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INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO A REPORT OF A VISIT

BY

A NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION VISITATION TEAM

This response is to acknowledge receipt of the evaluation team's report and recommendation based upon the site visitation conducted at William Rainey Harper College on October 20, 21, and 22, 1980.

Initially Harper College wishes to thank the Chairman of the team, Daniel B. Crowder, and the other team members, Robert Eicher, Charles McDowell, Dezo Silagyi, and Raymond Stith, for the manner in which they prepared for and conducted the visitation. Their individual and collective expertise and knowledge of a comprehensive community college were both evident and beneficial to the many people with whom they had contact during their visit.

We are in substantial agreement with the body of the report and the information bearing directly on the Certification Statements. We believe that the rationale presented to support the team's recommendation offers a fair and objective outside appraisal of Harper College. The insight and comments contained in the report will prove to be beneficial to Harper College as it continues to serve its constituents.

We have appreciated the opportunity to work with educators from outside the Harper community to examine our self-study documents and visit our campus. The experience has reinforced the value of the accreditation process and we are confident that the Report of a Visit will make a positive contribution to the future of William Rainey Harper College.

February, 1981

REPORT OF A VISIT
to
WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

Palatine, Illinois
October 20, 21, 22, 1980

for the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Robert Eicher, President, Southeast Community College, Lincoln, Nebraska
68520
Charles McDowell, Department Head for Geography, History & Political
Science, Cuyahoga Community College-Western Campus, Parma, OH 44130
Dezo V. Silagyi, Vice President for Student and Academic Services,
Macomb County Community College, Warren, Michigan 48093
Raymond J. Stith, Executive Dean, Pima County Community College-West
Campus, Tucson, Arizona 85709
Daniel B. Crowder, President, West Virginia Northern Community College,
Wheeling, West Virginia 26003 (CHAIRPERSON)

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

I. Introduction: Certain Matters of Information

William Rainey Harper College is a publicly supported two-year institution of higher learning with a total headcount enrollment of approximately 21,000. Located on a 200-acre tract in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, the college was established in 1965 under the then recently passed Illinois Public Junior College Act. The college's service area covers approximately 200 square miles and has an increasing population of currently near 500,000.

The area is largely residential in nature with clusters of population centered around several shopping malls and older villages. The economy of the community is based primarily on service-oriented industries, although there is some light manufacturing. Several corporate headquarters are also located in the area. In summary, the college serves a predominately middle- to upper-middle-class clientele with a per capita income considerably above typical populations served by community colleges.

The college established contact with North Central shortly after hiring its first president and has maintained a viable relationship throughout its history. At the request of the college, a representative of North Central examined Harper in 1966 and recommended the institution for participation in federal aid. That same year the college obtained the services of a North Central consultant. After a team visit in 1969, Harper was granted candidacy for accreditation status, and the institution received accreditation after a comprehensive evaluation in 1971.

The North Central team visit of October 20-22, 1980, was comprehensive in nature and followed an institutional self-study. The remainder of this report contains this team's findings and recommendations.

In keeping with North Central guidelines, this report will be organized as follows:

- I. Introduction: Certain Matters of Information (above)
- II. Advice and Suggestions to the Institution Having No Direct Bearing on the Visiting Team's Recommendation
- III. Information about the Institution Bearing Directly on the Certification Statements (the body of the report)
- IV. The Visiting Team's Recommendation and Rationale

II. Advice and Suggestions to the Institution Having No Direct Bearing on the Visiting Team's Recommendation

1. The institution should provide off-campus security for the student records system.
2. The college should aggressively pursue and become involved in the franchise development for cable television.
3. Members of the board of trustees should reexamine the extent of their involvement in the operation of the college.
4. The institution should reassess its reduced level of commitment to staff and professional development.
5. The college should consider the establishment of procedures to coordinate the efforts of job placement activities.
6. The administration should explore the desirability of increasing its out-reach educational services.
7. The institution should make a deliberate and concerted effort to shift its focus from its inordinate concern with a crisis of the past to constructive planning for the future.

III. Information about the Institution Bearing Directly on the Certification Statement

A. Question: Does Harper College have clear and publicly stated purposes appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution?

Team findings: The visiting team found that Harper College does have clear and publicly stated purposes set forth in its philosophy and mission statements which appear in various institutional documents and literature. (It can be found in elaborate form in the institutional self study, pp. 9-12.) The stated mission of Harper College is similar to that of community colleges in general and seems to be understood and well accepted by the college's various internal and external constituencies.

B. Question: Has Harper College established conditions and procedures under which these purposes can be realized?

Team findings: The team members believe the college has established conditions and procedures under which its purposes can be realized in each of its functional areas:

1. Governance and Administration

Harper College was organized under the Illinois Public Junior College Act of 1965. The Act sets up a state board which has a coordinating function to oversee the development and operation of the state's community college system. Though the state board has only a coordinating role, the state has provided several million dollars for capital development on a matching basis and still provides approximately one-third of the college's operating budget. As part of its coordinating function, the state board monitors the institution's enrollment statistics as well as the college's use of state funds. No new courses can be implemented for state funding without prior approval by the state board.

Harper College is actually governed by a local board of trustees consisting of seven members elected for three-year terms on a staggered basis. In addition, the students elect a representative annually who serves on the board in an advisory capacity. It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to establish policies and procedures by which the college is governed and to support and oversee the college's long-range planning and financial soundness. The local board also hires the institutional president and, upon his recommendation, other college personnel. Annual operating and capital development budgets are also under the local board's control.

Internally, the college is administered by a president who serves as chief executive officer, and by his administrative subordinates. Though the number of administrative personnel has been reduced significantly during the past two years, most of the usual functions appear to be performed satisfactorily. Structure is rather conventional with the usual area heads (vice presidents for academic affairs, student services, and finance and administration) and the middle and lower eschelon administrators with titles of deans, associate deans, and directors. In addition, there are several standing committees which meet at irregular intervals and make recommendations to the president. The faculty senate is affiliated with the AFL-CIO and negotiates with the board of trustees on matters relating to salaries and conditions of employment. There is also a student government which makes recommendations to the president. A classified employees' council represents the secretarial and vocational/technical personnel, and Local #11 of the Service Employees International Union represents custodial and maintenance personnel.

In general, the entire governance/administrative system appears to work rather well. The institution has an excellent working relationship

with the state board, and state officials speak highly of the operation and achievements of Harper College. The team members share a general feeling supported by some evidence that the board of trustees recently became excessively involved in the internal affairs of the college as a result of differences with the previous president. However, the board now seems to understand its proper role as policy maker and shows signs of retreating from previous encroachments in the area of internal administration. The faculty, too, apparently became dissatisfied with the previous administration and reportedly established their present affiliation with the AFL-CIO chapter to gain some sense of security and participation. Though the faculty senate is still certified as a local chapter of the labor organization--and shows no indication of changing--faculty members are, nevertheless, highly supportive of the present administration and feel they are treated as professionals and involved in the operation of the college.

Frankly, involvement is not very structured, except that students and faculty serve on the various institutional committees which can only make recommendations. Furthermore, there is no formal machinery or procedure through which various institutional constituencies sit together with the president and review the overall operation of the college. Even deans and vice presidents meet informally and infrequently with the president as a deliberating council and no minutes are available indicating what matters are dealt with in these meetings.

On the positive side, however, the system seems to work. The president does meet with all administrators in a "communications forum" once a month, and separately with each of the various area heads and their respective staffs, also on a monthly basis. The president is popular with all constituencies and has established an easy and open relationship with various

administrative subordinates as well as with the faculty and the students. What is more, things get done that should be done in an efficient and effective manner. The only concern on the part of the visiting team is that the internal harmony and effective operation of the college appear to depend far too greatly on the operating style and personality of the current chief executive. Team members believe that efforts should be taken in the near future to institutionalize the current cooperative and harmonious way of deciding issues and resolving conflict for the continued effective and efficient operation of the college.

In summary, the governance/administration of Harper College is working well at the various levels, due in large measure to the effectiveness of the current president, supported by highly competent subordinate administrators and by the good will and cooperation of the governing board, the faculty, and other constituencies.

2. Physical Plant and Facilities

Within its 200 acres, Harper College has 14 buildings, 1.6 miles of roadway, and 12 perimeter parking lots which can hold 4,000 cars.

The buildings contain about 720,000 square feet of floor space and are attractive and functionally designed for convenient access for students and members of the community.

Several structural problems have occurred with the buildings built during the first phase of construction. The College has engaged the services of a consultant to determine the scope and nature of these damages, and a report should be forthcoming in the near future. A mid-range plan and budget have been developed for a systematic maintenance of buildings and grounds.

The custodial services have been hard pressed with the opening of the new buildings. However, additional monies and personnel have been allocated to raise the level of service.

The college is also experimenting with energy-saving techniques through improved management of room and building utilization.

In conclusion, the physical plant, basic equipment, and operations appear to meet the expectations of the college staff, students, and community.

3. Financial Resources and Fiscal Management

The operating budget for Harper College for the current year is \$16,303,780. The annual operating budget has three primary sources: district levy, \$4,925,100; student tuition and fees, \$4,759,400; and State of Illinois, \$5,238,500. All three sources seem secure. Though a proposed increase in the district millage rate was recently rejected, annual increases in property value plus internal economies have enabled the College to realize modest surpluses each of the past two years. In addition, the College has a current reserve in excess of four million dollars (\$4,000,000) and owns real estate valued at between four and six million dollars (\$4,000,000-\$6,000,000) acquired several years ago as a site for a possible second campus. Current college officials do not plan to develop a second campus, and the property could be sold with board approval. Consequently, the value of this real estate may also be considered as part of a college reserve. While Harper experienced some financial problems a few years ago in terms of spending annually more than its annual income, its current financial status seems sound indeed.

Financial planning and management are accomplished in a very satisfactory manner. Budget planning begins at the program level, and proceeds through an orderly process until it receives final approval by

the board of trustees upon the recommendation of the college president. Budget expenditures are accounted for at the program (cost center) level, and this information is made available to staff members and the board of trustees on a monthly basis. This accountability to the board of trustees is reported on a modified accrual and cash basis.

Purchasing is initiated at the cost center level, approved by the appropriate dean and referred to the purchasing agent for processing. Whenever possible, all items are subjected to a bidding process with a minimum of three bids required in making a decision to purchase. There is evidence in the board minutes that equipment purchases in excess of \$500 are presented to the board of trustees for approval. There is some question as to the need for this procedure if the purchase falls within the approved budget limitations and has the approval of the appropriate program and division supervisors.

Surplus fund investments are handled in a way that maximizes the investment potential. Reserves that cannot be invested in certificates of deposit are invested in repurchase agreements. These agreements offer the advantage of an in-and-out investment on a daily basis.

Data processing services for financial management appear to be very adequate. An IBM 370-38 system is currently in place to accommodate management and educational functions. There is also support through the use of some Hewlett-Packard processing equipment.

The college bookstore operates as a self-supporting unit. Gross sales during the past year exceeded \$1,000,000, and the net gain exceeded \$100,000. The bookstore inventory appeared to be quite diverse and complete in meeting student and staff needs.

The food services program has operated at a deficit and has required limited general fund support. Minimal general fund support is justifiable to support the educational programming in areas of food service. However, a recent professional study by a consultant hired by the college suggests procedures to make this phase of the college operation self-supporting. Planning is being done by the college to adhere to the suggestions incorporated in the report.

4. Faculty, Curriculum, and Instruction

a. The Faculty

One of Harper's greatest assets is its outstanding faculty. Not only are they experienced, dedicated, and well qualified academically; but also positive, cooperative, and well disposed toward their institution. The overwhelming majority have taught at the college for several years and remained supportive of the institutional mission through changes in the board of trustees and in the college administration.

The college recently weathered an internal crisis with a remarkable recovery of goodwill between the faculty and the administration. The crisis included a retrenchment of faculty and administrators. A final settlement awaits the findings of an advisory arbitrator regarding the faculty reduction. Nonetheless, faculty morale is excellent and obviously enhanced by wide-open communications within the institution. To borrow from a faculty member they ". . . feel good about coming to work." Part of this confidence is also due to their belief that their faculty organization represents them capably with respect to salaries, working conditions, and the processing of grievances. Members of the visiting team believe the faculty is ready and willing to work with the college administration and board of trustees to move the institution ahead.

Most of the faculty members are well seasoned veterans with years of teaching experience. Together they make up an institutional resource not just for the on-going teaching process but also for developing new curricula and programs in a parallel on-going process. This reservoir of expertise could be the basis of substantive planning as the college identifies its purposes and objectives for the future.

Concern must be expressed, however, about a disproportionate distribution of part-time faculty. One of the few negative remarks that came from students was the inconsistent quality of instruction where part-time instructors were involved. In instruction for English as a second language, the faculty reported that all classes--and they exceed thirty--are taught by part-time faculty. Such a distribution would raise problems for quality control over and continuity for instruction.

However, faculty experience, commitment, and high morale have to be considered among the most valuable assets of the institution.

b. The Curriculum and Instruction

A wide variety of courses of study is currently offered in the various transfer and occupational curricula. Current enrollment is approximately sixty percent transfer and forty percent occupational. These programs probably met rather well the needs of most previous students. However, there is evidence that the socio-economic complexion of the community has been changing during the past several years; and whether the current program offerings are well suited to the needs of the present is somewhat open to question. One indication is that the service area may be taking on new ethnic and perhaps class distinctions as suggested by the considerable number of classes being offered in English as a second language. Though college personnel indicate some awareness of a current

and probable future shift to part-time and career-oriented students, there seem to be no clear plans at the present for altering the curriculum to meet this probable future direction. This is certainly one of the areas the college needs to address during its planning for the future.

Continuing education is offered at a variety of locations throughout the college's service area. In general, course offerings seem to be meeting the needs of the intended population. However, the area has recently been reorganized administratively. Adult and community service programs are now under a director who reports to the dean of instruction, while adult basic education and high school equivalency programs are administered under the dean of educational services. This arrangement should be monitored carefully to insure coordination of activities and proper emphasis based on demand. The future should provide significant opportunity for expanded service throughout the community.

While the traditional lecture method of instruction seems to dominate, the quality is generally excellent. Students speak highly of their educational experiences while conventional indicators suggest solid achievement. Follow-up studies show that Harper students transferring to other institutions perform exceptionally while graduates entering the fields of employment satisfy the market expectations.

Conditions for instruction at Harper are generally favorable, as measured by the usual standards. Class sizes and work loads are not excessive, and labs are well equipped. Instructional resources are generally adequate, including library holdings in excess of 100,000 volumes. Faculty morale is especially good and members enjoy good relations with the college administration. Their affection for and confidence in the current president is really quite extraordinary. The

only major concern expressed by the faculty is the limited amount of funds allocated for faculty travel and professional development.

In summary, Harper College has an outstanding faculty, excellent instruction, and a curriculum well suited to past and probably most present students. Faculty morale is exceptionally high and students are learning and succeeding. This is what a college is all about in the opinion of the visiting team members.

5. Student Services

Student services appears to be an integral coordinated part of the students' total educational experiences at the college. These experiences extend beyond the basic programs of counseling and academic advising. The students have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural, physical, and governance activities.

The wide range of services is implemented by a competent, well qualified, and dedicated staff. The management team holds regular meetings, establishes objectives, and evaluates the unit's progress.

Several areas of regular service have been reduced or replaced with minimal service offered by non-college personnel as a result of recent budget adjustments. The college recognizes the curtailed level of service and plans to restore needed services when financial resources become available.

a. Student Development

The counseling staff consists of fifteen full-time counselors and ten part-time student peer counselors. The counselors' work load is a 35-hour week for a 39-week period. Summer assignments are made on a volunteer basis with supplementary pay.

Counseling services are provided through three Student Development Clusters located in Buildings A, D, and I, each serving specific

curriculums and programs. Each cluster is a complete center where four to five counselors have access to student records, career material, college transfer information, and assessment instruments for placement. The cluster provides students greater accessibility to counselors and, at the same time, provides greater dialogue between counseling and faculty in each discipline.

The unit also maintains a Community Counseling Center. It operates on a fee basis and offers marriage counseling, personal counseling, and vocational testing and counseling.

b. Student Activities

The college offers the usual range of student activities in a lively, dynamic mode. The student leaders view their responsibilities in a serious manner attempting to involve students at large and to represent the general viewpoint to the administration and trustees. The election of the student trustee representative evokes strong campaigning techniques among the nominees and, generally, involves a substantial portion of the student body.

The student activities unit is also responsible for the publishing of the weekly newspaper, the annual literary and art magazine, and operating station WHCM.

Free legal advice is provided by practicing attorneys to any student who pays an activity fee.

c. Admissions-Registration-Recruitment

The college implements admission policies that are consistent with the open-door commitment of a comprehensive community college (College Bulletin, p. 14).

The admissions office is also responsible for the safekeeping of student records and implementing the registration process. Presently, the student master records are stored in a vault which is open and accessible during the day to office employees. A need exists for the safekeeping of duplicate records in an off-campus location to serve as a backup system in case the original records are destroyed.

The registration procedure is partially computerized and automated so that students are able to register by telephone after the early on-campus registration has closed. The continuing education students register predominately by telephone.

Recruitment activities are the responsibility of a separate unit which coordinates the various efforts throughout the college. Instructional personnel share visitation efforts with the recruitment personnel to local high schools, business and industrial complexes, governmental and health agencies, and community functions. The college recognizes the need to actively pursue the non-high school population to sustain the current enrollment level.

A mobile van is available to the college for public relations and recruitment activities.

d. Financial Aid-Placement-Health Services

The college provides financial assistance to students who qualify and meet the criteria for various local, state, and federal guidelines. (Descriptions of aid programs can be found on p. 25 of the College Bulletin.)

A total of \$706,264 in aid was distributed during the 1979-80 school year.

Due to budgetary restrictions, the former Placement and Career Development Center was closed in 1978 and the placement activities have been assumed by the various instructional departments. In addition, a branch office of the Illinois Employment Service was opened on the campus in 1979.

Career development activities have been assumed by the counseling clusters.

College health services are provided on a wide range of needs requested and required by various campus organizations. The center is staffed by professional personnel who provide services from first aid to physical examinations for new employees, athletes, and students in health career programs. The student activity fee pays for the student visits to the college physician.

The health service staff also participate in a wide variety of educational activities occurring throughout the college program.

e. Auxiliary Services

Although the bookstore and the food service are assigned to the vice president for administrative services, the operations provide needed services for the students and community.

On-campus catering services offer meals for special functions held by college or community groups.

Cafeteria facilities and the "mini-bakery" are used as instructional labs for the food service program. The faculty dining operation was discontinued by budgetary necessity in 1979. The action results in a void for a "common meeting place" for faculty and staff.

The bookstore offers a full range of new and used textbooks, supplies, paperbacks, magazines, and gift items to college staff, students, and the community.

6. Research and Planning

The college has an office of research and planning headed by a well qualified professional. This office has routinely generated a substantial amount of data regarding institutional programs and services. However, the data previously gathered are not especially well organized and reportedly were not well used for the benefit of the college.

Looking to the future, the president has recently established a planning committee to gather and analyze current data and assist in the exploration of future optional directions for the college.

Members of the visiting team applaud the president for this decision and encourage the planning committee in its endeavors.

C. Question: Does it appear that Harper College is accomplishing its purposes substantially?

Team findings: Visiting team members conclude that Harper College is accomplishing its purposes substantially. We believe ample evidence is included under B (above) to justify this conclusion.

D. Question: Is Harper College organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its objectives?

Team findings: Yes, Harper College is organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to accomplish its objectives. Again, we believe this conclusion is amply documented under B (above).

E. Question: Does Harper College fully meet the criteria of eligibility for consideration for accreditation and fulfill the obligations of membership through the Commission?

Team findings: Yes. This institution has a charter; an appropriate governing board; offers appropriate programs, including general education; and meets the other basic criteria for eligibility for consideration for

accreditation. To the best of the team members' knowledge, it currently fulfills all obligations of membership required by the Commission.

F. Summary and Conclusions

In summary, Harper College is well organized, well equipped, and well operated by thoroughly competent and dedicated personnel. Its stated purposes are appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution, and it has an instructional program well suited to its publicly stated mission. The college is currently operating on a sound financial basis and is achieving its stated purposes substantially. In the opinion of the visiting team, this institution meets all the criteria for continued North Central accreditation and should be able to continue to accomplish its purposes.

The college's primary challenge at the present is to plan and prepare for the future.

IV. Visiting Team's Recommendation and Rationale

A. Recommendation

The evaluation team recommends that the accreditation of William Rainey Harper College be continued at the associate degree-granting level and that the next comprehensive visit be scheduled in seven (7) years, during the 1987-88 academic year.

B. Rationale

The evaluation team believes that Harper College has established a clearly defined mission which it is carrying out substantially. However, the institution is presently emerging from certain marked changes within the governing board and administration. While significant harmony has been achieved under the able leadership of the current president, there is a definite need to establish a sense of future direction for the college.