



PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

June 2025

Dear Harper College Community:

I am very excited that our proposed FY26-29 Strategic Plan is on the agenda for the Board of Trustees to approve at its June 2025 meeting. This represents the culmination of a yearlong process highlighted by tremendous engagement opportunities with our students, faculty and staff, community members, trustees, business leaders and employers, alumni and other stakeholders. I am proud of the team, co-led by Vice President Darlene Schlenbecker and Professor James Gramlich, the Strategic Planning and Accountability Committee, for leading a creative, inclusive and engaging process resulting in a powerful plan that will guide our work for the next four years.

The legislative landscape keeps changing for higher education. Last week, the United States Senate rejected changes to Pell eligibility requirements and institutional risk-sharing and supported new eligibility for short-term Workforce Pell programs with specific clock hour lengths that are at least 8 weeks – these are great wins so far in the reconciliation process for community colleges. We will continue to advocate, to protect and enhance Pell options for our students. At the state level, the Illinois General Assembly wrapped up its spring 2025 legislative session recently with some major implications for higher education. Community colleges received a 1% increase while an additional 2% was set aside pending approval by the Governor to address any negative effects to the state's finances including changes in revenue projections and from federal policy shifts. Additionally, \$500,000 was set aside to support participation by community colleges in the Common App System. The state's budget also continued funding at current levels for Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) grants and support for Mental Health Early Action on Campus. All of our capital projects were reappropriated in the budget as well as funding for the Education and Work Center in Hanover Park. As committed to our Board of Trustees, we continued efforts to seek support from state and federal levels for our Emergency Services Training Center (ESTC). I am thrilled to report that an additional \$1.4M was appropriated in our state budget thanks to State Representatives Nicolle Grasse and Nabeela Syed. We are grateful for their support to help offset the costs of our ESTC and bring another valuable asset to our community. In terms of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents' (ICCCP's) major legislative priorities, we were pleased with our progress to strengthen dual credit provisions with the updates on the Dual Credit Quality Act, but disappointed that the community college baccalaureate degree bill did not pass. However, it is important to note that we did reach an agreement with public and private universities for the negotiated bill. This is the farthest we have come to the finish line for this effort as a state and the ICCCP is committed to working with Governor Pritzker, ICCB and ICCTA to advance this bill during the fall veto session. Again, major thanks to our bill sponsor State Representative Tracy Katz Muhl and all our partners in this effort, including the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) for which Chair Bill Kelley serves on its Community College Baccalaureate Committee.

Regarding ICCTA, I enjoyed attending the annual trustee convention in Bloomington-Normal during which the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), ICCCP and ICCTA held meetings, training opportunities and an awards banquet. I attended the ICCB meeting during which I was introduced as the incoming chair for the ICCCP. Chair Kelley, Trustees Knox and Meyer attended the Robbins Schwartz *Trustee Professional Development Training*. And at the awards banquet, Harper faculty were recognized once again for their excellence in the classroom. Professor Pardess Mitchell was nominated for the Outstanding Full-Time Faculty

Award and Adjunct Faculty Christopher Dunn was nominated and received the Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award. This is the second year in a row that a Harper adjunct faculty member has won this award. Congratulations to both Chris and Pardess for their dedication to our students.

Finally, I want to recognize and thank Rob Galick, our executive vice president of finance and administrative services, who is retiring after many years of service to several community colleges, including five years at Harper when he retires on June 30. Rob played a pivotal role as we navigated the unprecedented challenges of the global pandemic, led the implementation of Harper's new Campus Master Plan, and advanced our efforts in emergency preparedness, risk management and information technology, all while upholding high standards of fiscal stewardship and accountability. Best wishes on your retirement, Rob.



Academic Updates

By the Numbers

- Advising Services
 - Cumulative Appointment/Phone Data
 - Our collective Advising Services offices made a total of 28,967 phone calls and held a total of 8,393 appointments in the spring 2025 semester.
 - Academic Advisors also supported and addressed 4,535 Starfish flags raised by faculty and staff to aid students.
 - Over 5,400 Starfish “kudos” were sent to students to reinforce and provide proactive support for their progress and to engage them to stay on track with their Path for Success at Harper.
 - Raise Your Hand Launch Updates
 - In May 2024, we implemented a soft launch of a student-initiated request for help flag in the student portal appearing in the form of an “I need help” button. This is an extension to the referral and communication process and creates a safe space for students to advocate for help. See below for a breakdown of student-initiated requests for spring 2025:

Flag Name	Total	Responder
I need help but I don't know who to ask.	114	One Stop
I need help selecting courses for my major/Program of Study.	29	Advising
I need help with essential needs (food, transportation, etc.).	4	Hawks Care
I need help with mental or emotional support.	6	Counseling
I need help with my classes (tutoring, writing support, etc.).	19	Academic Support Center
I need help with paying for college.	44	One Stop
I need help with registration.	71	One Stop
Grand Total	287	

- Counseling Services
 - In May, Counseling Services facilitated 91 appointments, including 14 first-time student sessions aimed at supporting mental health and promoting academic success. This represents a 62.5% increase in total appointments compared to the same time last year in May 2024.
- Enrollment Services
 - Throughout May, the CRM initiative continued to focus on enhancing student engagement and streamlining service delivery across departments. The following are the key performance metrics for the month:
 - 4,197 phone interactions
 - 1,602 walk-in visits
 - 26,466 emails sent
 - Campaigns included Adult Information Sessions, and the Admissions Outreach Dual Credit Tour Invitation.
 - 1,333 total chat interactions
 - 688 handled by Chatbot (51.6%)
 - Top 3 chat topics:
 - Summer Classes
 - Registering for Classes



- Course Schedule
 - This spring, 177 Promise Scholars completed the scholarship, maintaining their eligibility all four years of high school and all four semesters at Harper College.
 - This spring, the University Center enrolled its 1,000th student! Enrollment is strong among the programs, showing the desire for alternative options in earning a bachelor's degree close to home.
- Resources for Learning
 - In May, there was a total foot traffic of 10,454 people in the library.
 - In May, the library checked out 128 library Chromebooks, 74 graphing calculators, and 62 wi-fi hotspots to students. The library also facilitated the checkout and distribution of 13 AED Chromebooks for AED students.
 - The Academic Support Center had a total of 11,691 tutoring visits in spring 2025, an increase of 43.4% from visits in spring 2024.
 - Supplemental Instruction attendance in the Academic Support Center grew from 1,238 visits in spring of 2024 to 1,948 visits in spring of 2025.

Events

- Business and Social Science
 - While Harper was celebrating their graduates on May 16, the Early Childhood Lab School was doing the same—and the preschoolers had a graduation they will never forget! With proud families and friends in attendance, our little graduates made their grand entrance walking to the iconic Star Wars music, setting the tone for a joyful and memorable celebration. The ceremony was followed by a fun-filled picnic, bringing together children, families, and staff to honor this important milestone in a warm, community-centered atmosphere. It was a special day that perfectly reflected the heart of our Harper Lab School: meaningful learning, strong relationships, and joyful celebration.



- Harper Wellness
 - Harper Wellness, in collaboration with Advising Services and Counseling Services, hosted two Refueling Stations for students in preparation for finals week. Over 150 students participated in the stations, which featured grab-and-go snack items, mental health supports, and resources to prepare for finals.
- Math and Science
 - Late April, the Department of Physical Science, along with the Northwest Suburban Astronomers club, co-hosted the annual Astronomy Day event on the Harper College campus. The event consisted of lectures presented by Harper faculty and NSA members, planetarium shows presented by the Harper Astronomy club using our inflatable planetarium, kids' activities and many interactive displays. The evening concluded with an observation session at the Henize Observatory. Over 500 members of the Harper community attended the event.

- Resources for Learning
 - Finals Week Programming: In May, the library hosted comfort dog, Flex. Over 60 students spent time with Flex to de-stress. Also in May, the library's Make Shop hosted a Paint & Sip event outside in the Quad, where 60 students enjoyed light refreshments and made paintings on mini canvases.
- Student Engagement
 - Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Heritage Month: In May, more than 500 students came together in the Quad to celebrate Asian Fusion Fest: "Homecoming – Return to the Motherland." Students enjoyed live performances by their peers, cultural dance and information tables, and delicious treats like boba tea and mochi donuts. The free photo booth was a big hit, capturing memories from this vibrant celebration of APIDA heritage and student pride.
 - Free Movie Night: Also in May, over 200 patrons gathered to watch Disney's remake of Snow White in the Performing Arts Center.

Highlights

- Division/Program Highlights
 - Athletics
 - The Women's Track and Field team finished second overall at the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) National Meet last month, in Utica, New York. Natalia Pocica finished first in the Triple Jump, setting a new school record! Natalia earned All-American honors, along with Delaney Gale, Zoe Pavlu, Hanna Schultz, Lucia Sanchez Scriven, Perla Vargas, and Rose Wagner.
 - The men's team also finished second in the national meet with strong showings in the steeplechase and 4x400-meter relay. All-American performers were Shamar Allwood, Connor Ariunbat, Justin Brown, Jaylen Calhoun, Prince Ellington, Jose Morales, Ryan Golden, Jason Schmidt, Owen Whelan, Jerome Grassle, Michael Johnson, Joel Jones, Lucas McMillan, Vladyslav Nakhim, Nico Navarette, Stephen Osei, Andrew Rashad, Ivan Rodriguez, Tyler Thymian, Fortis Variano, and Dakota White.
 - The baseball team qualified for the regional tournament for the first time in many years. They played Kankakee Community College in the championship game, losing a heartbreaker 8-7. The foundation has been laid for continued growth for the program. Infielder Dominic Jacoby was selected to the All-Region second team with several other players.
 - Brianna Linneman was chosen as third team All-Region for softball.
 - In addition to our athletes soaring in their athletic endeavors, they continue to shine in the classroom. Ten out of our twelve teams have qualified to be nominated for the All-Academic Team of the Year (GPA 3.0 or better) for the NJCAA.
 - Harper Wellness
 - The Wellness program, in collaboration with Campus Recreation, unveiled two new massage/napping chairs in Building M for students, staff, and patrons to utilize. The napping/massage chairs are meant to serve as a de-stressing and recharging opportunity for the campus.
 - In collaboration with a variety of other campus departments such as the library and Counseling Services, Harper Wellness packed and provided 400 Thrive Kits for students in preparation for finals. The students received the Thrive Kits in the mail, which contained snacks, destressing activities, and academic resources to help students prepare for finals.
- Employee Highlights
 - Counseling Services
 - Carol Trejo Kroeger, MACC, LCPC, Counseling Services Manager, was recently selected to serve as the President-Elect of the Illinois College Counseling Association, a division of the

Illinois Counseling Association. This well-deserved recognition highlights Carol's leadership and dedication to advancing mental health support for college students across the state.

Advancement

- As of June 6, the Foundation has awarded \$2,826,645.45 to 1,217 students for this academic year. One new scholarship fund has been established: Lee Ann & Melvin H Jacobs Foundation Scholarship which brings the total number of new donor-sponsored scholarships created since July 1, 2024, to thirteen.
- Alumni Relations programming connected with alumni through a variety of engagement strategies in FY25 including:
 - 345 alumni attending alumni events during the year (with a total of 14 events hosted)
 - 219 alumni donating to the Harper College Educational Foundation in FY25 for a total of \$216,204
 - 40 alumni volunteers in speaking roles or mentoring roles with Alumni Relations

On July 17, Harper College alumni are invited to "Alumni Night" at the Harper Music Department's Outdoor Music series. Alumni donors who made a gift to the Harper College Educational Foundation in FY25 will be invited to a special pre-event pizza picnic in advance of the show. The concert will feature performances by Harper Guitar alumni. All alumni will receive a special gift from Harper Alumni Relations at the alumni tent. The alumni ensemble will be led by Harper Guitar faculty Steve Vazquez, who is also a Harper alumnus.

- The Foundation hosted its 36th Annual Golf Outing this month at The Club at Wynstone. The event united 103 golfers representing organizations throughout the Chicagoland area. Twenty-one local businesses participated as event sponsors with proceeds going to the Foundation's Resource for Excellence Fund. The event raised over \$150,000 for Harper students and programs.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Last month at the Lavender Celebration, over 50 Harper faculty, staff, students and their community gathered to celebrate Harper's graduates. This program included student speeches, bestowing Lavender stoles to graduates, and honoring a Harper faculty member and student for their leadership and service. The two inaugural awards were the Elke Weinbrenner Faculty/Staff Service Award, which was presented to Dr. Sadie Hochman-Ruiz and the Audre Lorde Award for Student Leadership given to Cesar Pacheco. It was a joyous event.
- Harper was well represented at the 37th Annual NCORE Conference.
 - Dr. Tamara Johnson co-facilitated an all-day pre-conference session titled, "Strategic Leadership: Professionalizing the Work of Justice and Belonging" and co-presented a session titled, "The Evolving Landscape for Senior Diversity Officers."
 - Professor Maham Khan presented a session titled, "Are we going to talk about this? How to Navigate Controversial Topics and Difficult Dialogues in Class."
 - Esmeralda Guerrero Lopez led a service-oriented session during the preconference titled, "Student Connections: Community Engagement in NYC and Beyond."
- The Staff, Administrators, and Faculty for Equality Employee Resource Group (SAFE ERG) marched in the Buffalo Grove Pride Parade earlier this month where over 40 students, staff, faculty, and family members participated and wore shirts designed by one of our students with Baby Hawk holding a pride flag.



External Affairs

Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement and/or helped facilitate five articles that appeared in local and national media publications. Media mentions include:
 - *Community College Daily* published an article about Harper student tour guides who first came to Harper on the tours they now lead. Achieving the Dream's June newsletter and the ICCTA listserv also highlighted this story.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran stories about the groundbreaking for the new Business and Social Sciences Building.
 - *Diverse Issues in Education* and other publications highlighted that Harper's Aini Asim was one of the recipients selected for the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran articles about the upcoming Juneteenth in the Burbs celebration at Harper.
 - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* previewed Harper's Summer Concert Series, featuring Harper ensembles and Chicago-based acts.
 - The *Candid Candace* blog reported on Harper's participation in The Blue Paradox Sustainable Fashion Show at the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.
 - The *Lake Country Gazette* highlighted Barrington High School student Brian Rudnicki, who was recognized for his artistic talents and skills, which he partially credited to his participation in Harper's welding program.
 - The *Daily Herald* reported that Harper alum Vanessa Abundiz was sworn in as a newly elected Schaumburg Township Library trustee.
 - The *Women in Academia Report* announced that Dr. Jennifer Berne, Harper's former dean of Liberal Arts, has been named the president of Madison Area Technical College.

Legislative Affairs

- Harper received good news this month from Senator Tammy Duckworth, whose team shared with us that Senator Duckworth had submitted the college's congressionally directed spending request to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. The college requested \$765,000 to fund a project to expand access to quantum career pathways. While the funding request still has to make it into the final FY26 federal budget, this is an important first step.
- The community colleges sector also received positive news at the federal level as the Senate version of the reconciliation bill removed concerning provisions around Pell that would have greatly affected students across the country. According to [CC Daily](#), the Senate version "fully rejects the House bill's problematic changes to Pell Grant eligibility based on enrollment intensity and institutional risk-sharing—a significant win for community colleges. The bill also includes new eligibility for Workforce Pell grants, a change long sought by community colleges, and changes to loan and repayment policies modeled on the House legislation." Keep track of higher education changes at the federal level through ACCT's [advocacy resources](#).

Marketing Services

- Completed redesign of the High School and Adult Learner Enrollment landing pages. Both pages feature a fresh, inviting layout, as well as updated search-optimized content and elevated call to action buttons. Early data is showing +233% increase in search traffic and +176% increase in conversions.



Begin your journey at Harper College

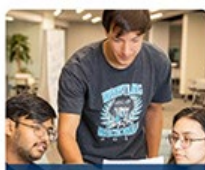
With affordable tuition, flexible schedules and career-focused programs designed to fit your goals, Harper College makes it easy to take the next step. Whether you want to jump-start your college education, gain real-world skills, or explore your passions, we're here to help you every step of the way.

Check out Harper from anywhere, meet Harper students and see what's waiting for you. Watch Harper College featured on the series [The College Tour](#).

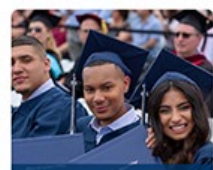
➔ APPLY



Get started at Harper



Request Information



Attend an Info Session



Tour Campus



Meet With an Admissions Specialist

Finance and Administrative Services

Human Resources

- Human Resources recently celebrated with 31 employees who completed the Emerging Leaders and Leading the Harper Way cohorts. Leading the Harper Way and Emergent Leaders program is a cohort based professional development opportunity to further develop your leadership skills. The Leading the Harper Way cohort is open to those who currently supervise at least one employee, and the Emergent Leader cohort is for those who aren't currently in a supervisory management role but would like to prepare for a future transition to this type of role. Six modules, based on Harper's core values (Respect, Integrity, Collaboration, and Excellence), are covered during in-person facilitated sessions that provide opportunities to develop relationships and grow alongside your colleagues.





Information Technology

- IT has successfully upgraded or replaced 3,187 out of 3,464 devices, completing 92% of the Windows 11 rollout. We remain on track to complete the upgrade before Windows 10 support ends in October 2025.

Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- Harper's student dashboard for advisors was recently enhanced to strengthen proactive support. Key updates include a new "Alerts" section that highlights important student characteristics, such as progress toward meeting first-year Path for Success indicators, the presence of registration holds, or requests for basic needs support. Another enhancement identifies all potential credentials a student could earn beyond their declared program of study, including progress and remaining credit indicators. In addition, the course withdrawal section now displays student-reported reasons for withdrawing, sourced from the recently added course withdrawal survey, providing advisors with greater context.
- Results from the 2024 Graduate Follow-Up Survey continue to reflect positively on the student experience at Harper. Among respondents, 99% would recommend Harper College, 91% would return to Harper, and 90% reported an improved appreciation for campus diversity. These insights are based on self-reported employment, educational status, and satisfaction.
- In May, members of the Office of Institutional Research, Dr. Anna Strati, Ron Serio, and Jacob Demos, presented at the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida. Their session, "Bridging Equity Gaps: Data-Informed Strategies for Student Success," showcased how Harper is leveraging disaggregated data and cross-campus collaboration to scale equity-focused interventions. The session was well attended, and feedback was positive.

Strategic Alliances and Innovation

Grants Office

- Harper College will receive over \$856,000 in grant funds for the FY26 ICCB Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) program. Funding will support student expenses, supplies, and equipment for nursing, dental, and other healthcare related courses. The allocation is the second largest award amount provided among 39 Illinois community colleges.

Strategic Alliances and Innovation Department

- Cybersecurity Program: Harper College has 107 students majoring in Cybersecurity with nine of these students having transitioned from non-credit to credit pathway. Support for this program comes from the

Department of Labor Strengthening Community Colleges grant activities which aims to build a skilled workforce in the cybersecurity field.

- **Program Launch: AI Immersion for Educators:** The college launched its first AI Immersion for Educators program last month, selecting eight faculty members to develop case studies on AI pedagogy, redesign, tools, and curricula integration. This initiative emerged from collaboration between the Innovation Accelerator and Academy for Teaching Excellence, focusing on transforming teaching methods through artificial intelligence applications in the classroom.
- **AI Education Consortium:** Harper College is developing an AI in Education consortium with in-district sender schools, high school educators, and staff. This will enable the college to design and offer the next wave of professional development opportunities that focus on AI advances in education and support successful transitions throughout each level of schooling in our district.

Workforce Solutions

- The Apprenticeship Office collaborated with Welding Technology to launch a new apprenticeship program in the fall. WABTEC Corporation, a long-standing partner in our CNC apprenticeship program, has hired the first apprentice for this new track. This addition reflects growing industry demand and our continued efforts to align training with workforce needs.

In Memoriam

- We are saddened to share the passing of former professor Larry Knight, who taught geology and physical science at Harper College for over 30 years before retiring in 2006. Larry made a lasting impact on countless students and colleagues throughout his distinguished career. [Read his obituary.](#)

