

President's Report

January 2014

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that 2014 is upon us. The year certainly started with a bang! Significant snow and cold temperatures made it a notable start to the new year. These weather events placed a significant burden on our facilities personnel and they responded admirably. Staff members were here moving and clearing the snow, evidenced by the large mountains dispersed throughout the campus. In addition, our utilities were closely monitored to ensure College buildings were adequately warm and key systems were not compromised by the cold. Kudos to the facilities staff!

As you will recall, 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.

We are closely monitoring Spring enrollment. Both full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment and headcounts are down as compared to last Spring. We have seen some modest increases in the past few days and expect more as dual credit enrollment is captured. Also, we are placing more courses on "late start" status meaning students enrolling in these classes will be captured later in the semester. This spreads enrollment throughout the semester rather than just at the beginning of the term. This trend will continue as we consider a policy that does not allow students to register for a course that has already begun. We also continue to experience enrollment declines in the adult market. Several groups are working to address this trend and I look forward to reviewing their recommendations.

The commencement speaker for our May graduation ceremony has been confirmed. I am pleased that Commerce Secretary, the Honorable Penny Pritzker, has agreed to serve as our keynote speaker. We will also be presenting her with an honorary degree. Secretary Pritzker has a robust history and we are looking forward to her remarks.

Our food service vendor, Sodexo, was busy over the holiday break setting up operations. We have seen some changes to the physical layout of the main cafeteria, with more coming in the future. It's great to see familiar faces as we enter the food serve areas; former Harper employees were hired by Sodexo per our agreement, with the only visible change being the logo on their shirts. The changes overall have gone smoothly.

Construction continues to progress. We are beginning to see activity in the area where the new parking structure will be erected. The addition to Building D is on target. The Career and

Technical building (Building H) is on schedule to open in January 2015. We are looking forward to occupying these new spaces—and our students will greatly benefit from them.

Below are many outstanding activities and accomplishments that have occurred over the past month.

Student Success

- Aligning with our efforts to increase the internationalization of the curriculum, International Studies and Programs conducted an interactive curriculum infusion workshop entitled “What’s up with Internationalization at Harper? And what’s in it for you?” on Thursday, January 8. More than thirty faculty were provided with the intellectual and conceptual framework for comprehensive internationalization. They learned about concrete tools (methods, means, and examples) they might use to internationalize their courses, and designed global learning units they might use in their own classes. International Studies and Programs will follow up on the success of this program with a variety of additional faculty development workshops and seminars during the spring semester.
- The Office of Student Involvement filled an important niche by engaging students outside of their usual classroom experiences on Harper’s campus during the last month of the semester. In December, 240 students participated in indoor campus recreation events. During the Fall semester, 1,329 students participated in recreation events ranging from indoor sports to chess tournaments to jewelry-making classes. In addition, 239 students participated in the Leadership Challenge – a series of intentional leadership development programs. 34 of those students earned a Bronze Certificate by completing all four aspects of the Leadership Challenge during the Fall semester.
- In Athletics, the men’s cross country team finished first in nationals in their Division and the Women finished sixth. The men’s and women’s cross country teams won the region championships prior to the national meet. Along with their third straight win at Nationals, Brennan Albeck, Zach Stella, Juan Barajas, and Jhoan Lino were All-Americans.
- The women’s soccer and volleyball teams both finished as region runners-up.
- The volleyball, men’s soccer, and women’s soccer teams finished the season with 5 All-Region and 13 All-Conference award winners.
- Spring enrollment figures continue to be a challenge. Current enrollment levels reflect an estimated decrease of 4% in FTE and 8% in headcount (note, however, that dual credit/high school partnership enrollment is not yet included in totals due to timing issues with the high schools). As we analyze the data, it appears that much of the enrollment shortfall is attributed to a decline in enrollment in the young adult and adult populations. Applications for admission are flat compared to last spring and actual enrollment activity is also below expectations. Despite the disappointing figures thus far, many areas of the College are working diligently to address enrollment shortfalls – including additional marketing and outreach efforts to students who have applied, but have not proceeded to registration, as well as expanded new student advising and Orientation support. As we approach the first week of school, key areas will be open for extra hours and resources have been aligned to be certain students will receive timely and supportive assistance to facilitate all processes leading to registration.

Physical Plant

- All staff have been working diligently through winter break to keep the campus operating, especially in response to the extreme weather we have been experiencing. Members from all sections were on hand to clear snow drifts at entrances, walks, and roadways for others who needed access during the break. De-icing was hampered due to extreme temperatures last week, but the warmer weather has helped bring access through campus back to normal. Additionally, the Roads and Grounds section continues to move snow off our surface lots to ensure maximum parking availability as students return to class.
- Utilities and Information Technology responded to a weather-related mechanical malfunction serving the main data center on campus. Staff cleared snow drifts off equipment on the roof during -45 degree wind chills, while others from both divisions worked to maintain required cooling inside the data center. Systems were quickly stabilized and repaired.
- Staff from several Facilities sections responded, along with the Palatine Fire Department, to a weather-related malfunction which caused a fire protection sprinkler head to malfunction in the ceiling in the Building L to Y link during the break. Flooding occurred both inside and outside the link creating icy conditions. Systems were quickly stabilized and repaired. There was no damage; just clean-up was required.
- Construction work continued through the break on the East Campus despite the extreme weather conditions. The Building D – Phase 1 project now has temporary heat available so that interior work can continue. Building H will have temporary heat shortly, and both projects are now fully protected from the weather. The East Campus Parking Structure was impacted most by the weather since all work is exposed to the elements. Although slightly slowed, all three projects remain under budget and on schedule.

Information Technology

- Completed the admissions checklist project to develop a checklist for students of the key activities that need to be completed during the admissions process. The checklist is located on the student portal and supports the student in completing financial aid, placement testing, orientation, advising, and other required activities to become admitted and ready to register for classes.
- Completed the Degree Works project to install Ellucian's DegreeWorks (advising support and degree audit) application in Banner.
- A Mobile Device Management (MDM) system has been implemented after several months of testing and evaluation. This system will help Harper monitor and manage the increasing number of mobile devices in use at Harper's facilities. This system will also help deploy and track portable devices owned by Harper.
- The networks/server team, along with the telecommunication team, performed a large number of upgrades over the winter break. Much of the effort required disrupting access to critical systems in order to accomplish this work. A great deal of gratitude goes out to the members of the Technical Services team and Telecommunications Team who worked during the break in order to ensure our systems and Data Centers are updated and maintained.
- Information Technology collected a record amount of items in December for two charitable organizations. The staff collected a cash donation of \$330 for Little City. More

than 100 pounds of non-perishable grocery items were collected for WINGS, a local woman's shelter.

Public Safety

- Signage for public entryways on Harper facilities prohibiting concealed carry weapons has been ordered. It is anticipated the signs will arrive and be installed prior to the end of January. Installation of decals on all exterior doors is underway. It is anticipated that all door decals will be in place prior to the beginning of the Spring semester.

Advancement

- The Foundation received many gifts at year end. Some were from first time donors who had attended one of several prospective donor receptions hosted by the Foundation during the year or had been invited by the Foundation to a performance on campus. Many were in response to a year-end appeal for scholarship donations, or in response to the recent mailing of the Catalyst that had a donation envelope enclosed. Over \$150,000 was received in year-end gifts. Philanthropic support is at \$2.1 million for the current fiscal year.
- A major gift pledge was received in late December. This thoughtful gift will benefit Harper students and will be publicly announced in the near future. We are grateful to the donors who will truly impact Harper students' lives through their generosity. This donation will be a lead gift in a future campaign yet to be defined and announced.
- The Foundation is pleased to host the 2014 "Economic Update and Outlook Breakfast" on February 6 in the Wojcik Conference Center. The event is free and includes a breakfast and presentation. The presenter is Jack Ablin, Executive Vice President and Chief Investment Officer of BMO Private Bank. Reservations are required by January 30. The event is presented by the Harper College Educational Foundation Professional Advisors Committee and is sponsored by BMO Harris Bank. For more information about this event, visit harpercollege.edu/foundation or call the Foundation at 847-925-6490. This popular and informative annual event begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast in the dining room followed by the presentation at 8 a.m. in the auditorium in the Wojcik Conference Center on Thursday, February 6, 2014.
- The Foundation announces a new team member, Michael Adzovic, who will manage the Annual Fund initiatives including building a new "Friends of Harper" annual support group.

Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

- The Learning Assessment Committee (General Education Workgroup) and the Outcomes Assessment Office coordinated a large-scale writing assessment project during the fall 2013 semester. This project assessed the overall writing effectiveness of Harper College students. Over twenty faculty from disciplines across the College participated in this project and included an in-class essay assignment in a course. To date, the Outcomes Assessment Office has received approximately 500 essays. Essays will be scored by members of the Learning Assessment Committee during the spring semester. Results of this project will be communicated with the campus community in late spring.

Workforce and Economic Development

- A welcome dinner was hosted for the instructors of our new Motorcycle Safety Program; 120 instructors attended. Harper was selected as the educational provider for this program which will be conducted at sites throughout Cook County.

- The state-side STEM Learning Exchange for Manufacturing was hosted at Harper College in partnership with the Illinois' Manufacturers Association. Over 30 individuals engaged in manufacturing education attended. Harper's program was highlighted in the discussion.

Communications and Legislative Relations

- The Illinois General Assembly returns to Springfield at the end of the month. The spring legislative session begins with Governor Quinn's "State of the State" address on January 29th. The most pressing issue facing legislators this session will be the State budget and the expiration of the temporary income tax. Even with recent pension reform, the Governor's budget office projects a \$1.9 billion deficit in FY 2015, \$4.1 billion by 2016 and \$4.6 billion by 2017. Also, the State's backlog of unpaid bills is projected to grow to \$16.2 billion by the end of FY 2017. The state's income tax rate was increased from 3% to 5% in 2011. If the tax rate goes back down to 3%, it's estimated the State will lose about \$5 billion in revenue.
- A dinner for participants of the community input sessions will take place on Thursday, January 23 at 6 PM at the Wojcik Conference Center. At the dinner, we will formally acknowledge the community input session participants, review the input we received, and continue our conversation about how Harper can better respond to workforce challenges and needs in the northwest suburbs going forward.
- News articles about Harper that appeared in local media outlets recently include:
 - *Chicago Tribune and Daily Herald* articles on Harper College's Small Business Development Center launching a "Small Business Boot Camp" to help entrepreneurs grow their businesses.
 - A *Chicago Tribune* story on Harper College student Khalid Abuasba who was the recipient of the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship and will study abroad next semester in Salzburg, Austria.
 - A profile by *AWBC Magazine* on Michelé Robinson, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion. *AWBC Magazine* is a Chicago-based publication targeted towards African American Women.
 - A *Daily Herald* story on Harper volleyball player Veronica Dabrowski being named First Team NJCAA All-American for her outstanding 2013 season.

I will not be attending the January Board meeting. In late December, I was invited to attend a White House gathering of colleges that are making progress in addressing student success challenges—particularly with under-prepared high school students. That meeting was postponed due to Nelson Mandela's funeral—and was rescheduled for January 14 and 15. Although I am disappointed that I will miss the Board meeting, the invitation to attend this meeting is a tribute to all the hard work and dedication that faculty and staff have put into assuring our incoming freshman are college-ready. I am honored to represent the College in this regard.

I am looking forward to another exciting, busy and productive semester!

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