

## President's Report

June 2019

It is now the end of June and we have certainly “run through the tape.” Reflection is important, particularly during certain milestones. We are not only concluding a successful year, but also a presidency, which at Harper is defined as a body of work that has contributed to a great institution. This is a time for reflection.

So many things stand out as I peruse the 100 or so President's Reports I have written over the past ten years to the Board and campus community as a way of communicating key events and accomplishments. My first missive reflects my excitement at being selected as the fifth president of Harper College. We made *no little plans* and realized we were *surrounded by insurmountable opportunity*. As the years go on, so many notable people visited the campus to learn from us, and us from them. We accomplished things that were difficult to conceptualize. We leveraged resources through partnerships. We completed complex building projects. We launched new programs, including the Promise Scholarship, apprenticeships and manufacturing. We addressed challenging financial times when the State was without a budget for 793 days. All these things are important. But, what is most important was our firm and unwavering focus on student success and the outstanding faculty and staff who work with our students, guiding them, teaching them, assisting them and sometimes just listening to them.

It's a humbling time and I believe that the College is in a wonderful place to build on the many things we accomplished together. So this report is a reflection. A reflection of what Harper College is, and the promise of how it can continue to evolve.

Thus, for my final President's Report I offer snippets of past President's Reports that memorialize this important work and what we have accomplished. It certainly took me down memory lane. I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

Thank you for ten wonderful years!

*Ken*

For me it has been a remarkable start. I'm more excited about the opportunity now than I was when the Board first selected me to be President. And, I was pretty excited then, if you recall! I'm surely aware that we "make a difference" at Harper College, and that the potential is here to do so on a grand scale. We have a lot to do. We are surrounded by "insurmountable" opportunity. And we intend to make "no little plans." Thank you, members of the Board, for bringing me to William Rainey Harper College.

We are completing the upgrades that were planned to the swimming pool, and now have broader lanes and starting blocks for external swim team use. We were particularly delighted to learn that the U.S. Olympic Swim Team was interested in practicing in our facility and will be in our pool September 16-19 in the early morning hours.

Legislatively we have closed out the fiscal year with the Governor signing the budget bill for Fiscal Year 2010. The good news is that the Governor did fund enough of Career and Technical Education and Adult Education to match the Federal Perkins Funds. The bad news is that there is grave concern for next year as stimulus funds go away and with the State's budget in a dire condition.

We are delighted that Deputy Secretary of Labor Jane Oates and University of Illinois Professor Dr. Debra Bragg have accepted our invitation to keynote our symposia during Engagement Week. Mr. Rick Maher, a national expert on regional economic development and workforce development, will facilitate these sessions. We will follow this week of engagement with the development of white papers that will describe the options we may wish to consider for strategic directions. The community will be invited to help us consider the options in a series of meetings with community stakeholders.

The Harper Speech and Debate Team won the Community College Division of the 62nd Annual L.E. Norton Forensics Tournament; this is the third consecutive tournament where the team has placed first among community colleges

The "Week of Engagement" coupled with the launch of the academic year has solidified the College's awareness and interest in committing to the student success theme. Our internal discussions, the work of our Achieving the Dream "core" and "data" teams, the College-wide symposia, the engagement between the President and the K-12 leadership, as well as local officials and business and civic leaders have all contributed to a community discussion of student success. A recent editorial in the *Daily Herald* reinforced this community dialog. With the publication of a "white paper" summarizing this work, the stage will be set for strategic planning in the spring.

Students have launched a new "Veterans Club" on campus, with 20 members thus far. We expect this number to grow, as we have more than 200 veterans on campus this term; a special thanks to Assistant Professor Bobby Summers for leading this effort;

The simulation hospital for the Nursing Program was completed. This included the installation of web cameras, monitors, simulation equipment and laptops in four of the simulation rooms and the birthing room. Four "rolling carts" were also setup with new laptops. A call light system was set up at the nursing station. The nursing students completed their first set of simulations this week.

We are pleased to share that Harper's Speech and Debate team won the National Championship in the Community College division. Traveling to Minneapolis, Minnesota to compete at the Pi Kappa Delta National Speech and Debate Tournament, Harper competed against 60 teams representing both universities and community colleges from across the country. The team finished in eighth place overall, with 15 of Harper's 27 speeches winning awards.

We also bid farewell to J. Michael Thomson, our ACE Fellow. J. Michael returns to Cuyahoga Community College (CCC) and prepares to assume the position of leading the new CCC West Shore campus. It has been an honor working with J. Michael this year, and we thank him for choosing Harper as a host institution. He has set a very high standard for the next ACE Fellow who may choose to work with us.

We anticipate submitting the Strategic Plan to the Board for adoption in July. In anticipation of that presentation, we have attached the historical context of this planning effort and the Strategic Directions and Goals that are being considered. The Board will receive a short overview of these data during our June meeting.

In August, we will invite the Board to a master planning workshop with our planning team from EE&K/Graywood. This workshop will provide the Board with the overall direction of the plan, its goals, strategies and cost estimates. Following the workshop we will finalize the Master Plan for Board adoption at the September meeting.

We end fiscal year 2010 with a balanced budget and with plans in place to manage the difficult state revenue forecast for FY2011. We look forward to July 1 and the beginning of the new fiscal year. We will also welcome two new members to the executive team, Dr. Judy Marwick and Dr. Ron Ally. FY2011 promises to be an exciting year for the College.

## **2010-2011**

The Rita and John Canning Women's Program was formally dedicated.

Community colleges continue to receive an unprecedented amount of state and national recognition. The recent White House Summit on Community Colleges, hosted by Dr. Jill Biden, affirmed that the initiatives we are pursuing via the strategic plan are indeed relevant and current. Governor Quinn's endorsement of our efforts to renovate Buildings G & H is evident through the appropriation that was just released. These funds will allow Harper College to move to the next phase of this important renovation which will provide enhanced instructional and student support space for critical career and technical programs.

There will be two new Board members in April, as Dick Hoffman and Bill Graft are not seeking re-election. Two community members have submitted petitions for these Trustee positions, thus they will be running unopposed. We are planning orientation activities for these new Board members to familiarize them with Board policies.

The College landscape is still covered with mountains of snow. Our physical plant personnel and police officers have worked steadily since the "Groundhog Day Blizzard" to clear campus lots, sidewalks and building entrances. Please join me in saluting these dedicated employees. Many worked non-stop during the blizzard to ensure the campus would re-open in a timely

fashion. We hosted several members of our community on the night the blizzard began as they abandoned their cars on surrounding roadways and sought refuge on our campus. This is a wonderful example of extraordinary service.

Despite the cool temperatures, spring is in the air! This month, we welcome three new Trustees to the Board: Trustees Walt Mundt and Jim Gallo, and Student Trustee Justin McDermott. We look forward to working with these new Board members.

Harper's Phi Theta Kappa chapter received four national awards, including an award for the Honors in Action Projects, and an award recognizing chapters for their College Project, which was the BOSS mentoring program. Our chapter also won the award for Distinguished Chapter, which is an award for chapters with strong Honors in Action Projects and College Projects. Finally, John Garcia, chapter advisor, received the Paragon award which is given to new chapter advisors.

## **2011-2012**

The new College mobile application was placed into production in Apple's Application Store, making it accessible to anyone with an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch device. The application provides maps, events, news, and access to the library, Blackboard and social media. The Android and Blackberry markets are to follow shortly.

Harper hosted an emergency training exercise which is mandated by State law to occur once every five years for all Illinois colleges and universities. The Harper College event was the first such exercise conducted by an Illinois college or university in compliance with this law. The exercise involved 170 fire personnel, 23 fire departments, and 30 law enforcement personnel from Harper and surrounding communities. Four communities surrounding Harper activated Emergency Operations Centers to assist with the training. Approximately 100 volunteer victims and 60 exercise staff also participated. This training, which cost \$80,000, was funded by the Chicago-Cook County Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI).

The Starfish Early Alert software system has been implemented. The system provides the capability for faculty to notify counselors and other success-related services of the College that a student is in need of support.

A manufacturing summit was held in early October to gather information on workforce needs from area manufacturers that cannot fill vacancies. More than 50 attended the event. As a result, Harper is reviewing current curricula that will help train workers for these positions.

The comprehensive compensation study, which was conducted by the outside consulting firm Mercer, has been completed. A steering committee comprised of Harper staff from all employee classifications directed the efforts by reviewing and authorizing the job descriptions that were benchmarked and compared. Comparison groups included peer community colleges, published surveys, and local municipalities. All employee classifications other than full-time faculty were included in the study. (A full-time faculty compensation and benefits study was conducted in January.) The results of the Mercer study revealed that Harper offers competitive salaries and highly competitive benefits. This is great news and explains why we are able to attract and retain highly qualified staff.

Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) is beginning with a full day of training on January 17. IBB discussions are scheduled throughout the next several months. We are very hopeful that our interests will be aligned and that we can reach closure on the contract discussions well before current contracts expire. We will provide monthly reports to the Board as this process unfolds.

A great deal of progress has been made on setting targets for our Institutional Effectiveness Measures (IEMs). In addition, the Institutional Planning Committee (IPC) has been working hard to synthesize the data and feedback collected from the financial policy input sessions. The IPC is currently soliciting feedback from the campus community on a draft policy.

We met with a group of manufacturers as we continue to build a coalition to support the emerging focus on advanced manufacturing. This involves educational programs that lead to credentials and a manufacturing career pathway for students. We have requested that our partner manufacturers provide capstone internships as students complete the initial certificate in advanced manufacturing. We anticipate a minimum of 50 paid internships being available for our students as we launch the program. In addition, we have many manufacturers that have volunteered to share training space and equipment. There is a sense of urgency in our business community to respond to the ongoing need for skilled workers in this field. These positions are well compensated and in highly technical environments. We will continue to work closely with these employers.

Several notable national presentations were made during the past month, placing Harper's student success agenda in the national spotlight. Earlier in the month, I had the opportunity to engage in professional presentations with two of our high school superintendents. Dr. Nancy Robb, Superintendent of District 211, joined the Harper delegation that attended the Achieving the Dream (AtD) conference in Dallas. Nancy joined me and two faculty members (one from District 211 and one from Harper) in making a presentation about our very successful math partnership. The Board will hear a presentation from these two faculty members during our meeting this month. A few weeks after the AtD conference, Dr. David Schuler, Superintendent from District 214, and I were asked to make a presentation to a national advisory committee of secondary superintendents sponsored by the College Board. The College Board invited David and me to attend this meeting (at their expense) to discuss our Northwest Educational Council for Student Success—the consortium consisting of Districts 211, 214, 220 and Harper College. This consortium champions all of the activities related to college and career readiness. Both of these presentations went very well and I was very proud of the relationships and partnerships we were able to showcase and demonstrate to these respective audiences.

Our College-wide task force on governance met for a half day retreat this past month. We are currently developing a set of “guiding principles” that will be used in developing design criteria for shared governance with the College's core values as an anchor for these guiding principles.

This is a great time of year on the campus as we all anticipate the final celebration of student success: the commencement ceremony. We are so delighted that David Brooks will be with us to receive a degree and provide the commencement address. Many people will have exposure to Mr. Brooks through a pre-commencement brunch, the actual ceremony, and the post-graduation reception that Cathy and I will be hosting at our home. He has been so gracious with his time as he has dedicated this entire day to Harper festivities. We are honored.

We were treated to a wonderful keynote address by Anne Pramagiorre, CEO and President of ComEd. This was in honor of the 100 Influential Women Breakfast, an annual fundraiser supporting our Women's Program. Anne's comments cleverly used lessons from kindergarten to frame ways we need to view today's world. Simple yet important lessons included viewing failure as a step to success, managing by wandering around and speaking to people, and expecting all employees to provide leadership. These points were articulated in a heartwarming and realistic manner. Our Foundation staff did a wonderful job organizing the event. Also, many thanks go to Rita Canning for recommending and engaging Anne as the keynote speaker.

This week, I begin my three-year appointment as a Board member of the newly formed Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership. Karin Norington-Reaves, CEO of the Partnership, spoke at a recent regional workforce/community college meeting held at Harper. The goals of that group are aligned with the initiatives we have undertaken this year—to review job placement services and how well we connect our students to local employment opportunities. A task force led by Mark Mrozinski and Patty Bruner has been charged with looking at ways to enhance job placement services at Harper. This group includes members from business and industry, as well as a Harper alumnus.

We have also been busy launching the recently announced Trade Adjustment Act Community College Career and Training (TAACCCT) grant that was awarded to Harper College on behalf of 21 community colleges, referred to as the Illinois Network for Advanced Manufacturing. This grant, which was awarded for \$12.9 million, will allow these colleges to develop additional capacity in addressing the critical skills shortage in the advanced manufacturing sector. A search is well underway for a manager who will lead this effort.

The Harper Leadership Institute Task Force is making very nice progress with the development of this program. During the College's all-campus meeting in January, we will preview the program for faculty and staff. Scheduled to begin in fall of 2013, the year-long program will work with a cohort of 30 members of our faculty and staff. Cohort groups will be developed to assure wide representation of our employee community. The program will begin with a four-day residential experience, followed by monthly Friday meetings throughout the year. The format of the program will involve key thought leaders from higher education, state-wide leaders, and members of our own faculty and staff leading various segments. A group project will be embedded within the program — projects will be related to our current strategic plan.

Faculty and staff attended our traditional President's All Campus Meeting last week. The main highlight of the event was a keynote address by Dr. Diana Oblinger, who edited the book *Game Changers* and authored Chapter 3 which focuses on the impact of IT in higher education. This book, along with watching youngsters use technology, has made me acutely aware that the landscape of higher education will change in the future, perhaps dramatically. In her address, which was delivered remotely to Harper, Dr. Oblinger articulated how information technology has created the "connected age." Themes such as do-it-yourself learning through platforms like MOOCs (massive open online courses), student empowerment, predictive analytics, credits and credentials conferred based on competencies, and new value chains where private entities are offering courses at reasonable rates, were highlighted. This address provides a base of information that we will dive into in more detail in March when Dr. Oblinger visits the campus.

A Harper student once again has been awarded the coveted Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's transfer scholarship—it was awarded to Elizabeth Erikson. This has occurred for an unprecedented third year in a row! This prestigious scholarship honors excellence by supporting outstanding community college students with financial need as they transfer to and complete their bachelor's degrees at the nation's top four-year colleges and universities. The Foundation selects up to 60 community college transfer students across the nation and awards each scholar up to \$30,000 annually. It is indeed rare that a community college has a Jack Cooke Kent Scholarship awardee. Many thanks go to Dr. Alicia Tomasian for her ongoing support and coaching of students applying for this scholarship.

During the last weekend in April and first weekend in May two notable events were held on campus that required a significant amount of coordination. In support of Harper's completion mission and inspiration strategy, the recent College and Career Expo and Inspire U events engaged and motivated more than 1,000 community residents to start, finish and go forward with their lives through education. The Expo and Inspire U are projects developed by the Inspiration Strategic team in partnership with many other faculty, staff and community colleagues. While the Expo engages 4-8 grade students and families, Inspire U was designed to reach adult learners. This has always been a goal of the Inspiration team, but the concept really came to life through comments shared by parents who attended past Expos and shared that they were looking for similar opportunities to explore learning relevant to their own lives.

An unanticipated opportunity was presented to us at the end of June. Broward College in Florida invited us to join in a \$25 million dollar Department of Labor TAACCCT Round 3 grant application, seeking funding to build a national certification system for Supply Chain Management. With support from the Gates Foundation, Broward is leading an effort for funding that would bring together eight community colleges (Florida, New Jersey, Illinois) with three research universities, (Northwestern, Rutgers, Florida State) to develop these credentials. We had three weeks to complete our application for \$1.5 million dollars. Needless to say, the earlier work we led which resulted in the awarding of a TAACCCT Round 2 grant and the data we collected at our recent "skills" conference was very helpful. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the grant proposal will be funded by the Department of Labor.

## **2013-2014**

At the end of June we had the privilege of hosting a group of Chinese college presidents and regional higher education leaders for two days at Harper. This was an event we hosted at the bequest of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) which served as the group's American sponsor. Our guests spent a day touring our campus and meeting with faculty and administrative leaders. They used the second day to debrief their entire American experience (their Harper visit was the culminating event following three weeks in the United States) with the AACC staff. There is no question that the 21st century community college is globally connected! We shall seek other opportunities to participate in the international arena.

We were delighted to learn that our application to join the ranks of "Leader Colleges" for the Achieving the Dream (AtD) network has been accepted. We are now formally a Leader College for AtD. This is wonderful validation of our work on student completion, partnerships with our sender school districts, and our willingness to work hard when we have the data to support a need for change. This will be a continuing challenge as we work in an environment that is demanding better outcomes for more students with shrinking resources. We will be challenged

to develop clearer and more supportive educational and career pathways as we advance our work.

Next week (the week of September 16) the Harper Leadership Institute will be launched. We are looking forward to beginning this important initiative and also looking forward to introducing this first cohort to the Board at a pre-Board meeting dinner on September 18. Kudos to Dr. Mark Mrozinski and the entire planning team for developing a superb agenda for the intensive residential experience the participants will experience. We will share with the Board the agenda for those four days and I believe you will agree it is aligned nicely with issues and opportunities facing community colleges today.

Early in December, I will travel to Washington, DC for the initial meeting of the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (AMP 2.0) Steering Committee organized by the Council of Economic Advisors Science and Technology Committee of the White House. This work is being coordinated by the Executive Office of the White House. I am delighted to report that our recommendations regarding individuals that would be good additions to the working committees have also been accepted and these individuals are already at work. Four of our suggestions, Dr. Maria Coons, Jim Nelson (Illinois Manufacturing Association), Marianne Stanke (Motorola Solutions) and Jennifer McNelly, (the educational center leader for the National Manufacturing Association), have each been assigned to various working groups under the AMP 2.0 umbrella. We are all proud to be involved and recognized for the work Harper has done in leading the manufacturing initiative in Illinois.

Dean Michelé Robinson will join the Executive Council on January 1 as the Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion. Work in this area is already underway and she will report progress to-date to the Board at the December meeting. We welcome her into this new and important role.

I co-taught a section of the new First Year Seminar course with Dr. Tom Dowd. Over the holidays I took the opportunity to read our students' self-discovery/academic planning pathways papers. I must say that these papers fuel my continuing belief that the freshman seminar assures student engagement in their academic and career planning and provides our students the best start possible. Tom and I will co-teach the course again next year and we continue to fine-tune the design and delivery. We will determine next year if the course is to become mandatory for all our students.

Follett assumed operations of the HarperStore on July 1, 2013. In addition to hiring all Harper employees working in the HarperStore, Follett continues to hire student workers. With the help of Human Resources, open student positions were posted on the job portal, and Follett has hired 15 Harper students for the Spring semester. Studies have shown that student workers on campus have higher persistence and graduation rates.

Over the last several months, the College has moved forward with major construction projects. It is simply amazing to see all of the construction that has occurred over the winter—particularly when noting that the weather was a challenge. The D Building addition is closer each day to completion. H Building will be ready for occupancy in spring 2015, and the parking structure is seemingly rising out of the ground magically! The brick panel walls present so well and complements surrounding buildings.

## **2014-2015**

I'm pleased to report that we have received a recommendation from our governance system to become a smoke-free college. I have accepted the recommendation and will forward a policy to the Board in September for a first reading. We will become smoke-free January 1, 2015. A group of staff has been charged to develop a communications program to share this policy change with the College community. We will also provide smoking cessation assistance for those that request help. This policy is aligned with recent statutory legislation prohibiting smoking on or in any state-operated or assisted institution.

Dr. David Schuler (District 214) and I have been invited to present information regarding our Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) to a forum of school superintendents and community college presidents in Washington DC. This event is being sponsored by the National School Superintendents Association (NSA) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Four superintendent/president teams were invited to present and we were delighted to be asked.

The Harper Promise program is into an intense infrastructure development phase and we can anticipate a public announcement of the program in mid-late January. Regarding the Harper Promise Program, we wish to acknowledge the ongoing support and involvement of our three superintendents from Districts 211, 214, and 220. Without their leadership and support this program would not be possible. The consortium we have formed, the Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS), continues to evolve with new and innovative projects. This work has been recognized regionally and nationally. The relationship we have with our school superintendents is envied by many of my peers. It is a delight to work with them as colleagues and friends. The four of us are excited about our first joint Board dinner and workshop in early December. I hope many of our Board members will attend.

We look forward to welcoming Governor Bruce Rauner on January 23 to help us officially open the Career and Technical Education Center. This will be one of the Governor's first formal public appearances since the swearing in ceremony earlier this month. We are so delighted he will join us. Not long after this public event, we will begin the construction of the new Fabricators and Manufacturers Association's (FMA) Advanced Manufacturing Center. We are so delighted to be partnering with them to put a national spotlight on advanced manufacturing. Currently, there are more than 1,000 students (headcount) in the programs this facility supports and the additional technologies we train for will only increase those numbers.

## **2015-2016**

We want to give a special thanks to Vince and Pat Foglia who made a \$1 million investment in our Promise Scholarship Program. They are investing in the future workforce of our community. We so appreciate the Foglia Foundation making such a significant investment. We will soon be developing a special recognition for Vince and Pat and will be inviting them to campus for the unveiling of the "Foglia Center for Nursing and Allied Health."

My personal and professional belief is that there is considerable room for enrollment growth through enhanced persistence and retention, and our new strategic plan is the vehicle we must use to enhance student success while also increasing enrollment through persistence and retention. The directions: Inclusion (First Year Seminar, faculty coaching of students, and intensive outreach to high risk students), Engagement (Harper Map, degree plans and

pathways, early intervention through faculty engagement and predictive analytics), and Achievement (improved retention and persistence rates, and higher graduation rates) will have a significant contribution to our enrollment picture. We must strive to benchmark ourselves to the highest achieving community colleges in the nation and develop the strategies that will provide outcomes as good as or better than theirs. Our new strategic plan will provide a road map for the next four years to seek those enhanced outcomes for our students.

On September 18, we will host Dr. Davis Jenkins, one of the co-authors of *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*. Dr. Jenkins will be joined by Dr. Arlen Garcia, a faculty member from Miami Dade College, in a daylong symposium exploring the text. We are looking forward to learning more from them as we continue to understand the utilization of academic plans and pathways as an important tool for our student's success. I, along with a group of faculty and Dr. Quirk-Bailey, have planned this symposium and we anticipate about 95 of our colleagues will join us for the discussion.

We are disappointed that although it is mid-December, the State is still without a budget. Unfortunately, the budget stalemate is impacting the College's operating budget. We are fairly certain that the College will receive less than its anticipated State operating grant when a budget resolution is reached. In fact, with a \$3 billion gap between the State's proposed spending and revenue, it is almost guaranteed that all of the funds will not be forthcoming.

Our first class of Promise Scholars have registered and demonstrated their interest in the program. Sixty-seven percent of the high school freshman registered for the program. Over the next four years, we will learn if their "interest" will turn into "commitment." We are very close to our \$10 million dollar goal that will finance the scholarships. With almost four years remaining before Promise students arrive on campus, we feel confident that we will meet or surpass our financial goals.

The *Daily Herald* ran an article about the College's Achieving the Dream's Leah Meyer Austin Award.

One of our deans, Dr. Mark Mrozinski, has been selected to participate in the inaugural class of the Aspen Institute's Presidential Fellow program. This prestigious program "is preparing the next generation of community college presidents to lead transformational change so that significantly more students earn valuable credentials and go on to well-paying jobs." Forty community college leaders from across the country will participate in this prestigious experience; more than 600 applied. Congratulations to Mark!

Our partnership with Zurich North America Insurance will be spotlighted next week at the "Select USA Investment Summit." This Summit is sponsored by President Obama and coordinated by the Department of Commerce. Speakers include the President, Secretaries of State, Commerce and Labor, as well as the Secretary of Finance. There will be an invited audience of global investors. Mr. Mike Foley, CEO of Zurich North America, and I will join a panel moderated by the US Ambassador to Switzerland discussing our Insurance Apprenticeship program. We are delighted this program will gain international attention and honored to be included.

This Saturday we will enjoy commencement in our new venue. The "pavilion on the lake" will be an impressive site for this celebration, as will the newly refurbished Building D. The latter has come together in spectacular fashion and we wish to commend Power Construction for delivering the site and the building on time, and within our forecasted budget. In fact, we believe the project will end with a significant balance in the contingency fund that will be applied to other

needed preventative maintenance and replacement initiatives. During commencement, we look forward to awarding President Toni Preckwinkle an honorary degree and hearing her address to our graduates.

## 2016-2017

Earlier this month, the College was honored by the Schaumburg Business Association (SBA) as they named Harper College “Business of the Year.” It was an honor to accept the award at the SBA’s annual gala, the Toast of Schaumburg, and be joined by Trustees Dowell, Kelley, and Mundt, and former Chair and Trustee Laurie Stone. We were all so proud of the College.

There has been quite a bit of conversation about the impact the recent election will have on immigration policies. The College has signed an open letter to President-Elect Trump requesting that he continue the executive order which protects undocumented students referred to as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). I joined a group of 500 college presidents in this regard. Other colleges have passed resolutions to become a sanctuary place for students. This is a common action for cities or municipalities, however there is little history regarding colleges taking such action. We must be mindful that many of our students rely on federal financial aid as a means of paying for their education at Harper. Thus, we must be vigilant in preserving this funding source as we search to understand the effects of sanctuary status.

Because of the Harper brand, the significant results we are obtaining in our graduation rates, success with developmental education and reducing achievement gaps, we have been selected to participate in the Frontier Set program. The Frontier Set is a group of 31 colleges and universities which include Historically Black Universities or HBUs, individual universities and community colleges as well as state systems that have been recognized for doing significant work in the student success arena. We join a group that includes community colleges such as Miami Dade, Santa Fe, and Lorain, as well as four-year institutions including Georgia State and Arizona State Universities, Delaware State University, and the University of Georgia System, among many others. Funded by the Gates Foundation, we will work with these institutions to develop and share promising practices in advising and counseling, developmental education, and digital delivery programs. We were proud to be asked to join this prestigious group and are excited to have our work enhanced by these new partners. We will work collaboratively with this impressive learning community over the next four years, supported by a \$630,000 grant for Harper College.

Our campus strategic planning goal teams are working hard. Areas of interests or “meta majors” have been identified by the Educational Planning and Pathways team; our Curriculum and Instruction team is focusing on both digital education and engagement in the classroom; and the Student Experience team has set its sights on developing a “culture of care” throughout the campus. This is just a sampling of the work to-date.

Our Title III team is currently working with the Civitas group to install their products in our electronic support system for student engagement, advisement and proactive outreach. The Civitas tools assist counselors and advisors as they manage their caseloads of students from entry to completion. We are very excited about the implementation of these tools.

As this report was written, yet another glimmer of hope is coming out of Springfield regarding some funding for higher education in Illinois. The House has passed a measure that is now going to the Senate that could provide \$85 million to community colleges with equalization

grants and some base support. To date, MAP funding has not been addressed. I am traveling to Springfield this week and hope to have up-to-date information to share at the Board meeting on Wednesday.

Great news from the athletic front, the Harper Water Polo team has placed first in the nation in the Collegiate Water Polo Association League. Comprised of major universities and just a few community colleges, the Harper team defeated all other teams at the national tournament. We will introduce and celebrate the team's success at the May Board meeting.

Last week we were pleased to note two important accomplishments by the College. First, the negotiating teams representing full-time faculty and the Board completed their work and are recommending a five-year collective bargaining agreement. Currently, the contract is being ratified by faculty members, and the Board will consider a recommendation to approve the contract at the May Board meeting. This is a considerable accomplishment that represents the best interests of all parties. Particular thanks go to David Richmond, faculty lead, and Judy Marwick, administrative lead, for successfully navigating the discussions and agreement. This is the first time in many years that a fully negotiated faculty contract was completed in the semester in which it began. This is a true testament to the extraordinary positive working relationship shared between the faculty and College.

A second accomplishment is of particular note. The College was informed by the Illinois Community College Trustees' Association (ICCTA) that William Rainey Harper College is the recipient of the 2017 Equity and Diversity Award. This award honors the efforts of many College leaders, faculty, staff and administrators who have worked persistently over the last four years to implement the recommendations of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force that was commissioned five years ago. Special thanks go to Michelé Smith for her leadership and the College's Diversity and Inclusion Committee for leading these efforts. While much remains to be done, this award signifies that we are making progress. Trustee Bill Kelley, Michelé and I will attend the ICCTA convention in June to accept the award on the College's behalf.

With this new fall cohort, we begin the implementation of our case management advising system. This new system will be coupled with "areas of interest" that have been developed for students seeking to earn a degree and/or certificate. Beginning July 1, we will have the equivalent of 44 full-time counselors and advisors available to work with our students to develop academic plans and pathways and provide support through outreach and coaching. Over the course of the next two years, we will scale the case management system to every full- and part-time degree and certificate seeking student. This new system of advising and support is expected to improve our persistence, advancement and graduation rates. While we are delighted that our graduation rate is at an all-time high and with this year's graduation we surpassed our goal of 10,604, there is still considerable room for improvement.

## **2017-2018**

It's hard to believe that we are launching another academic year; time seems to fly by faster each year. Although we began the celebration of Harper's 50th Anniversary last spring with the annual Foundation golf outing and graduation, the celebratory activities will begin in earnest this week. The planning committee, co-chaired by two creative and capable leaders, Donna Harwood and Bev Riley, has organized a plethora of activities including the 50th gala, Community Day in April, and opportunities for volunteering. Notably, the actual anniversary date

of the College in September 13; that is when the annual Hullabaloo will be held where students learn about clubs and organizations.

Harper has been honored with the Association of Community College Trustees' (ACCT's) Central Region Equity Award. This award was given after Harper won the Illinois Community College Trustees' Association (ICCTA's) Equity and Diversity Award last spring. As the Central Region winner, we are a finalist for the national Charles Johnson Equity Award. This award recognizes exemplary commitment by a governing board and its president to achieve equity in the college's education programs and services and in the administration and delivery of those programs and services. Many thanks to Michelé Smith who has led our Diversity and Inclusion activities for the past three-plus years. We will learn if we won the national award at the annual ACCT annual conference in late September.

There is more good news to share related to our Promise scholarship program. The final individual investment was made to assure the \$10 million goal was reached! We received a \$75,000 donation that will be matched by the donor's employer by \$30,000; this puts us over the \$10 million goal. The Educational Foundation Board and our staff are now in pursuit of additional donations that will be matched by the \$1 million the Board of Trustees has put into reserves to leverage new investments in the program.

As we finish this fall semester and prepare for the spring, the College will begin the process of selecting the next president. We were particularly pleased that Dr. Josh Wyner, Director of the Community College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, will be assisting the Board with preliminary preparations for the search. Dr. Wyner is well-respected across the higher education and community college landscapes and will be a valuable resource to the Board. Dr. Wyner has specified a timetable and a set of outcomes for his work with Harper.

The College hosted two significant events last week. First, we greeted mayors and village managers from the 23 towns and villages we serve and briefed them on our updated master plan. This is part of our overall plan to educate and provide information to our community members regarding a possible no-tax increase that would be used to continue investing in our facilities. We also hosted a ribbon cutting for the University Center in Building D. The President from Northern Illinois University and the Provosts from Roosevelt and DePaul joined us to celebrate the opening of the Center, which will bring six bachelor degrees to our campus. This event generated an unprecedented positive response through social media.

When the Board reconvenes for the regular April Board meeting, the College will have just hosted the April 14 Community Day. This special day, planned by the 50th Anniversary Committee, welcomes the entire community to the campus for a day filled with activities, information and fun! Our 50th Anniversary Committee has executed a number of outstanding events this year. This, and graduation, will be the biggest and best ever!

Our final 50th Anniversary celebration will be the graduation ceremony on May 19. I am honored that David Coleman, President and CEO of The College Board, will be this year's commencement speaker. The College Board is the organization behind the SAT and Advanced Placement programs. It has a long history in higher education and under David's leadership has partnered with Khan Academy to revolutionize the way students practice for the SAT—empowering students of all backgrounds. David has been diligently preparing for his commencement speech by sending videographers to campus to record our students' stories. We are looking forward to his comments and insights!

Although there was no formal Board meeting in March, the College was certainly active and the Board present during our HLC accreditation visit. The results were absolutely remarkable. As some have said, we hit a grand slam home run! In the more than 40 years that I have worked in higher education, I have never seen such a glowing report. The College met all criteria for accreditation, there were no sanctions and most importantly, there is no interim monitoring recommended. I wish to thank Darlene Schlenbecker and Julie Ellefson for their leadership of this most important endeavor! They were supported by a cadre of dedicated Harper faculty and staff, all contributing to this wonderful outcome.

Once again, Harper is honored to have a student who is being awarded a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation scholarship. Our Harper student is one of only 47 receiving this most prestigious award. Each recipient receives up to \$40,000 annually to complete their bachelor's degree, along with comprehensive educational advising. This year's Harper recipient, Mili Tomar, along with Dr. Alicia Tomasian, the Harper faculty member who works tirelessly to help students with their applications, will visit the Board meeting in May so we can all congratulate her.

I was proud to receive the Gary Davis Ethical Leadership Award from the Illinois Community College Trustees Association. This award recognizes individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the pursuit and support of ethical leadership and decision-making in their fields of work and volunteer service. I was honored that the Board nominated me and humbled to receive the award among many notable community college leaders in Illinois.

## **2018-2019**

We are so eagerly anticipating the opening of the Foglia Foundation Health and Recreation Center. The new building is extremely inviting with light, graphics and a professional management team. The fitness room itself marvels anything I have seen. The pool is gorgeous and the various exercise rooms and activity areas are sparkling. The instructional areas are much improved, as are the facilities for our student athletes and staff. We are currently registering our employees who are "joining" as members and more than 50 have enrolled thus far. Training is underway for the student workers who will be assigned to the building with more than 50 students hired. The Palatine Park District has successfully programed the pool to maximum usage, and the swim coaches for Palatine swim teams are shaking their heads with amazement at the new facility. Many have expressed, "I never thought that this would be possible." Well indeed it is.

We were so proud to receive notice recently that the College is being recognized for the work we are doing in assessment. The Board packet this month contains a copy of the letter notifying us of the award. Without a doubt, the excellence we are achieving in assessment went a long way in helping us make the case for re-accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. Darlene Schlenbecker and her staff have done a great job leading the College in the assessment area. Kudos to them!

The College hosted the annual Diversity Symposium, which focused on our growing Latinx community. This event has steadily grown in importance to us as our diversity and inclusion agenda has, in turn, evolved and grown. Our shared governance Diversity and Inclusion Committee leads this effort and is assisted by Dr. Pearl Ratunil, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion. Thanks to all for presenting an excellent program for the campus community.

This fall also brought the eighth consecutive National Championship for our Men's Cross Country team; the Women's Cross Country team earned their third National Championship. This is truly a remarkable achievement. Coach Jim Macnider continues to do an excellent job identifying and developing outstanding runners. These young men and women are exceptional runners and students alike. Congratulations to the teams and the coaches.

We also celebrate our recent successful bond referendum. Our community supported the referendum with more than 61% voting yes to the College's request to raise \$180 million dollars in support of capital projects. This is the largest referendum in the College's history, as well as the largest affirmative vote. We thank the voters for their confidence. We also wish to thank all of those at Harper College and in the Harper community who volunteered to work toward passage of this bond authorization. Kudos to past board members Laurie Stone, Rita Canning and Dick Hoffman for their efforts in leading the community campaign. Their ongoing commitment to Harper College is just outstanding!

We are also celebrating the success of the Harper faculty and staff who have been participating in Ferris State University's Community College Leadership doctoral program. This semester has seen many of our Harper colleagues successfully defend dissertations. On December 15, these successful new doctorates will walk across the stage at Ferris State University to be formally awarded the doctorate degree. We will have a reception for these scholars in February on our campus.

We begin this New Year with very heavy hearts as we absorb the loss of Professor Craig Stettner from the Biology Department. Craig was an excellent and well-liked faculty member, admired by students and faculty alike. His accidental drowning in Costa Rico was tragic news for all. We shared a moment of silence for him at the spring All Campus meeting and it was a very solemn moment indeed. We pray for him and his family.

I was pleased to receive a recommendation from the shared governance system that requires students to complete a Start Smart or First Year Experience course. The recommendation states that all new degree-seeking students with fewer than 12 hours of college credit earned after completing high school be required to participate in this type of experience within their first two semesters at Harper. We have no doubt that this requirement will increase student persistence, completion and success. We should continue to make impressive gains in our graduation rates because of this solid start for our students. Certainly our 33% graduation rate will soon be surpassed as our various initiatives build more student momentum and completion.

On behalf of Cathy, Shaun and myself, we want to say thank you. This month's activities highlighting our ten years of service to the College were simply splendid—so well planned, executed and attended. Thanks to all of you who attended the events and participated in the celebrations. We felt blessed and personally touched by all your kind words and well wishes. Naming the Pavilion in our honor was the icing on the cake. Thank you.