



PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

September 2025

Dear Harper College Community:

With the fall semester, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our faculty, staff, and students for creating a welcoming and vibrant start to the academic year. The energy on campus during Welcome Week was inspiring, and it's clear that Harper's mission to transform lives and strengthen our community remains as vital as ever. I wanted to provide an update on enrollment since my last report: Total FTE (CE and Credit) as of 9/15/2025 is 7,857.4, an increase of 2.9% from last fall; tuition-bearing FTE is at 6,645.0, an increase 1.5% from last fall; and headcount is 14,589 an increase of 3.1% from last fall. Our retention numbers continue to be strong and our partnerships with local high schools continue to expand, as you'll hear at Wednesday's board meeting when we welcome our three high school district superintendents to discuss our new initiative College Now: Accelerating Your Future. The College Now partnership will ensure interested high schoolers can enhance their dual credit experience by earning both their high school degree and an associate's degree from Harper upon graduation from their high school. I am excited to celebrate this strengthening of our connection with our Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) partners to accelerate student success for our region.

Last month, we welcomed federal, state, and county elected officials and their staff members to our legislative breakfast. Dr. Derek Leiter and Caitrin Sobota showcased Harper's innovative VR technologies, which are transforming how we prepare students for high-demand careers in health care. The event underscored the importance of strong partnerships and policy support as we continue to meet the workforce needs of our region. I am also pleased to formally extend our appreciation to Mayor William McLeod of Hoffman Estates at a village event commemorating his 45 years of public service. His leadership has fostered economic growth and community connections, including initiatives like the Harper-specific PACE bus route and our educational partnership with McDonald's.

Speaking of honors, our Educational Foundation hosted the dedication of the Martha Bell Gallery in Building C in conjunction with the Small Works juried exhibition. Martha Bell is an Emeritus member of the Harper College Educational Foundation Board of Directors as well as a member of Harper's 2024 Decennial Committee. Beyond being a scholarship founder, Bell's recent creation and funding of the Martha A. Bell and Glen O. Reeser Art Program Fund will support art programming at Harper College, including supporting a full-time Art Curator/Gallery Manager position. Congratulations, Martha!

As I wrote in my message to the college community last week, we need to remember the importance of unity, compassion and the power of community as we navigate challenging events both nationally and locally. From increased immigration enforcement activity in the Chicago area, the tragic shooting in Utah that claimed the life of Harper alumnus Charlie Kirk to the heartbreaking mass shootings, these moments are affecting all of us in various ways and call on us to lift up our shared humanity. Harper remains committed to being a place where every individual is treated with dignity and where safety, belonging, and civil discourse are paramount. We have updated our Immigration Enforcement Guidance to support our community and are actively advocating at the state and federal levels to protect resources and programs that are critical to our students' success. In the coming weeks, we will continue to provide spaces for dialogue, including an employee session on September

30, and offer resources such as legal support and mental health programs. In these difficult times, Harper will continue to center our mission and remain focused on fostering care, understanding and opportunity for all.



Academic Updates

Events

- Hawks Care
 - Hawks Care hosted a backpack giveaway in August while supplies lasted. We gave away 50 backpacks filled with school supplies in three days and continued to distribute empty backpacks for the remaining duration.
- Harper Wellness
 - Harper Wellness hosted a variety of wellness activities during Opening Week, including Affirmation Jar creating, Bonsai Tree planting, and Sound Meditation.



- Harper Wellness hosted Buddy System BINGO on the first day of classes on the Quad.
- Resources for Learning
 - The first meeting of the Crimes, Calamities, and Curiosities book discussion group is this month. We'll be reading *The Bone Lady* by Mary H. Manhein – a book about the author's work as a forensic anthropologist.
 - The first One Book One Harper book discussion for the semester was this month. We're launching the year with *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant: A Memoir* by Curtis Chin.
 - BIO 260 Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders led nine tours of the Anatomy Room in the first week of the semester. One SI Leader, Karen Torres Alvarado, collaborated with Judy Basofin in Success Services to lead three study skills workshops for BIO 260 students in the first week of the semester. These workshops gave students study strategies and time management skills to help them succeed in BIO 260.
- Student Engagement
 - Student Engagement welcomed students back to campus with exciting events and activities to make students feel welcomed. These events included Welcome Week Information Tables, Campus Roamers and Welcome Wagons throughout the first week of classes, the Student Engagement Coffeehouse in collaboration with Sodexo, Engagement Expo, Ice Cream Social, Student Lounge Popcorn Launch, Center for Student Veteran and Military Connected Students Open House and the student favorite Neon Night.

Division/Program Highlights

- Athletics
 - The Harper Hawks athletic teams have officially kicked off the 2025–26 athletic season, with volleyball and men's and women's soccer opening competition at the end of August.
 - The women's volleyball team started the year strong at the Opening Weekend Tournament in Rockford, IL, posting a 4-2 record against tough competition and setting the tone for an exciting season ahead.
 - On the soccer pitch, both the men's and women's soccer teams began play with early-season matchups as they continue to solidify their rosters.
 - The men's and women's cross-country teams began their season earlier this month in Warrenville, IL.
 - Harper Athletics is looking forward to an exciting year of competition, and we encourage the campus community to come out and support the Hawks!
- Student Success and Retention - Honors and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
 - Over the summer, Honors processed 48 new applications and welcomed an additional 40 new Distinguished Trustee Scholars into the program.
 - Over the summer, the Harper chapter of PTK (Phi Phi) welcomed 51 new members.
 - In September, Honors and PTK completed their first joint service outing to *Feed My Starving Children*.

Student Highlights

- Health Careers
 - All 22 students in the Dental Hygiene Class of 2025 successfully passed both required national board examinations:
 - The *Commission on Dental Competency Assessment (CDCA)* clinical board examination, with individual scores ranging from 89 to 99.
 - The *National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE)*, with the cohort achieving the highest scores in the past 13 years.

Advancement

- The Harper College Educational Foundation launched its Corporate Mentorship Program this month. This award-winning three-month program provides students with the opportunity to engage with industry mentors who can provide guidance, support, career modeling, and networking. This year's program features 32 mentors representing 12 organizations, including three first-time partners.
- Harper Alumni Relations and Student Engagement will co-host an alumni leadership panel through the Career Conversations with Harper Alumni Program on October 1. Students will hear from four accomplished Harper alumni who will share their career experiences, perspectives on career leadership, and give advice and best practices for the professional world.
- As of September 5, the Foundation has awarded \$806,247 to 426 students this academic year. Since July 1, 2025, two new donor-sponsored scholarships have been established: the Abbey Family Fund Scholarship Program and the Susan McDade Dental Hygiene Scholarship.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- During Orientation Week, the Office of DEI partnered with Trickster Cultural Center to host an information session on adopting a Land Acknowledgement statement and developing initiatives to support Native and



Indigenous communities. Over 30 people attended the interactive session, and following the training, 10 volunteered to join the Harper College Native American Initiatives, Support, and Land Acknowledgement Workgroup.

- The Office of DEI hosted the 4th Annual Cultural Center kickoff event, with record attendance of over 200 students and several colleagues. Students met the DEI team, learned about the purpose of the Cultural Center, received information about affinity groups, and learned about upcoming events. Food, music, and giveaways were provided.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

- In partnership with the four ERGs - Diverse Relationships Engaged in Affirming Multiculturalism (DREAM), Learning About Abilities not Disabilities (LAND), Staff Administrators and Faculty for Equality (SAFE) and Voice of Immigrants Committed to Equity (VOICE), the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion successfully hosted the 4th annual ERG/DEI Welcome Back Celebration. With nearly 100 attendees, the event offered a wonderful chance for everyone to reconnect with former colleagues and forge new connections! Music and food were provided.
- The VOICE ERG kicked off the semester with a panel discussion during Orientation Week, "Hear our VOICE" as part of which panelists shared their diverse perspectives living in the US and working at Harper. This panel highlighted the importance of acknowledging diverse identities and lived experiences in the workplace, and the centrality of mattering (Verschelden, 2017) to immigrant employees' professional success and overall well-being.

External Affairs

Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement, and/or helped facilitate eight articles that appeared in local, national and international media publications. Media mentions include:
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* reported on Harper joining the Aspen Institute's Unlocking Opportunity network. The article was also shared via the ICCTA listserv.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran stories on the President's Art Selection Award, highlighting student works chosen to be displayed in Dr. Avis Proctor's office. The piece was also featured on the front of the *Daily Herald's* Neighbors print edition.
 - *Campus Rec Magazine* reported on Harper College's use of social media to boost student engagement and build community through campus recreation.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* reported on Harper's celebration of its inaugural Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week.
 - *Patch* reported on Harper's Hawks Care program, which supports students' needs beyond the classroom.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* previewed Harper's fall Film Lab series, with additional coverage forthcoming in the *Daily Herald*.
 - *On Campus at Drake University* highlighted Harper instructor Nikki Renee Anderson's solo art exhibition at the Anderson Gallery.
 - The *Daily Herald* reported on the Excel Beyond 211 program, which included Harper alumni and mentorship connections.
 - *Patch* posted a piece about Harper's successful efforts to save energy in partnership with Nicor.
 - The *Daily Herald* published a remembrance of former Nation Pizza executive and Harper supporter Mike Alagna, which included comments from Dr. Kenneth Ender, former Harper president. The *Daily Herald* noted Harper in coverage of an anti-bullying scholarship program marking its 10th anniversary at Fremd High School.



- In the wake of the September 10 shooting death of conservative activist and Harper alumnus Charlie Kirk, there have been hundreds of media reports (from CNN and NBC News to news organizations from around the world) that mention his connection to Harper College. Most reports briefly state Kirk attended Harper for a short time and left before graduating to focus on his political activism.

Legislative Affairs

- Harper hosted a legislative breakfast to update elected officials on the college's programs and initiatives while providing a demonstration on virtual reality technology being used in the health careers area. In addition to board members Chair Bill Kelley, Vice Chair Walt Mundt, Trustee Eric Knox, Trustee James Meyer and Trustee Pat Stack, numerous elected officials and their staff members attended the breakfast in Wojcik Conference Center. We were pleased to welcome State Senator Mark Walker, State Representatives Nicolle Grasse, Tracy Katz Muhl, Michelle Mussman, Nabeela Syed, and Cook County Commissioner Maggie Trevor along with staffers from the offices of Senator Dick Durbin, Congressman Mike Quigley, State Senator Seth Lewis, and State Representative Mary Beth Canty, Nicolle Grasse, Jennifer Sanalidro and Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton.
- The college became a signatory to a letter to Congress from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) advocating for continued funding and support for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant of which Harper is a recipient.
- Chief of Staff and VP of External Affairs Jeff Julian attended the Hoffman Estates Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon at Ascension Hospital and connected with elected officials and staffers including State Senator Laura Murphy and State Representatives Michelle Mussman and Nabeela Syed.

Finance and Administrative Services

Harper College Police

- As part of Meet the Black Faculty, an event hosted by the Black Student Union (BSU) this month, the Harper College Police Department reaffirmed its ongoing partnership with the BSU. Representatives shared their commitment to maintaining an open and supportive relationship with the campus community. They emphasized the department's role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all students.

The partnership between the BSU and the Harper College Police Department aims to build mutual trust, promote community engagement, and ensure that students feel heard, protected, and valued on campus. This collaboration includes ongoing dialogue, participation in BSU events, and shared efforts to address student concerns and enhance the college experience.

Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- Provided decision support to the Advising and Student Success Department to strategically identify more than 3,000 students for inclusion in the fall 2025 Early Alert program. By applying Student Success Model criteria, IPEDS cohort analysis, and risk factor scoring, this work ensures proactive monitoring of students most likely to benefit from early interventions, advancing institutional goals for persistence, completion, and equity.



- Developed and facilitated a Welcome Week 2025 session on the Success 360 dashboard, equipping faculty and staff to filter and disaggregate data, identify equity gaps, and interpret course success rates through an equity-minded, systemic lens.
- The Office of Institutional Research consolidated previous enrollment dashboards into a single, more robust resource to make enrollment data easier to access. The new Enrollment Dashboard provides real-time enrollment numbers, date-to-date comparisons for active enrollment periods, and decades of historical data, dating back to 1967, giving the College a clearer view of enrollment trends over time.
- Results of the spring 2025 Information Literacy General Education Assessment have been compiled, analyzed, and shared with the Learning Assessment Committee. Students were assessed on their ability to: Apply a variety of credible sources to support a given topic. More than 600 student artifacts were assessed and results indicated that 86% of students met the criteria for success on the assessment. This year, the Learning Assessment Committee will develop an improvement plan based on these assessment results.

Workforce Solutions and Strategic Alliances

Apprenticeship

- In August, Harper College was recognized at the German American Chamber of Commerce and Industry Consortium for Advanced Technical Training (ICATT) Apprenticeship Program graduation ceremony as the first college in the United States to partner with ICATT. This recognition celebrates a decade of collaboration with ICATT and our German-based employer partners—working together to expand apprenticeship opportunities, strengthen the workforce, and empower students on their career paths.

Community Education

- The Astronomy Department's Bhasker Moorthy, along with one of their outstanding students, hosted 22 people from Community Education's program for older adults at the Observatory in August. The students had a fascinating view of a satellite constellation from the ground along with several stars through a ground-based telescope. They then climbed to the large telescope in the observatory where they observed a fascinating view of Saturn's rings. Community Education appreciates Dr. Moorthy's hosting of this viewing.

Strategic Alliances and Innovation Department

- Harper College has been accepted for membership with the NCyTE, a National Science Foundation-funded consortium. NCyTE's mission is to advance cybersecurity education by improving workforce quantity and quality through collaboration among over 300 faculty members across the nation. This prestigious membership provides Harper College with access to world-class cybersecurity resources, curriculum materials, professional development opportunities including free webinars and externships, and support for student competitions and workforce preparation programs. The NCyTE membership will assist Harper College in the goal of achieving the cybersecurity-related CAE-Center of Academic Excellence designation.

Grants Office

- Harper College will receive up to \$33,000 in grant funds from the Calumet Area Industrial Commission to support 11 students in Harper College's Apprenticeship programs. Funding will cover the apprentice's expenses for tuition, books, fees, and other program-related supplies for the 2025-2026 academic year.



In Memoriam

- We are saddened to share that Gary Paul Schmidt, a longtime adjunct instructor and tutor at Harper College, passed away on July 11, 2025. He began teaching in the Math and Science departments in 2004 and also served as a tutor in the Academic Support Center and was deeply appreciated by both students and colleagues. He will be missed. [Read obituary here.](#)