



## PRESIDENT'S *REPORT*

March & April 2025

Dear Harper College Community,

It's been an exciting and productive time since my last update in February. I'm pleased to share some of the great accomplishments and news from late February, March, and April.

We are making incredible progress on our new strategic plan. We hosted our strategic planning conference with over 200 participants engaged in dialogue as part of our *Participate. Discover. Focus*-themed event. I was so proud to see students, faculty, staff, board members and community members working side-by-side to plan for the future of our institution. Emerging from that conference and the incredible work of our Strategic Plan and Accountability Committee are three goals:

- Provide innovative and responsive education that addresses the evolving needs of students, the workforce, and our community.
- Cultivate an inclusive and supportive community that prioritizes holistic well-being for everyone.
- Achieve organizational excellence by centering on mission-aligned initiatives that improve operations, encourage experimentation, and advance sustainability, while upholding the College's core values.

These goals will now be posted for input from the college community, and I believe we are on track to bring the strategic plan to the Board of Trustees in June for approval. Thank you to VP Darlene Schlenbecker, Professor Jim Gramlich, and the members of the SPA Committee for their unwavering commitment to facilitating this robust development process that represents broad-based input.

In March, we broke ground on our Emergency Services Training Center. There was practically no chance of a fire breaking out on campus as uniformed firefighters from all across our district joined faculty, staff, community members, elected officials and our trustees to celebrate this community-centered facility that will provide outstanding training and educational opportunities for our local first responders as well as establish a fire academy at Harper College. Continued thanks to Senator Durbin who ensured that \$1 million in congressionally directed spending funds were approved to support technology and equipment in this facility. We expect to be hosting our first classes in this building in Spring 2026.

We also hosted finalists for our executive vice president of finance and administrative services position in March. I am pleased to announce that after a national search, I have selected Craig Duetsch for the EVP position pending board approval at the April 28 meeting.

Craig is an accomplished higher education and nonprofit leader with experience in finance, budgeting, human resources, information technology, public safety, risk management and related areas. Prior to his current role as an independent finance, human resources, technology and operations consultant, Craig served in senior leadership positions at Northwestern, Chicago State, Loyola and Northeastern Illinois universities. He earned an MBA from the Keller Graduate School of Management, an MSW from the University of Michigan and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Michigan State University.

I want to thank Dr. Stephanie Horton, professor, and Mike Barzacchini, director of marketing services, for co-chairing the search committee, as well as Dulse Barraza, executive assistant, and Erika Hartman,



administrative coordinator, for the administrative support they provided. I also want to thank the committee members for their work on this national search:

- Nikolay Arcos, Network Specialist, IT
- Dr. Courtney Bolhous, Operations Manager, Career and Technical Programs
- Adrian Fleisher, Adjunct Faculty, Mathematics and Science
- Bob Hayley, Assistant Controller, Accounting Services
- Lisa Helwink, Systems and Employment Manager, HR
- Ashley Honore, Student and Student Government Association Vice President
- Peter Neville, Police Sergeant, Harper Police
- Kimberley Polly, Dean, Mathematics and Science
- Michael Shaw, Director - CRM Operations, Enrollment Services
- Juan Silva, Maintenance Mechanic, Maintenance
- Michele Thoele, Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Science

And of course, I would be remiss not to thank our current EVP Rob Galick for his tremendous contributions over his nearly five years at Harper College. Rob, who is retiring on June 30, 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 the highest standards of fiscal stewardship and accountability. Thank you, Rob, and best wishes on a well-deserved retirement.

This month, we welcome new members Eric W. Knox and James Meyer to the Board of Trustees. Trustees-elect Knox and Meyer were elected on April 1 to six-year terms on the Board succeeding current trustees Greg Dowell and Herb Johnson. Trustees Dowell and Johnson will be honored with resolutions and trustee emeritus status. They were both incredible champions for the college and our students and served on the Board during a time of tremendous growth of the campus physical plant as well as increases in key student success measures including our record high graduation rate. We will also say goodbye to Student Trustee Liman Lei and welcome new Student Trustee Adekunbi Aransiola. I look forward to working with our new trustees to continue our mission and supporting our students on their Path for Success.

Our fifth annual Professional Development Day was a huge success and kicked off with a wonderful keynote address from Laura Knights, leadership and team development expert, who highlighted our theme "All Hands In" as part of her address. Laura brought her mom with her to the event and shared that her mom's educational journey began at Harper in the '70s before culminating in earning her bachelor's degree a few decades later at the same time as Laura. It was a delight to welcome her mom back as an alumnus and to learn from Laura's strong address about everyday transformational moments that lead to a big impact. Our team put together a wonderful day of sessions and activities, including a presentation on the Executive Orders/Dear Colleague letter by our general counsel, geared toward employees' learning and professional development needs while we also celebrated our community with a college-wide luncheon. My thanks to the Board of Trustees for supporting this time for college employees to focus on improving ourselves so we can provide better service and support to our students.

With the continued aim of strong communication within our college community, I conducted a Town Hall in April sharing updates and answering employees' questions. To no surprise, employees asked several questions about the federal government's policy changes and stances on higher education including the recent executive order on accreditation as well as the difficulties facing our international students. I reaffirmed that our commitment to our mission of serving our diverse communities will be our focus. Our leadership team will continue to review and evaluate changes at the federal level to ensure we are serving our students while being compliant with local, state and federal laws.



Finally, as we celebrated Women's History Month, I was honored to be named the Woman of the Year by our community partner, JOURNEYS, The Road Home. I'm grateful for this recognition and to be in partnership with JOURNEYS as we diligently strive to help our community thrive!

## Academic Updates

### *By the Numbers*

- **Counseling Services**
  - In March, Counseling Services facilitated 94 appointments, including 26 first-time student sessions aimed at supporting mental health and promoting academic success. This represents a 40.43% increase in total appointments compared to February 2025.
- **Hawks Care**
  - In the month of February, 215 students accessed the food pantry; 93 students met with staff; 57 students received dinners on-the-go; seven students visited the career closet.
  - In February, Harper College Lyft Pass Program had 568 unique riders who took 3,099 rides. The average cost per ride was \$9.81 and our monthly cost was \$30,387.48
  - In the month of March, 180 students accessed the food pantry; 68 students met with staff; 45 students received dinners on-the-go; eight students visited the career closet.
  - In March, Harper College Lyft Pass Program had 548 unique riders who took 2,849 rides. The average cost per ride was \$9.76 and our monthly cost was \$27,801.93.
- **Enrollment Services**
  - In March, the CRM team delivered support across multiple communication channels, ensuring timely and effective assistance for students and stakeholders. Below is a summary of key activities during this period.
    - 3,789 phone calls were logged.
    - 1,343 in-person visits were recorded.
    - 6,563 inquiries were submitted via email and information forms.
    - 1,113 chat interactions took place, with chatbots handling 55% of the conversations.
  - Spring Break Drop-In Campaign: This year, Admissions Outreach marketed drop-in hours to our high school students who were also on spring break. Overall, 171 students visited the office. Compared to spring break last year, when we did not market drop-in hours to our FTIC inquiries and applicants who were also on break, we saw 150 more students (a 156% increase!)
- **Resources for Learning**
  - **Library Services**
    - In March, there was a total foot traffic of 13,424 people in the library.
    - In March, the library checked out 38 library Chromebooks, 47 graphing calculators, and eight wi-fi hotspots to students. The library also facilitated the checkout and distribution of three Chromebooks for AED students.
  - **Academic Support Center**
    - Through week 12 of the spring 2025 semester, the Academic Support Center has had over 8,500 tutoring visits. This is an increase of almost 3,000 visits from the same time in spring 2024.
    - In April, the Academic Support Center offered two new Supplemental Instruction (SI) Information Sessions for faculty. These new sessions highlighted changes made to the program since July 2023. Below is some data that shows the impact of these changes:
      - SI visits more than doubled in the 2023-24 school year (2,507) from the 2022-23 school year (1,027).
      - Students who attend SI sessions have a 79.3% success rate compared to only 63.2% for those who do not attend.
      - Students who attend six or more SI sessions have a 91.4% success rate.

## Events

- Career and Technical Programs

- In March, Harper College hosted approximately 150 dual credit culinary arts students from Districts 211 and 214 to participate in the first Harper Culinary Competition. Participants worked in groups to create their own taco dish from a pantry stocked with proteins, produce, herbs, and spices which were judged by industry professionals and college staff.

Organized in collaboration with the Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS), State Rep. Mary Beth Canty's office, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) leaders, the event exemplified Harper College's commitment to fostering career readiness through hands-on experiences and regional partnerships.

- Counseling Services

- Community partner Kenneth Young Center facilitated a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training session designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to recognize, understand, and respond to signs of mental health challenges and substance use disorders. A total of 11 students, faculty, and staff successfully completed the training and earned MHFA certification.

- Enrollment Services

- Admissions Outreach hosted our annual Career Forward event for adults in our community looking to switch jobs, reskill or upskill. The event saw 137 attendees and feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive.

- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

- In March, HSI collaborated with Harper Wellness and participated in a free income tax preparation assistance on-campus event, with the goal of increasing student awareness of the Financial Literacy Program.
- Also in March, HSI participated and collaborated in the "How to Pay for College" Project Assistance, Surpassing Obstacles (PASO) event designed to support families in navigating the financial aid process.
- In April, HSI participated and had active involvement in a Latino Resource Fair sponsored by a local church in Hanover Park, strengthening community outreach and visibility for our PASO program and student services.

- Learning Communities and Start Smart

- In March, the Interdisciplinary Programs Office successfully hosted the annual Start Smart training. The event featured insightful discussions among faculty on various key topics, including the Open Educational Resources (OER) textbook, engaging with students about proper use of AI, and leveraging resources to enhance student success. Additionally, faculty examined valuable insights from student surveys. The training also included a robust dialogue on areas within Start Smart courses where students require the most support and where we face challenges in providing that support.
- In April, five faculty and staff from Harper attended the Consortium for Illinois Learning Communities (CILC) Best Practice Symposium. The symposium offered an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues from other community colleges who work with learning communities. Attendees gained valuable insights into learning community courses and programs through a variety of sessions, covering topics such as enhancing learning community offerings through assessment and promoting civic engagement. The highlight of the event was a student panel, where participants had the chance to hear the students' perspective of learning communities.

- Resources for Learning
  - Library Services
    - In March, the library participated in Fresh Check Day with a Follow Your Art booth led by the Make Shop: 313 interactions were recorded.
    - In March, the library participated in Resources to the Rescue with a table promoting library services and resources: 57 interactions were recorded.
- Math and Science
  - Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM) Regional Math Competition: In February, Harper hosted eight local high schools and approximately 330 students for a daylong math competition. Thirteen Math Department faculty supported the event, with top performers advancing to the state competition at Illinois State University.
  - Science Olympiad Regional: In March, Harper welcomed 20 middle and high school teams competing in 44 STEM events across campus. The event drew schools from across the region and featured hands-on activities, student-built devices, and over 86 student volunteers. Special guest Dr. Proctor engaged with students and faculty. The day was made possible by extensive support from faculty, staff, and Facilities Services.
  - Explore Engineering: Also in March, the Engineering Department hosted over 90 prospective students and families at the Wojcik Conference Center. Attendees explored transfer opportunities, including the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Engineering Pathways and LIFT mentorship programs, and connected with faculty, alumni, and STEM student clubs.
- Student Engagement
  - Professional Leadership Dinner: In March, thirty students joined 14 alumni for an evening of networking and dining at Chicago Prime Italian, hosted by Student Engagement and Harper Alumni. A pre-event workshop helped students build business etiquette and networking skills.
  - Retro Remix Dance: This month, more than 200 students attended the 90s-to-now themed dance featuring DJ Chris Kidd, vintage snacks, airbrush hats, and retro-inspired photo ops. The event was created with student input and built on the success of fall's Neon Night dance.
  - Veteran Support Spotlight: In April, Harper's Center for Student Veterans hosted Olivia Brinsfield from Student Veterans of America. She praised Harper's veteran support as "a shining example" in higher education and requested that Harper's programs be shared as national best practices.
- Wellness
  - Harper Wellness hosted the Love Your Self-ie event in February to promote body inclusivity and body image resources. Students were able to get a flower and write a note for someone they appreciate as well as learn about ways that they can celebrate body diversity. Around 80 students attended the event.
  - Harper Wellness collaborated with the Nutrition Department to offer the Nutrition and Wellness Fair in March where students and employees received free screenings such as blood glucose checks, Body Mass Index (BMI) testing, and blood pressure. Nutrition interns were able to receive hands-on experience in their field. Over 75 people participated in the event.
  - Harper Wellness hosted the sixth annual Fresh Check Day in March to promote mental health and suicide prevention. Twelve different campus departments, clubs, and organizations came together to help provide information and resources. Around 200 students attended the event. Of the students who completed the post-survey, 92% mentioned that they were either much more aware or somewhat more aware of the mental health resources available to them after attending the event.

## Highlights

- Division/Program Highlights (Featuring Division/Program-level updates.)
  - Athletics
    - Thirty-five Harper student athletes garnered All-Academic team honors for the fall semester. In order to earn All-Academic honors, a student athlete must have a GPA above 3.0. A total of 14 student athletes earned a perfect 4.0 GPA.
    - Harper's Wrestling team achieved a top three DIII finish at the NJCAA Nationals in Council Bluffs, Iowa, in March. Eight athletes qualified for the National Tournament and Ali Adel finished sixth in the 197 lb.-weight class.
  - Business & Social Science
    - Harper College's Business and Social Science Division hosted a series of impactful events for Black History Month, featuring renowned speakers and performers who brought history to life.
      - Award-winning singer and guitarist Chris Vallillo performed *Oh Freedom*, a powerful collection of songs from the Civil Rights Movement that highlighted the struggle for equality and determination for freedom.
      - James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association, shared insights from his seminal work, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and The Great Migration*, providing a deep dive into the historical forces that shaped Black migration to the North.
      - In February, retired teacher Connie Martin captivated the audience with her presentation, *Pre-Civil War Quilts: Secret Codes to Freedom on the Underground Railroad*, revealing how enslaved people used quilt patterns as secret guides to navigate their path to safety.

The events were well attended, fostering meaningful discussions and engagement, and we look forward to another enriching lineup next year.

- Hawks Care
  - Nearly 1.5 years after an application was submitted, Hawks Care Resource Center was officially offered a pantry partnership with Greater Chicago Food Depository. While the partnership is still in progress, it will bring our main campus, our students, and Hawks Care staff membership into Cook County's sole food bank. The sustainability and advocacy of working with Greater Chicago Food Depository is unmatched. Look for more details to come as our partnership progresses!
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
  - HSI welcomed two new team members to the HSI Office: Dr. Sandy González Rivas, Undocumented Student Liaison/Peer-to-Peer Coordinator, and Nicole Cabe, Administrative Assistant.
  - This month, during Professional Development Day, HSI hosted the professional development training sessions "Becoming an Undocumented Student Ally – UndocuAlly."
- Honors and Phi Theta Kappa
  - In February and March, Honors and PTK students:
    - Volunteered at the Gretchen S. Vapnar Community Crisis Center in Elgin.
    - Visited Elmhurst University to learn about the Elmhurst Honors Program.
    - Traveled to the Red Orchid Theater to see *The Cave*.
    - Volunteered at the Deer Grove Forest Preserve.
    - Volunteered on a build day with Habitat for Humanity.

- In March, eight Honors students traveled to Governors State University to present at the Honors Council of the Illinois Region Student Symposium. Topics included the impact of the Ukrainian war on grain production, criticism of capitalism in Bram Stoker's Dracula, the chemical composition of astronomical phenomena, and harmful stereotyping of Black women.
  - Over spring break, nine Honors students traveled with Prof. Andrew Wilson to Japan.
  - During the first weekend in April, six members of Harper's Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa traveled to Kansas City, Mo. to participate in the International PTK convention.
  - Earlier this month, Phi Theta Kappa students hosted about 40 faculty and students for their College Project event, Fun with Faculty.
- Learning Communities and Start Smart
    - The Integrative Learning Committee approved a designated section of First Year Seminar (FYS) for students interested in social transformation. This course will be open to all students interested in global, social justice, and sustainability studies starting fall 2025.
    - For the fall 2025 semester, students will have the opportunity to register for six different learning communities. These learning communities will give students the opportunity to connect on a deeper level with faculty and other students as well as the content in the two courses. The offerings for fall 2025 include: SPE 101/ FYS 101, MTH 101/ PHI 101, LEJ 101/ ENG 101, ENG 101/ FYS 101, ENG 102/ ART 105, MTH 065/ FYS 101. A variety of marketing efforts are underway to spread the word to students about these exciting opportunities.
  - Liberal Arts
    - In February, the Harper Jazz Ensemble led by LEAD Fellow Kirby Fellis participated in the Elmhurst Jazz Festival.
      - The Elmhurst Jazz Festival had over 20 bands from across the Midwest including the University of Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Purdue University.
      - Nine of our members received awards for outstanding recognition including four music students (Frank Vyverberg, Brian Hilton, Bruno Diaz, Francine Posadas) and five community members (Brian Conway, Jalen Little, Richie Dombrowski, Anthony Nardiello, Ethan Chodoroff).

It was a huge honor to compete against these excellent programs and receive so many awards!

- Office of International Education
  - Dr. Richard Johnson Presents at Global Education Conference: Dr. Richard Johnson, director of international education, presented at the 2025 Forum on Education Abroad in Toronto. He joined a panel of experts to discuss strategies for increasing study abroad participation among community college students. Dr. Johnson spotlighted Harper's innovative use of alumni and community scholarships to expand global access. The session drew strong engagement and affirmed Harper's leadership in equitable international education.
  - Spring Break Study Abroad-England and Japan: Over spring break, Harper students participated in transformative global learning programs. Theater students, led by Professor Kevin Long, traveled to London for Shakespeare-focused experiences, including master classes with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Meanwhile, Honors Program students, guided by Professor Andrew Wilson, explored Japan's rich history and culture across Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima. Both trips offered immersive academic and cultural experiences that enriched students' global perspectives.

- 16th Annual International Education Summit: In April, Harper's Office of International Education and Harper Grows! co-hosted the Summit, themed "Building Sustainable Communities through Global Perspectives." The event featured tracks on curriculum, mobility, green initiatives, and student services, alongside keynotes by Dr. Melissa Whatley (William and Mary) and Jean-Paul Ibambe (Arizona State/Humphrey Fellow). The Summit emphasized the transformative role of global education in fostering sustainability, integrity, and community resilience.
- Employee Highlights
  - Athletics
    - Former Athletic Director Doug Spiwak will be inducted into the Hall of Fame at the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics meeting in June. Spiwak had 27 NJCAA National Championships during his 33-year career at Harper College and served as the college's athletic trainer for 15 years.
- Student Highlights
  - Career and Technical Programs
    - Two new Legal Studies alumna stories have been published on the Legal Studies website. Click to read [Kellie Turner's](#) and [Kelly Hussey's](#) stories and learn how Harper helped launch them into their new careers.
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
  - Karen Torres, a nursing student and president of the Latine Health Sciences Club, was awarded a scholarship from the Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE) to support her continued pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.
- Honors and Phi Theta Kappa (PTK)
  - The Harper Honors Program has four Jack Kent Cooke semifinalists: Priyanka Saroya, Annette Lee, Bruno Diaz, and Wengipreye (Preye) Indiamawe.
    - Chapter Officers Kyle Enhzul, Preye Indiamawe, and Priyanka Saroya were honored on the PTK stage as members of our Distinguished Officer Team.
    - Isabella Giometti has been awarded the Honors Full-Tuition scholarship to Elmhurst University.

## Advancement

- As of April 21, the Foundation has awarded \$2,793,520 to 1,163 students for this academic year. The general scholarship application for the 2025–2026 academic year opened on March 1, and to date, 699 students have submitted applications.
- Four new scholarship or program funds have been established: the Edgar and Lisa Alvarado Educational Scholarship, the Martha A. Bell and Glen O. Reeser Art Program Fund, the Rev. Clyde H. Brooks Scholarship, and the Tony Gagliano Endowed Scholarship. This brings the total number of new donor-sponsored scholarships created since July 1, 2024, to eleven.
- The Resource for Excellence Committee selected six proposals as finalists for this year's internal grants. These projects are led by Harper employees and represent innovative programs centered on college priorities. The Foundation budgeted \$125,000 in FY26 for these worthy projects and final allocation recommendations will be made following proposal presentations on April 22. The finalists for this year's Resource for Excellence Grants are: Advanced Drone Operations, Curriculum Development for Teaching



Workforce Skills, Child Care Assistance, Enrollment to Employment: Student Resume Initiative, Harper AI Immersion Educators Consortium, Next Steps for Newcomers, and Under Construction: Building for the Future While Leaving No Student Behind.

- In March, Harper Alumni Relations in partnership with Student Engagement and the Job Placement Resource Center hosted the third annual Career Connections with Harper Alumni. The program, which connects student to the rich career experiences of Harper alumni, included 25 alumni participants from a variety of careers and backgrounds in panel discussions and at Professional Leadership Dinner. Nearly 70 students participated in the career focused programming over two days.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- In February, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, in collaboration with the Innovation Accelerator Office, hosted an inspiring lecture that spotlighted the significant contributions of African Americans to the digital and STEM fields throughout history. The event explored past innovations while also delving into emerging technologies, sparking awareness and motivating attendees to pursue careers in STEM and computing. A total of 81 high school students from nearby districts, along with 15 Harper students, faculty, and staff, attended the event.

Congratulations to our Leveraging Equity in Academia through Diversity (LEAD) Fellow, Kirby Fellis and the Harper Jazz Ensemble. They were one of the most awarded groups at the Elmhurst Jazz Festival last month. There were over 20 bands from across the Midwest like University of Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Purdue University. It was surely an honor to compete against excellent institutions and return with big wins!

- Last month, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) announced that Dr. Tamara Johnson was re-appointed to the NASPA Region IV-East Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 term. Dr. Clint-Michael Reneau, regional director-elect remarked, "This Board represents the finest leaders of NASPA Region IV-East—individuals dedicated to student success, equity, and the transformative impact of higher education. We are excited to see the contributions this team will make in the coming years!"
- In March, we hosted our first Guiding Learners to Intentionally Develop Efficacy (GLIDE) excursion for the semester. Joined by members of Triple H (Harper's Hip Hop Dance Club) and Student Government Association (SGA), we enjoyed great conversations, Mexican cuisine and the powerful performance of the Alvin Ailey dancers, leaving everyone inspired by the beauty and strength of dance. This experience was more than just a night out, it was a celebration of culture, connection, and community.
- In celebration of Women's History Month, the Office of DEI worked in collaboration with Harper Wellness, the Recreation Center, Social Justice Studies, and Harper Athletics to organize several events. The theme for this year was: The History of Women in Sports: Women's contributions to equality, equity, and change through sports. Events included a Women's NCAA March Madness Bracket party in the Rec Center, a presentation by Dr. Anne M. Mitchell, the former Director of Critical Ethnic Studies at DePaul University, to talk about race, gender, and sexuality in the WNBA and educational posters posted in Buildings A, D, Z, L, M, and W that highlighted 30 women's contributions to women's sports.

Our second GLIDE excursion was held earlier this month, which offered students an evening of cultural connection and artistic immersion in downtown Chicago. Following dinner, students attended "Moulin Rouge" at Broadway in Chicago's Cadillac Palace. The high-energy production provided many with their first exposure to a Broadway experience. Student feedback highlighted feelings of excitement, community and connection.



- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):
  - In March, LAND (Learning about Abilities, not Disabilities) sponsored author Kala Allen Omeiza, who joined the Academy's Neurodiversity Reading Group over Zoom for a conversation about her work. This semester, the Reading Group has been studying Omeiza's most recent book, "Autistic and Black: Our Experiences of Growth, Progress, and Empowerment." Faculty and staff members of the Reading Group learned more about Omeiza's experiences as a neurodivergent person of color and about her writing process.
  - Staff, Administrators, and Faculty for Equality (SAFE) hosted a successful Trans Day of Visibility in March, for Harper students. Harper Cultural Arts Committee and DEI hosted a performance by Dr. Christopher Cayarti about gender fluidity, gender performance, and transgender identities, with nearly 60 attendees. Following the performance, the Office of DEI hosted a reception at the Cultural Center for over 40 students, faculty, community members, and staff attendees.
- This month, Esmeralda Guerrero Lopez, Cristina Lopez, and Brenda Escutia presented, "Comadres en Comunidad: The Power of Community in Leadership and Advocacy" at the Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE) Conference held at Governors State University. Guerrero Lopez also co-presented with Martinez E-B Garcias on "All American Video Dialogue: Las Voces Latinas."

## External Affairs

### Communications

- The Communications team pitched, secured placement and/or helped facilitate 13 articles that appeared in local and national media publications. Media mentions include:
  - *Community College Daily*, the *Daily Herald*, *Patch* and Achieving the Dream's ATD News published reports about the groundbreaking for the new Emergency Services Training Center.
  - The *Daily Herald* reported on enrollment growth at area community colleges, highlighting Harper's enrollment and retention numbers.
  - *Community College Daily* reported on Dr. Proctor, Jeff Julian and Amie Granger's presentation about community relations at the American Association of Community Colleges' annual convention.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran profiles of Harper alum Erick Flores, who was helped by Harper's partnership with Partners for Our Communities.
  - *Community College Journal* (and *CC Daily*) wrote an article about how colleges are engaging alumni in fundraising efforts with a focus on Harper's Alumni Relations initiatives.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* previewed the Harper College Theatre Ensemble's production of *Guys and Dolls*.
  - The *Daily Herald*, *Journal & Topics* newspapers and *Patch* reported on the first Harper College Culinary Competition, which involved area high school students enrolled in Harper dual-credit programs.
  - *The Chicago Defender* reported on Harper's Black History Month event highlighting leaders in emerging technology.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published articles about Harper's InZone summer camp.
  - *Patch* ran a report on Harper's Ethics Bowl team winning a regional championship and competing at nationals.
  - *New America* announced a new project on degree apprenticeship including Harper's Darice Trout.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published previews of Harper's Three From Ukraine film series.
  - Western Illinois University News reported on WIU's new pathway partnership for Harper's criminal justice students seeking a bachelor's degree.
  - The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* ran articles in advance of Harper's Quantum in Healthcare event.
  - The *Chicago Tribune's* Editorial Board wrote a piece highlighting Harper's affordability in comparison to four-year institutions in Illinois.
  - *Patch* ran a story about Harper's HOPE Giving Circle and the HOPE Scholarship's 10<sup>th</sup> year.



- *Capitol News Illinois*, WMBD Radio and other outlets reported on Gov. JB Pritzker's State of the State address, featuring quotes from Rep. Fred Crespo about the potential for Harper to provide four-year degrees.
- *Forbes* magazine named Harper one of the best midsize employers in the U.S.
- The *Daily Herald* reported on and endorsed candidates for Harper's Board of Trustees elections.
- *Patch* previewed Harper's film noir music concert.
- The *Daily Herald* ran a report about Harper Radio's recent wins at the IBS Media Awards and BEA Festival of Media Arts.
- *Quad Cities News* reported on Harper's Kirby Fellis' appearance at the Black Hawk College Jazz Festival.
- *Philly Poetry Chapbook Review* highlighted *Diorama*, a new work by Harper's Sandra Marchetti.
- *Modern Luxury Chicago Social* named Harper adjunct fashion instructor Kathleen Haines-Finley to its best-dressed list.
- The *Daily Herald* and *Patch* published calls for community members to submit nominations for Harper's Distinguished Alumni Awards.

### *Community Relations*

- This month, Dr. Proctor, Jeff Julian and Amie Granger presented at the 2025 AACC Annual Conference. College leaders learned about Harper's community relations initiatives over the past 10 years and the lasting impact our engagement efforts have had on the community and Harper.

### *Legislative Affairs*

- State Representative Nicolle Grasse visited Harper College and met with Dr. Proctor and Chief of Staff Jeff Julian in April to discuss capital support for the Emergency Services Training Center (ESTC) project. State Rep. Grasse has been incredibly supportive of the project and is hopeful that funds may be available this budget year for the ESTC.
- In April, Chief of Staff Jeff Julian brought 8 students and staff members Christopher Maxwell and Aisha Robinson to Springfield for Student Advocacy Day. Harper students were recognized on the floor by State Rep. Nabeela Syed and conducted meetings in offices, in the hallways, and on "the rail" with elected officials during one of the busiest times in Springfield—third reading of bills. Elected officials who met with students included State Senators Cristina Castro, Darby Hills, Adriane Johnson and Laura Murphy, along with State Representatives Dan Didech and Michelle Mussman.
- Recently, Dr. Avis Proctor participated on a panel with Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi and other community college presidents at Truman College in Chicago to discuss challenges facing higher education. Dr. Proctor illuminated concerns around academic freedom, accreditation, the potential loss of federal funding, international students, institutional autonomy amongst other key issues.

### *Marketing Services*

- Marketing Services recently completed updates to all ten sets of Area of Interest (AoI) brochures. These are designed for prospective students, parents and supporters of students as an introduction to the wide array of Harper College's academic programs. Created as individual publications under the various "areas" or career pathways, a range of occupational outcomes are shown under each AoI. Each brochure highlights degrees, certificates and/or transfer programs along with applicable Harper College credentials, affiliations and unique benefits. Authentic campus and student photos, testimonials and distinctive information interspersed distinguishes each discipline. The brochures have a consistent format and voice presenting institutional values and available student support systems. AoI focuses on opening a prospective student's mind to the possibilities and outcomes of a Harper College education. Thought-provoking information assists in selecting an area of academic study. Produced in-house as both a print piece and in digital format.



## Finance and Administrative Services

### *Human Resources*

- The Human Resources Department has made its first set of changes for the Redwood upgrade in Oracle. Oracle requires these upgrades to provide more functional use in our modules. While most changes are just cosmetic, employees may see some new features that are added to the pages.
- Harper College hosted its fifth annual professional development day this month. Keynote speaker Laura Knights spoke about "All Hands In: A shared approach to making transformation accessible in everyday moments." Employees had the opportunity to connect and collaborate with peers across campus.
- Harper College had the opportunity to share its work in digital transformation with two national groups recently. The Higher Education Users Group recently held its annual conference in New Orleans, where members from IT, Payroll, Accounts Payable and Human Resources shared their work and knowledge with members of the Oracle community. In April, Harper was invited to participate in the Oracle Higher Education Summit hosted at Baylor University. Amanda Duval Norwood hosted a panel with employees from Butler University and the University of Tennessee Systems to share about the Oracle implementation highs and lows and where we are moving to next and what we are excited about in Oracle.

### *Risk Management*

- Thirty additional outdoor speakers were added around campus to improve our emergency communications system.
- Six life ring rescue stations were installed around our lakes on the Palatine campus. This will help facilitate a water rescue and meets OSHA compliance.
- Twenty-five first aid cabinets were installed across Harper College locations. This will provide a quick resource for minor injuries and ailments.

## Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness

- The Strategic Planning Conference was held in February, engaging more than 200 stakeholders in dialogue-based breakout sessions centered around the three themes, Supportive and Inclusive Community; Innovative and Responsive Education; and Organizational Excellence. All employees were invited to attend the conference, and the Board of Trustees, students, and a variety of business, community, and educational partners were invited. The Strategic Plan recommendation is currently following the Shared Governance process for approval.
- To gather feedback on the draft FY2026-2029 Strategic Plan goals, the Office of Outcomes Assessment distributed a survey in late March/early April to all employees and students, the Board of Trustees, and community members who attended the Strategic Planning Conference in February. A total of 195 individuals responded to the survey and results indicated 92% agreement with the draft strategic plan goals.
- The Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Division and Information Technology have collaborated to expand student data to better track credential progress. By leveraging Ellucian Degree Works' batch 'what-if' audits, this work identifies students who have unknowingly completed or are close to completing a



credential - whether in their declared program of study or another program for which they meet the requirements. The results will support graduation-related IEMs by informing the Registrar's Office of students eligible for credential conferral, providing Advising with data that highlights how close students are to completion, and enabling program coordinators to monitor opportunities for students to earn stackable credentials in career programs.

## Strategic Alliances and Innovation

### *Grants Office*

- The "Foundations in Cybersecurity" Continuing Professional Education (CPE) course recently saw three students transition into credit courses, officially declaring cybersecurity as their pathway. In total, seven students have moved from the "Foundations" course into the cybersecurity credit program, bringing the total number of students in the cybersecurity pathway to over 100 since its inception in fall 2024.

## Workforce Solutions

- Harper's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) participated in the 2025 SBDC Day by setting up a table near our campus fireplace—a perfect high-traffic location that tied into our "igniting local transformation" theme. Our table featured information about the SBDC, a fun "Mad Libs-style" activity where attendees shared how they're igniting local transformation, as well as hot chocolate and cookies. A major highlight of the day was a stunning custom laser-cut and etched 2025 SBDC Day display designed by our Advisory Board Member Adrian Serrano. His incredible design not only captured our theme perfectly but also became the centerpiece of our table. Serrano serves as the manager of the Innovation Hub at Schaumburg Township District Library where he designed and created this display. We had roughly 30 people visit our table.
- Job Placement Resource Center (JPRC)/Apprenticeships:  
In April, the Job Placement Resource Center hosted a Law Enforcement Career Fair in collaboration with the Law Enforcement and Justice Administration program. Alumni and current students who attended were able to network, learn about careers, and discuss potential employment opportunities with 30 agencies, which included local, state, and county sheriff's departments from the Chicago metropolitan area.

Harper College hosted a successful Apprenticeship/Internship Fair in February, bringing together employer partners and more than 160 interested candidates, including high school seniors from Districts 211 and 220. The event provided an opportunity for students to explore apprenticeships, internships, and career pathways while connecting with industry professionals. Employer participation was instrumental in highlighting diverse opportunities, and we look forward to continued collaboration in strengthening our community's talent pipeline. The Apprenticeship Program also welcomed HYDAC as a new employer partner to participate in the CNC Precision Machining Registered Apprenticeship Program starting fall 2025.

Also in April, Darice Trout, senior director for workforce solutions and job placement, traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the New America Degree Apprenticeship Project Advisory Committee. The focus of the meeting was to gather various constituent groups and thought leaders to help identify quality principles for degree apprenticeship programs in the United States. Trout also served as one of nine panelists who shared updates during the Barrington Chamber of Commerce's annual Town Hall which was held earlier this month.



- ICCB Strategies at Work Noncredit Conference (Normal, Ill.):  
In February, Billie Díaz, manager of career and customized training, and Dr. Sean Bailey, Ph.D., Harper Business Solutions trainer, presented on Customized Training Secrets: Assess, Adopt, and Achieve.

National Council for Continuing Education and Training Annual Conference (Glen Ellyn, Ill.):

In April, Susan Mulvey from Harper Business Solutions presented with McHenry County College colleague Pat Kallaus on Winning Strategies for Selling Contract Training. Díaz and John Chiappetta, technology CE instructor, presented on Time-Saving AI Strategies for Curriculum Development.

### In Memoriam

- We are saddened to share the passing of Fred Vaisvil, a long-time and valued member of Harper College's early leadership. Vaisvil passed away on April 14, 2025, at the age of 93 in Hampshire, Ill. He joined Harper on July 1, 1967, as the director of placement and student aides, later serving as director of public information and then director of the career center until his retirement on July 31, 1991. Vaisvil was a kind and dedicated colleague whose impact is still felt. [View obituary here.](#)

