held on Thursday, November 6 at 6 p.m. at Wojcik Conference Center. The event will be in-person with a virtual option for individuals who opt to watch the program online. Five honorees will be recognized for contributions, achievements, and impact they have made in their careers and within the community. Visit harpercollege.edu/distinguishedalumni to register and read honoree bios.
- Alumni Relations has partnered with two college divisions to launch bi-annual affinity e-newsletters, featuring division news, alumni updates, and upcoming events.
 - The Business and Social Science newsletter reached over 2,000 alumni in September; and
 - The Health Careers newsletter was sent to nearly 9,000 alumni the same month.

Each newsletter will be distributed once per semester to keep alumni engaged and informed.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- In September, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sponsored events to continue welcoming students and connecting them with the members of the DEI Team, including a Welcome Back lunch and a Pop Up social. These gatherings provided students with opportunities to build community, meet DEI colleagues and peers and learn about the resources, spaces and support systems available to help them thrive throughout the semester.
- Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Dr. Tamara Johnson officially completed the Higher Learning Commission Peer Reviewer training, strengthening the College’s capacity to engage in the upcoming reaccreditation process. The training equips Dr. Johnson with the expertise to assess institutional effectiveness, support continuous improvement and contribute to the broader higher education community through the peer review process.
- As part of Latine Heritage Month, we also hosted a number of programs, including:
 - Juntos Adelante: In collaboration with Latinos Unidos and the Social Justice Studies program, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion launched the inaugural session of Juntos Adelante (Forward Together) in September. Dr. Antonio Ramirez, professor at Elgin Community College, presented on the history and impact of Latine student activism in the Chicagoland area, inspiring powerful dialogue on advocacy, leadership and solidarity. Rooted in Latine culture, community and connection, this event brought together 85 participants, including 70 students, who engaged in a dynamic and inspiring dialogue about identity, empowerment and collective action.
 - Chocolate, Conchas y Chismes: This is the sixth Annual Chocolate, Conchas y Chismes (Chocolate, Conchas and Conversation) last month. Our largest gathering of Latine professionals to date, this



program served as a meaningful networking opportunity for both students and colleagues, helping to increase the visibility of Latine faculty and staff on campus.

- Semillitas: Continuing our commitment to cultural literacy and storytelling, in September, we partnered with the Library and Latinos Unidos to host the third Annual Semillitas (Seeds), a book club that highlights Latine authors. This year we featured a novel by Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Cien años de Soledad).
 - Today's Inspired Young Latinas: Earlier this month, Latinos Unidos, Student Engagement and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, co-sponsored, "Today's Inspired Young Latinas," featuring Stephanie Herrera, contributing author to the Today's Inspired Young Latinas anthology. Designed to empower students through real-life stories of perseverance, leadership and academic success, Stephanie shared her journey navigating higher education as a first-generation student and her current experience in a doctoral program to an audience of 40 students.
 - Co-sponsored the 26th annual Sabor Latino with the Latinos Unidos student club to conclude the celebration of Latine Heritage month with performances, vendors and sweets.
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
 - All four ERG's held kick-off meetings to jumpstart the year:
 - Voice of Immigrants Committed to Equity (VOICE) met in September, with approximately 30 attendees. During their meeting, the leadership team shared the strategic plan developed during the summer retreat. A key focus for the upcoming year is to develop effective strategies to engage underrepresented and low-participation constituency groups.
 - Learning About Abilities Not Disabilities (LAND) ERG welcomed a small but engaged group in September. Their meeting focused on exploring ideas for increasing LAND's membership for the 2025-2026 academic year and upcoming events.
 - Staff, Administrators, and Faculty for Equality (SAFE) ERG had their kickoff meeting in September. They discussed their goals for the year, community-building, and reflections on current struggles and feelings amidst this period of turmoil.
 - Diverse Relationships Engaged in Affirming Multiculturalism (DREAM) held their first meeting earlier this month. Their meeting included congrats and kudos for various achievements, a networking activity and an important dialogue regarding support for aspiring full-time faculty.

External Affairs

Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement and/or helped facilitate 12 articles and reports that appeared in local, national and international media publications. Media mentions include:
 - *ABC 7 Chicago*, *FOX 32*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *WBBM Radio*, *City Stuff* and *Capitol Fax* reported on the launch of College Now, Harper's new partnership enabling area students to earn an associate degree while simultaneously attaining their high school diploma. The story was also shared on the ICCTA listserv.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published profiles of Harper student Katsiaryna "Kat" Piatsevich, who is pursuing credentials in welding and fashion (and recently had her garments walk a Rome runway).
 - The national Apprenticeships for America 2025 report highlighted Harper's leadership in credit articulation agreements, university transfer pathways and the development of new insurance specialization courses within its apprenticeship programs.
 - The *Daily Herald*, *Patch*, *World Today News* and other news sites ran articles on Harper's Community Education program, spotlighting its wide range of enrichment opportunities for all ages.



- *Community College Daily* published an article on how community colleges engage with lawmakers, featuring insights from Harper's Jeff Julian. It was also shared via the ICCTA listserv.
- The *Chicago Tribune* featured Harper students and alumni in coverage following the death of Harper alum Charlie Kirk.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* previewed the recent Career Conversations event, which connected Harper alumni and students.
- *Patch* ran a story about Harper's dedication of the Martha Bell Gallery.
- Italian publications including *Sardegna Live* and *Vivere Lucca* reported on Harper's participation in the Fashion & Talents show in Rome, featuring designs from Harper students.
- *Patch* ran a story about Harper's 2025 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from *Insight Into Academia* magazine.
- The *Daily Herald* mentioned Harper in a story about Pace bus hub upgrades in Schaumburg, part of improvements to the other end of the 697-bus route.
- *Patch* previewed author Elizabeth Gonzalez James's visit to Harper for a reading of *The Bullet Swallower*.
- *Gopher Sports* reported that Harper alum Travis Foy competed at the Senior World Wrestling Championships.
- *Patch* featured the Harper College Police Department's October initiatives, including participation in the Pink Patch Project and Faith & Blue events.
- Writer (and former Harper employee) Victoria Atkinson forecasts her campus visit on her blog.
- The *Prospect High School Cutlass* reflected on Harper's long-running Harper Area Art Show, recalling its community and creative impact.

Community Relations

- This fall, Harper College is buzzing with excitement as school tours return in full swing. Over the past month, more than 600 students have explored campus and discovered new interests through engaging, hands-on sessions in areas such as health careers, fire science, graphic design, IT, marketing, theatre, and artificial intelligence. Interest has been overwhelming—every fall tour date is now filled!
- The Community Relations team has had a busy fall. Since early August, the team has participated in more than eight back-to-school and resource events throughout the district. As community needs continue to grow, so do opportunities to engage with families through partner events. During this time of year, the team connects with thousands of community members over just a couple of months.

Legislative Affairs

- In September, Chief of Staff and VP of External Affairs Jeff Julian attended the American Association of Community College's Advocates in Action conference hearing from key members of the DC higher education establishment including new Undersecretary of Education Nicholas Kent. Julian also met with staffers from the offices of Congress members Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi, Mike Quigley, Delia Ramirez, Jan Schakowsky and Senators Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin. Topics included funding for Pell, the Hispanic-serving Institution and Strengthening Community Colleges Training grants, and support for legislation, including Tax Free Pell Grant Act and College Transparency Act.
- Julian also attended a town hall co-hosted by State Representatives Mary Beth Canty and Nicolle Grasse and featured Speaker of the House Emmanuel "Chris" Welch, where the discussion focused on key regional topics including transportation reform and funding options. Harper College also hosted an information table at the event providing resources on apprenticeships, innovation accelerator, and the Promise program.

Marketing Services



- The FY26 Edition of The Ultimate College Planning Guide will be published this month. For almost two decades, Harper College has published the guide to help students and families in Districts 211, 214, and 220 plan for a successful journey through college and beyond. Along with content updates, this year's guide is published as an accessible PDF. The guide is also currently being translated into Spanish.
- Two recently recorded radio interviews with Admissions Outreach Representative Ela Jakubczak promote an upcoming Polish-language information session. Interviews will air five times—on different shows at different times—during the campaign period of September 29 to October 19 on the Polish-speaking radio station 103.1 FM Polish American Mix. This will be the second time Harper has run an information session in Polish. You may listen to the interviews at <https://wpna.fm/podcast/harper-college/>.

Finance and Administrative Services

Harper College Police

- The Harper College Police Department is once again participating in the Pink Patch Project for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. During the month, police officers, community service officers, and telecommunicators will wear the special pink patches on their regular uniform to raise awareness about breast cancer and the importance of early detection and treatment.
- National Faith & Blue Weekend is a nationwide initiative dedicated to creating safer, stronger, and more unified communities by fostering partnerships among law enforcement, residents, businesses, and faith-based organizations. Harper College Police Department and Harper College's Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) hosted a craft project this month in Building Z lobby designed to build trust, foster unity, and strengthen connections across campus.
- The Harper College Police Department hosted National Coffee with a Cop Day at the beginning of this month. This casual event was a great opportunity for students, faculty and staff to connect with campus law enforcement, ask questions, and discuss community safety over a cup of coffee.

Information Technology

- The Generative AI requisition process has been successfully rolled out to employees.
- The DegreeWorks upgrade has been completed.

Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- To strengthen data governance, the Insights and Decision Support team launched a new monitoring process that automatically flags and brings forward new codes added to Harper's student information system for review by the Data Standards Committee. This approach ensures key updates are shared transparently across departments.
- Several members of the Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Division completed EDUCAUSE's four-week *Data Storytelling: The What, Why, and How* Learning Lab, gaining practical skills to transform complex institutional data into compelling narratives that inform strategic decision-making.
- In September, the Learning Assessment Committee, in collaboration with the Outcomes Assessment Office, held the 17th Annual Harper College Assessment Conference and Share Fair. Approximately 90 faculty and staff attended the conference. The conference included the keynote address, *Building a Culture*



of *Assessment to Foster Student Success*, presented by Dr. Gavin Henning, Director of the Doctor of Education and Master of Science in Higher Education Administration Programs and the Center for Innovation in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship at New England College, New Hampshire. Other sessions led by Harper faculty and staff included *Seeing Through Students' Eyes: Enhancing Assignment Design Through Student Perspectives*, where participants explored assignment design from the student point of view—uncovering common barriers to comprehension and engagement. Another session, *Engaged & Equipped: Co-Curricular Learning Through NACE Competencies*, involved a hands-on activity focused on developing essential skills such as communication, strategic thinking, and teamwork. During the poster session, conference attendees engaged with assessment initiatives from across the college. Highlights included *Agile Assessment: Faculty Case Studies of Meaningful Change in the Context of AI* and *From Inquiry to Impact: Assessing the Effectiveness of Admissions Outreach on New Student Enrollment*.

Workforce Solutions and Strategic Alliances

Apprenticeships

- In a collaborative effort between the Apprenticeship Office, Job Placement Resource Center, Innovation and Development Office, and Career and Technical Programs, Harper College hosted a Cybersecurity Career Panel at the beginning of this month. This in-person event offered students a valuable opportunity to engage directly with industry professionals, gain insights into cybersecurity career pathways, and begin building their professional networks. A highlight of the panel was the participation of one of our current Zurich cybersecurity apprentices, who shared his personal journey through the apprenticeship program and his early experiences in the field. His story exemplified the impact of work-based learning and the strength of our partnerships with leading employers. The event drew strong interest, with approximately 87% of registered attendees participating in person, and additional walk-ins bringing the total audience to over 40. Attendees included current Harper students and community members exploring cybersecurity as a potential career option.
- In September, Harper College welcomed a delegation from New America for a day of learning and engagement focused on best practices in apprenticeship programs. The event showcased Harper's innovative approaches and strong employer partnerships. New America representatives met with employer partners and apprentices from Weiss-Aug, Richard Wolf, and Zurich North America. Additional sessions included discussions with faculty who have played a key role in curriculum development, including Marie Faber-Lapidus and Rob Russ (Business Administration and General Insurance), Aaron Kolb (Manufacturing), and Laura Smith (Surgical Technology).

The final session focused on Harper's robust wraparound services, with insights provided by Brenda Belarmino, Sheila Cheripka, Nancie Mohedano, April Reyes, Besa Sadiku, Annie Sylvester, and Darice Trout. This collaborative visit underscored Harper College's commitment to workforce development and the vital role of apprenticeships in bridging education and employment.

- Harper College celebrated National Workforce Development Day in September by hosting an event at the Wojcik Conference Center in collaboration with the Village of Hoffman Estates, Greater Chicago Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (GCAMP), and the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC). The event began with an engaging keynote address by Ray Ziganto, Director of Innovation and Resources at the Valley Industrial Association, who shared strategies for enhancing workforce development and company culture. Following the keynote, a panel discussion featured representatives from IMEC, Stannum Core Solutions, Roll Call Chicagoland, Business and Career Services (BCS) Illinois, and Little Friends, Inc., who shared best practices for creating supportive and impactful workplaces.



- IMS Buhrke-Olson, one of our earliest apprenticeship partners, has reaffirmed its commitment by hiring an apprentice who will begin the program in spring 2026.
- The Apprenticeship Office has launched recruitment for fall 2026, kicking off with an Information Session last month that drew impressive interest, with more than 90 individuals registered to attend.

Events Management

- In September, Events Management supported a variety of activities across campus. The Performing Arts Center hosted four internal events, including three music department convocations and Constitution Day, along with four rental events. Events Management Department (EMD) staff also assisted with eight additional campus events. In addition, 560 student ID cards and 29 faculty/staff cards were issued.
- In September, the Wojcik Conference Center hosted 34 events—12 external and 22 internal. Highlights included the return of the *Let's Meet Retreat* for families of children with special needs, five financial/retirement organizations, and long-time clients such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, Rush University, and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce. over 400 show cars in its 14th year at Harper. Internal events included the Dietetics Symposium, Adjunct Faculty Teaching and Learning Conference, Women's Veterans Luncheon, 2025 Assessment Conference, and the Directions College and Career Fair. Additionally, the conference center and Rohrman Automotive hosted a celebratory luncheon for Hyundai of Gurnee, winners of the Rohrman/Hawks Care Challenge.