2019 SWOT Analysis

Report Presented by:

Strategic Planning and Accountability Committee

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OVERVIEW

In preparation for future planning, Harper College invested significant time and effort to conduct a thorough assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as an external review of opportunities and threats – a SWOT Analysis. The SWOT analysis provides an evaluation that can focus institutional attention and inform planning processes. The analysis began with the identification and critical review of key institutional data. These key data sources included:

- Accountability Report
- Campus Master Plan
- College Plan
- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results
- Community Scan
- Cultural Values Assessment results
- Environmental Scan
- Fact Book
- Follow-up Survey results
- National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) results
- Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) results
- Post-Harper Employment and Wage Outcomes
- Recent task force reports

As a result of the review of these documents the College's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats began to surface. The analysis identified the current state of affairs, while highlighting areas in which Harper is strong as well as those that need focused attention. Further research was conducted to gather additional data on external factors influencing Harper as opportunities or threats. Items that surfaced were evaluated using three criteria:

- Institutional - The item is at the institutional level, not one relating solely to a particular division, department or program.
- Data Driven - Once the institutional criterion is met, the item is reviewed to determine if its data are documentable and measurable.
- Peer Comparison - If applicable, Harper can be compared to similar institutions.

An initial draft document was created and reviewed by the Strategic Planning and Accountability Shared Governance Committee. The draft was then presented to the campus community via the portal and during the March 14, 2019 Dialogue Session. Faculty and staff were able to provide feedback on the draft at the session and in an online survey. This final document incorporates the campus feedback.

STRENGTHS

A strength is a positive internal institutional attribute.

Strength 1: Increasing Levels of Student Success – Persistence and Completion

<u>Item Description</u>:

Persistence rates have increased for both full-time and part-time students since 2012-13. Efforts to retain students, both inside and outside of the classroom, appear to be producing the desired effect. Additionally, completion rates continue to show improvement with graduation rates at their highest in recorded history. While room for improvement in both persistence and completion still exist, the growth in both of these areas, ultimately representing an increase in the success of Harper students, is a reflection of the academic excellence of the College.

<u>Supporting Information</u>:

Harper College has experienced an increase in persistence rates for both full-time and part-time students. Since 2012-13, persistence rates are more than five percent higher for full-time students and five percent higher for part-time students.[1]

Persistence Rate (fall to fall)*					
Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Harper full-time	68.4%	68.4%	69.7%	72.9%	73.9%
Harper part-time	44.6%	47.4%	45.8%	47.5%	49.6%

*IPEDS fall to fall persistence rate measures first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who first enroll at Harper in the given fall semester and return the following fall.

When compared to Harper's peer group, persistence of first-time, full-time credential seeking students from first fall term to second fall term is higher for Harper students (74%) than the peer group (70%).[2] Additionally, both full-time and part-time students persist to the next term and the following fall at rates higher than peers (fall 2016 cohort).[3]

The College's graduation rate has also improved over time, more than doubling since 2010, and is currently at its highest rate in recorded history. Harper's graduation rate has also remained above the Illinois peer group average since 2011.

Graduation Rate*									
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Harper	13.9%	19.0%	20.4%	24.1%	21.4%	26.3%	28.4%	28.8%	32.7%
Peer Average	15.4%	15.8%	16.9%	18.3%	18.5%	20.5%	24.2%	24.4%	Not Yet Available

*IPEDS Graduation Rate measures first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who completed a credential within three years of enrolling at Harper.

In addition, when compared with more than 200 community colleges nationwide, Harper's full-time completion rates at two-years, three-years, and six-years are at or above the 72nd percentile.[4]

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[1] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. i.
[2] National Center for Education Statistics. 2018. *IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2018,* p. 5.
[3] *2018 National Community College Benchmark Report,* p. 2.
[4] Ibid.

Harper College continues to respond to former President Obama's 2010 American Graduation Initiative, which challenged the nation to produce an additional five million credentials by 2020. Harper College calculated its share of this five million at 10,604 additional credentials. The College surpassed this goal in FY2017, and by the end of FY2018 conferred an additional 12,218 credentials.[5] Harper confers more degree and certificates than the peer group – 3,607 for Harper as compared to the peer group average of 2,466.[6]

Improved persistence and completion have been the result of the College's focus on academic excellence as well as the implementation of a multitude of campus efforts:

- Expanded the Early Alert system (Starfish) to include all new degree-seeking students. Starfish is a system used by faculty and advisors to identify students at-risk and intervene with needed supports or resources.
- Redesigned the MyHarper Student Portal to provide essential information in a user-friendly manner. Increased the ease with which students can register for classes, pay tuition, and find services.
- Ensured completion of an Educational Plan for all new degree-seeking students.
- Implemented a Case Management Advising Model that assigns all new degree-seeking students with a point person.
- Stackable credentials are offered in a variety of career programs and provide opportunities for students to earn additional certificates.
- Students who have earned a degree/certificate and those who are close to meeting degree/certificate requirements are identified and notified of this status. Additionally, certificates are auto awarded to students who earn A.A.S. degrees in a stackable career program, once program requirements are met.
- Ongoing work with sender high schools continues to result in increased college readiness thereby increasing the likelihood of persisting and reducing the time to completion.

[5] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. i.
[6] National Center for Education Statistics. 2018. *IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2018,* p. 3.

Strength 2: Institutional Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

Item Description:
Institutional priority has been given to matters of diversity and inclusion since 2012 when a presidential task force was appointed to examine employee attitudes and beliefs, review best practices, and recommend a goal for the College's Institutional Effectiveness Measure (IEM) on diversity. Many initiatives have been implemented and Harper has since been recognized for its diversity and inclusion work.

Supporting Information:
Harper has taken many steps in support of diversity and inclusion, including creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer position to further Harper's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.[7]

Implemented supports for diverse employees including:
- Established and implemented a protocol for bias incident reporting.[8]
- Employee Resource Groups: DREAM serving employees of color; LAND serving those with disabilities/accommodations; and SAFE @ Harper serving LGBTQIA+ employees.[9]

Diversity and inclusion remains an institutional focus as indicated by:
- Two IEMs, Diverse New Hires and Underrepresented Employee Separations.[10] Progress on these metrics is reported annually on the College's public website.
- A Diversity Scorecard, serving as an accountability tool, measuring recruitment/ advancement, retention, service/professional development, and student opinion/satisfaction.[11]
- Goals that support recruitment/retention of Hispanic/Latino students, recommended by the Hispanic Strategic Enrollment Task Force and included in the FY2019 Operational Plan.[12]
- Administration of the Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) every three years. After the most recent administration in 2016, 16 small group sessions were conducted with 270 employees to review and discuss the results of the CVA.[13]

Updated hiring and feedback practices that support diversity and inclusion including[14]:
- A diverse employee recruitment plan focused on increasing applicant diversity, increasing the percent of diverse applicants interviewed from 11% in FY2015 to 14.7% in FY2016.
- Use of an outside vendor to conduct all exit interviews.
- Implementation of a 360-feedback process for managers and administrators.
- The Diverse Faculty Fellows program, beginning in January 2015 with nine Faculty Fellows participating in the program to date. Three fellows have continued as full-time faculty and one as adjunct faculty. Fellows have taught 1,451 students with 95 of those students taking more than one course with a fellow.

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[7] Harper College *A Way Forward: Report of the President's Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion 2013,* p. 31.
[8] "Bias Incident Reporting," https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourcollege/diversity-inclusion/Pages/Bias-Incident-Reporting.aspx, accessed January 11, 2019.
[9] "Office of Diversity & Inclusion November 2014 Pardon Our Dust," last modified November 2014, accessed January 11, 2019, https://hipexternal.harpercollege.edu/news/Pages/DiversityandInclusionNovember2014.aspx.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Diversity Scorecard," last modified August 16,2018, accessed January 11, 2019
https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourcollege/AssessingOurCollege/Pages/Diversity-Scorecard.aspx.
[12] Harper College *College Plan 2018-2019,* p. 58-59.
[13] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report* 2016-2017, p.48.
[14] "Office of Diversity & Inclusion November 2014 Pardon Our Dust," last modified November 2014, accessed January 11, 2019, https://hipexternal.harpercollege.edu/news/Pages/DiversityandInclusionNovember2014.aspx.

- Since 2007, 393 employees have attended the Cultural Competency Workshop and 413 employees have attended the Search Process Workshop, both required to be eligible to serve on a supervisory, faculty, or administrator search committee.[15]

Professional development opportunities provided for all employees:
- Diversity and Inclusion Dialogue Workshops provide occasion to engage and connect with diversity and inclusion issues. In FY2018, 149 employees participated in these workshops.[16]
- A Social Justice Leadership Certificate Program pilot in FY2019, focusing on building employee skills and capacities to lead and support diversity and inclusion initiatives.[17]
- Since 2014, six Diversity Symposiums have been held with more than 1,400 employees attending.

Recognition for the College's work on Diversity and Inclusion:
- 2017 Equity and Diversity Award – Illinois Community College Trustees Association
- 2017 Central Region Equity Award – American Community College Trustees Association
- 2017 and 2018 INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award.[18]
- 2018 Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award for Campus Internationalization

Student satisfaction, learning, and outcomes related to diversity are also part of Harper's focus:
- Graduate surveys indicate an environment that values diversity and inclusion:
  - FY2017 Follow-Up Survey[19] – 88.3% responded "definitely yes/yes" when asked if their experiences at Harper resulted in "a better appreciation for diversity and different cultures and values." In addition, 81.6% responded that their education at Harper College helped them examine diverse perspectives and cultures.
- Student learning outcomes and degree requirements include diversity and inclusion:
  - The Diverse Perspectives and Cultures general education outcome states that degree completers will be able to "examine diverse perspectives and cultures as they relate to the individual, the community, and the global society."[20]
  - The World Cultures and Diversity Graduation Requirement ensures students complete a World Cultures and Diversity course prior to degree completion.[21]
- Hispanic Strategic Enrollment Task Force created to address recruitment/retention declines.[22]
- Participation in the Achieving the Dream network has enhanced Harper's use of data by creating a practice of examining disaggregated data to determine where student achievement gaps exist. This practice has resulted in the College focusing efforts on increasing success for specific student populations.[23] [24]

[15] Workshop Attendees, accessed April 16, 2018, https://hip.harpercollege.edu/careerbenefits/recruitmenthiring/Documents/Workshop%20Attendees.pdf

[16] Harper College *Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard FY2018*, p. 1.

[17] "The Social Justice Leadership Certificate," last modified November 6, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourcollege/diversity-inclusion/Pages/The-Social-Justice-Leadership-Certificate.aspx.

[18] "Harper College receives second Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award," last modified October 10, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.harpercollege.edu/about/news/archives/2018/posts/101118.php.

[19] "Harper College 2017 Follow Up Survey Dashboard," last modified August 22, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourcollege/IR/Documents/Follow%20Up%20Survey%20Dashboard%202017.xlsm.

[20] "General Education Learning Outcomes," last updated October, 16, 2018, accessed January 4, 2019, https://www.harpercollege.edu/about/leadership/accountability/genedoutcomes.php.

[21] "World Cultures and Diversity Requirement," last updated November 2, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.harpercollege.edu/catalog/current/zz_requirements/diversity.php.

[22] Harper College *Latinx Success: A Vision for Harper College, May 2018.*

[23] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report* 2014-2015, p.37.

[24] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report* 2017-2018, p.29.

Strength 3: Institutional Transparency and Fiscal Stewardship

Item Description:
Harper College demonstrates, to our external constituents, a commitment of transparency and fiscal responsibility in a variety of ways including: transparent budgeting, an exceptional bond rating, accountability metrics, and clean audit reports.

Supporting Information:
Harper presents itself clearly and completely. This is evidenced through engagement in a transparent and public budget process, which demonstrates both fiscal responsibility and accountability to its diverse community. Harper consistently develops a balanced or better than balanced budget for tax capped funds. The College received an unmodified opinion from the independent audit of its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).[25] The unmodified opinion states that the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the College.

Harper has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, by the Government Finance Officers Association for seven consecutive years.[26] To receive this award, a government organization must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized comprehensive annual financial report that satisfies both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

The College's financial stewardship is also reflected in its bond rating and Composite Financial Index (CFI). Despite recent state budget concerns, the College has maintained a Moody's Aaa bond rating for more than 15 years, the highest rating awarded. Harper has consistently maintained this Aaa rating because of its healthy operating reserves, low dependence on state appropriations, and an annual budget process that ensures appropriate allocation of funds, maintenance of a balanced budget, and collaboration with the Board of Trustees.[27] Additionally, Harper has maintained a CFI ranging between 2.35 and 3.80 over the past seven fiscal years. This score is reported to the Higher Learning Commission and combines four principal ratios: primary reserve ratio, net operating revenue ratio, return on net assets, and viability ratio. Harper's number demonstrates adequate financial resources.[28]

Harper's proactive response to fiscal challenges demonstrates its ability to maintain a balanced budget without sacrificing the educational experience of its students. The College manages resources appropriately to support the advancement of its physical and technological infrastructures, which has resulted in the expansion and enhancement of instructional support, learning, and study spaces for students. The community recognizes these efforts and overwhelmingly supports the work of the College as demonstrated through passing a 2018 referendum to sell capital bonds in the amount of $180 million to support the Campus Master Plan.[29]

Major capital projects demonstrate the College's commitment to maintaining an excellent physical

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[25] Harper College *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2018*, p. 120.
[26] Ibid, p. 10.
[27] "Moody's Rating Action," last modified November 10, 2017, accessed January 11, 2019, https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-Assigns-Aaa-rating-to-CCD-512-William-Rainey-Harper--PR_904284125.
[28] *Higher Learning Commission Assurance Argument*, February 5, 2018, p.86, https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourcollege/Documents/Harper College Assurance Argument February 2018.pdf.
[29] Harper College *Minutes of Board Meeting of Wednesday, November 14, 2018,* p. 8.

infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner. Large projects that provide innovative spaces for educational programs, student support, and learning resources are consistently completed on-time and at or under budget. Projects include:

- Building H: Career and Technical Education Center – $38 million renovation providing new classrooms and labs for Harper career programs. Additionally, with support from a $500,000 grant from the Fabricators and Manufacturers Association, a $1.78 million state-of-the art Metal Fabrication Lab for the Advanced Manufacturing Program was constructed.[30]
- Duchossois Family Educational Center – Renovations to create updated, appropriately-sized classrooms that offer faculty and students more opportunities for teaching and learning.[31]
- David K. Hill Family Library – Renovations to update and expand this building providing numerous spaces for students to study, convene, and engage in the learning experience. This building also houses student academic support services and the Academy for Teaching Excellence.[32]
- Foglia Foundation Health & Recreation Center – Renovations to transform the building into an engaging educational facility that encourages a culture of health and wellness.[33]

The College also demonstrates its commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency, and accountability through its effectiveness, planning, and assessment activities. Harper's Institutional Effectiveness Measures (IEMs) are key performance indicators for which the College sets goals and publicly reports progress.[34] Included in the IEMs are metrics on both student success and institutional success, such as Persistence, Completion, Employee Diversity, and Instructional Cost.

Harper uses a broad, collaborative, community-based strategic planning process that includes the review of internal and external data, on-campus dialogue sessions, a strategic planning conference for internal and external stakeholders, and shared governance revision and review. The process leads to the adoption of a comprehensive Strategic Plan. Progress toward achieving Strategic Plan goals is made available to the public on the Strategic Plan Dashboard.[35]

Outcomes assessment at Harper is the process of using data about student learning to focus institutional efforts on improving student learning and achievement. General education assessment results and improvement plans are publically available through the Evidence of Student Learning Dashboard. This dashboard was developed with transparency in mind. As a result of the College's commitment to student learning and transparency, Harper was named as a 2018 Excellence in Assessment designee.[36]

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[30] Perkins Eastman. 2017. *Harper College Campus Master Plan 2016 Update,* p. 2.
[31] Perkins Eastman. 2017. *Harper College Campus Master Plan 2016 Update,* p. 2.
[32] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. iv.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "Institutional Effectiveness Measure Dashboard," last modified October 16, 2018, accessed January 18, 2019, https://www.harpercollege.edu/about/leadership/accountability/iem/index.php.
[35] "Strategic Plan Dashboard – 2016-2019," last modified October 16, 2018, accessed January 18, 2019, https://www.harpercollege.edu/about/leadership/planning/college_plan/iea-2016-2019/index.php.
[36] "National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment," accessed January 18, 2019, http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/eiadesignation_2018.html.

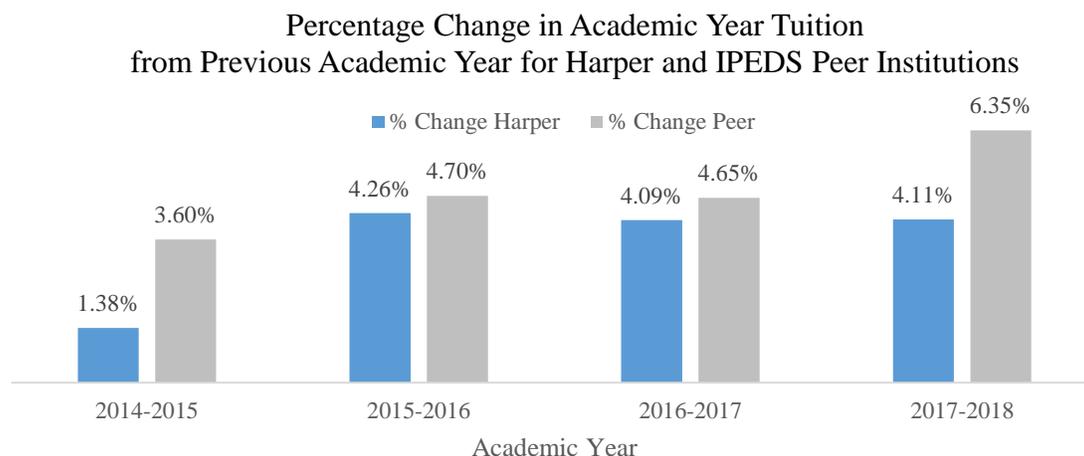**Strength 4: Meeting Community Needs through Innovative and Affordable Education**

Item Description:
Harper continues to meet the education needs of its community in innovative and affordable ways. Harper maintains low tuition and fees and awards grants and scholarships to aid in keeping the cost of education affordable. New scholarships, such as the Promise Program, continue this commitment to affordability. Additionally, newly-completed renovations have expanded both the community outreach at Harper as well as the programs that can be offered. Finally, strong evidence exists that Harper credentials are valuable in the marketplace.

Supporting Information:
As stated in the College mission, Harper is committed to providing affordable education. To maintain this affordability, the College is conservative in tuition increases and generous with institutional grant and scholarship opportunities.

- The net price of attending Harper continues to decline for full-time students awarded grant or scholarship aid, from $7,659 in FY2015 to $6,616 in FY2017.[37]
- Harper students received more grant aid in 2016-17 per student than the peer group average. This includes federal, Pell, state/local, and institutional grants.[38]
- Harper made a commitment to cover Illinois Monetary Awards Program (MAP) grants for students when state funding was uncertain.
- In the 2013 and 2016 Community Scans, when asked "What is Harper College best known for?" the community's consistent response was affordability.[39]
- Harper's annual tuition is increasing at a slower pace than its peer institutions as shown below.[40]

Percentage Change in Academic Year Tuition from Previous Academic Year for Harper and IPEDS Peer Institutions

■ % Change Harper ■ % Change Peer

Academic Year	% Change Harper	% Change Peer
2014-2015	1.38%	3.60%
2015-2016	4.26%	4.70%
2016-2017	4.09%	4.65%
2017-2018	4.11%	6.35%

Academic Year

Harper also has expanded the number of ways a credential can be earned. Through its Registered Apprenticeship Programs, students complete Harper coursework while employed and mentored by a local employer. Additionally, the employer covers the education costs of the program, allowing the student to complete the apprenticeship debt-free. The College's Fast Track program allows motivated students to complete select credentials with classes offered in 5- or 8-week formats. The Fast Track program offerings include an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Business Administration and

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[37] National Center for Education Statistics. 2018. *IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2018,* p. 4.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 17.
[40] Ibid and National Center for Education Statistics. 2017. *IPEDS Data Feedback Report 2017,* p. 4.

certificates in Entrepreneurship, Health Information Technology Medical Coding, Human Resource Management, and Supply Chain Management.

Campus renovations also allow the College to expand innovative program offerings in state-of-the art facilities.

- The renovated Building H contains the College's Advanced Manufacturing Lab. Harper's manufacturing program has partnered with about 170 area companies that offer apprenticeships, paid internships, financial support, and expertise. The program has received approximately $2 million in funding and donated equipment from its partner companies including a laser cutter, robotic welding cell, and computer numerical control (CNC) machines. Harper also was selected as home of the Fabricators and Manufacturers Association Metal Fabrication Lab, a state-of-the-art training facility for metal fabrication and welding.
- The University Center was created in response to demand from the community to make bachelor's degrees accessible on the Harper campus.[41] Students can now earn select bachelor's degrees from DePaul University, Northern Illinois University, and Roosevelt University on Harper's campus. DePaul University discounts tuition by 25% and Roosevelt University by 35%.
- The newly renovated Foglia Foundation Health and Recreation Center represents an innovative partnership with the Palatine Park District and Northwest Community Healthcare. The new fitness center enabled the creation of a Personal Trainer certificate, as well as community-focused health and fitness courses and access to professional medical care on campus.

Harper continues to meet community education needs as indicated by the labor market value of a Harper credential. As compared to students who leave Harper prior to earning a credential, students who leave with a credential are employed at higher rates and have higher average wages over a five-year period. For example, five years post departure, students leaving Harper with a credential had an average monthly wage of nearly $800 more than those never earning a credential.[42] Additionally, 72.1%[43] of career graduates report being employed in a field related to their Harper area of study, further evidence of the College's commitment to providing education that meets community needs.

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[41] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 24.
[42] Harper College *Employment and Wage Outcomes for Harper College Students Fiscal Year 2012 Cohort,* p. 7.
[43] *2018 National Community College Benchmark Report,* p. 4.

Item Description:
Harper is committed to providing high quality education and student services. This commitment is demonstrated in the wide range of student support services available and the positive feedback from students regarding these services and their impact on educational growth.

Supporting Information:
Harper College measures student satisfaction in various ways. Instruments that have been used to gauge satisfaction with support services and the institution include the Follow-Up Survey, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and Student Opinionaire of Instruction (SOI).

The Follow-Up Survey is an annual survey administered to Harper degree and certificate completers to measure student views on Harper and the services provided toward their educational advancement. Follow-up surveys are conducted for students who complete career and transfer programs. Survey results indicate:

- Both career and transfer completers would recommend Harper, with at least 97% of transfer [44] and career completers[45] stating "definitely yes/yes" in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

	2015	2016	2017
Would recommend Harper			
Transfer Completers	97%	98%	97%
Career Completers	99%	97%	99%

- Career and transfer completers rate library services and availability of computers high, when measured on a four-point scale. [46] [47]

	2015	2016	2017
Satisfaction rating of library/audio visual services			
Transfer Completers	3.63	3.73	3.70
Career Completers	3.69	3.69	3.70
Satisfaction rating for the availability of computers for out-of class use			
Transfer Completers	3.59	3.74	3.80

- Both career and transfer completers would return to Harper for education or personal enrichment courses, with 86%-92% of transfer[48] and career completers[49] stating "definitely yes/yes."

	2015	2016	2017
Would return to Harper for education or personal enrichment courses			
Transfer Completers	86%	88%	90%
Career Completers	91%	89%	92%

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[44] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Transfer Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 27.
[45] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Career Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 26.
[46] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Transfer Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 9; *FY2016,* p. 9; *FY2015,* p. 10.
[47] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Career Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 19; *FY2016,* p. 20; *FY2015,* p. 20.
[48] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Transfer Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 28.
[49] Harper College *Follow Up Survey Career Credential Earners Fiscal Year 2017,* p. 27.

CCSSE is administered to a randomly-selected cross-section of students every three years, in order to gauge student engagement with academic and support services, as well as the overall educational environment. The CCSSE results indicate:

- As compared to peers, Harper's benchmark score for Academic Challenge has been above the peer average for the 2015 and 2018 administrations of the survey, at 51.8 and 52.0 respectively. With CCSSE benchmark scores, 50.0 is a normalized score among all colleges conducting CCSSE that year, with scores higher than 50 considered positive.

Students also report high levels of satisfaction with courses and instruction through the Student Opinionaires of Instruction (SOI) that are conducted for credit courses. Results indicate general satisfaction with organization of courses and performance of the instructors:

SOI Results				
Responding "mostly agree" to	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
Satisfaction with the general organization of the course	88.5% (5,321/6,015)	85.0% (4,716/5,546)	85.9% (9,151/10,654)	87.0% (7,706/8,854)
Satisfaction with the overall performance of the instruction	90.0% (5,362/5,961)	87.4% (4,784/5,476)	89.3% (9,319/10,436)	86.4% (7,869/9,105)

Employees perceive the campus environment as positively focused on student success. The Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) is a survey administered to employees to assess the climate of the institution from the perspective of different education-based categories. Within PACE, the Student Focus category "considers the centrality of students to the actions of the institution as well as the extent to which students are prepared for post-institution endeavors."[50] Harper employee ratings have identified Student Focus as collaborative for the past three administrations of the survey.[51] According to PACE, collaborative is the most positive rating, followed by to consultative, competitive, and coercive.

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[50] "Survey Instruments," accessed January 23, 2019, https://nilie.ncsu.edu/nilie/pace-survey/survey-instrument/.
[51] King, G., and Garland, L. The National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness. 2016, Harper College: Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Quantitative Analysis, p. 15.

WEAKNESSES

A weakness is an internal attribute requiring improvement.

Weakness 1: Achievement Gaps

Item Description:
While persistence and completion rates have increased for most demographic groups, many of the achievement gaps identified in the 2014 SWOT still exist. Efforts supporting student success include improved placement methods, strengthened partnerships with high schools, and assigned advisors for credential-seeking students. Despite these efforts, gaps have only reduced for Hispanic students in some cases, but other groups continue to underperform when compared to their peers. Continued efforts to decrease gaps based on race/ethnicity, gender, and age are a priority of the College and essential to providing equitable opportunities for all students.

Supporting Information:
Student achievement gaps exist in the areas of persistence, developmental course success, college-level course success, and completion.

Persistence: Black/African American students and students age 20 and over persist at rates below the College's overall persistence rates.

- The fall 2016 to fall 2017 full-time persistence rate for Black/African American students is 51.6% as compared to the overall rate of 73.9%.[52]
- The fall 2016 to fall 2017 full-time persistence rate for students age 20 and over is 7.2%-21.6% lower than the overall rate of 73.9%.[53]
- Student engagement, both inside and outside of the classroom is related to retention. Ratings on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement continue to be low for the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark.[54] While overall ratings are low at 46.2[55] (mean = 50.0), ratings for Black/African American students are even lower at 43.4,[56] having a potential negative impact on retention.

Developmental course success: Black/African American students and male students do not perform as well as their peers in developmental math. Success is defined as earning a C or higher in the given developmental math course.

- The developmental math course success rate for Black/African American students in fall 2017 was 46.9% versus the overall at 60.1%.[57]
- In fall 2017, male student developmental math course success rate was 55.7%, 4.4% below the overall rate of 60.1%.[58]

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[52] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019, https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess /Persistence/StudentSuccess_PersistenceRate_FalltoFallFullTime_Demographics.aspx.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Understanding Survey Results, Benchmark, accessed January 22, 2019, http://www.ccsse.org/survey/reports/2017/ understanding.cfm#benchmark.

[55] *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2018 Benchmark,* p. 1.

[56] *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2018 Custom Breakout Report by race/ethnicity,* p. 1.

[57] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019,https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess /Developmental/StudentSuccess_Developmental_Math_Demographics.aspx.

[58] Ibid.

0-15 course success: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and male students underperform in comparison to their peers in 0-15 courses. The 0-15 courses are typically 100-level, high-enrollment courses with success rates below the college-level course average. Success is defined as earning a C or higher in a 0-15 course.

- Male students consistently perform below female students in 0-15 courses. In 2017, male student success rates were 65.2% versus 72.1% for female students.[59]
- 0-15 course success rates for Black/African American (52.6%) and Hispanic/Latino (62.1%) students are below the overall success rate of 68.5%.[60]

Completion: Completion, graduation, and advancement rates are consistently lower for male students than female students. Additionally, graduation rates for Black/African American students are consistently lower than their peers, and student advancement rates for both Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students are lower than their peers.

- Male students earn credentials at consistently lower rates than female students. In 2017, the completion rate for male students was 36.3% versus 62.6% for females, a 26.3% difference.[61]
- The graduation rate gap between males (24.0%) and females (34.5%) was 10.5% in 2017.[62]
- Although the overall College graduation rate was 28.8% in 2017, the graduation rate for Black/African American students remained much lower at 16.7%.[63]
- Advancement rate is the percent of students who graduate, transfer or are still enrolled at three years. In 2017, advancement rates were lower for Black/African American (60.6%) and Hispanic/Latino (61.0%) students compared to the overall rate of 67.7%.[64]
- The gap in advancement rate between male (62.7%) and female (74.3%) students was 11.6% in 2017.[65]

[59] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019, https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess/Gateway/StudentSuccess_Gateway_015Courses_Demographics.aspx.

[60] Ibid.

[61] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019, https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess/AnnualCompletions/StudentSuccess_AnnualCompletions_Completers_Demographics.aspx.

[62] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019, https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess/Advancement/StudentSuccess_Advancement_GraduationRate_Demographics.aspx.

[63] Ibid.

[64] IEM Dashboard, accessed January 4, 2019, https://edmsp.harpercollege.edu/Institutional/Dashboards/StudentSuccess/Advancement/StudentSuccess_Advancement_AdvancementRate_Demographics.aspx.

[65] Ibid.

Weakness 2: Employee Climate Concerns

Item Description:
Although Harper College has taken steps to improve employee climate, data suggest employees may not be fully invested in the College. Results of the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) call attention to issues in institutional structure, climate, communication, and feelings of efficacy.[66] Similar issues were identified in the 2016 administration of the Cultural Values Assessment (CVA).

Supporting Information:
Although Harper College has consistently demonstrated a consultative management style as measured by the PACE survey, employee perceptions have shown a steady decline and are moving towards the competitive management style. A decline in this area may have a negative impact on employee engagement.[67] The four items on the PACE survey that have ranked the lowest over the past three administrations of the survey are included in the table below.[68] The scores for each of these items have decreased over time, and the 2016 Harper rating is below that of the large two-year college peer group.

Item	2016	2013	2011	2016 (Large 2yr colleges)
The extent to which:				
I am able to appropriately influence the direction of this institution.	2.89	2.99	3.14	3.13
I have the opportunity for advancement within this institution.	3.02	3.04	3.13	3.14
decisions are made at the appropriate level at this institution.	3.07	3.22	3.29	3.31
information is shared within the institution.	3.08	3.24	3.27	3.29

The degree of cultural entropy at Harper, as measured by the CVA, has increased from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2016.[69] According to the Barrett Values Center, high levels of cultural entropy indicate a decrease in the level of trust and internal cohesion which may lead to a lack of employee investment in the organization, often demonstrated by employees not using their full skills and talents at work. This cultural entropy suggests that Harper employees may be experiencing a crisis situation in the workplace.[70] Further data from the 2016 CVA has identified newly emerging cultural values including:[71]

- Territorial behavior
- Silo mentality
- Favoritism
- Job insecurity
- Micro-management

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[66] King, G., and Garland, L. The National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness. 2016, Harper College: Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Qualitative Analysis, p. 37.
[67] King, G., and Garland, L. The National Initiative for Leadership & Institutional Effectiveness. 2016, Harper College: Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Quantitative Analysis, p. 33.
[68] Ibid, p. 17.
[69] Barrett Values Centre. 2016, Harper College Group Results Cultural Evolution Report, p 4.
[70] Ibid, p. 8.
[71] Ibid, p. 6.

Open-ended results of the 2016 CVA suggest:[72]

- Distrust of communication and information hoarding
- Feeling a lack of value and respect
- Silo mentality and an interest in collaboration

Separations from the College can also result from concerns regarding employee climate. Data from the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) suggest that full-time employees at Harper are departing at rates higher than peer institutions. In FY2018, 11.5% of regular full-time employees departed from the College. This percentage puts Harper at the 85th percentile as compared to the 174 community colleges reporting.[73]

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[72] Harper College *Cultural Values Assessment Qualitative Results*. 2016.
[73] *2018 National Community College Benchmark Report,* p. 5.

Weakness 3: Employee Diversity

Item Description:
The racial/ethnic diversity of Harper College faculty and staff is not representative of the community it serves. While attention has been placed on increasing employee diversity, Harper is challenged to achieve a representative workforce within the College, and failure to do so could negatively impact student success and College climate.

Supporting Information:
A similar weakness was identified in the 2014 SWOT. As described then, research indicates that having a racially and culturally diverse faculty and staff greatly benefits students and the College as a whole. Through this diversity, minority students gain mentors and role models, while all students benefit from the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of faculty and staff.[74]

Although a strength of the College is its commitment to efforts around diversity and inclusion, Harper employees do not racially/ethnically represent the community. In referencing the recent National Community College Benchmark Project data on the ratio of minority employees to constituent population, Harper's ratio is 0.39 – the closer to 1.0 the more representative of the community population. This places Harper in the 15th percentile as compared to 200 community colleges.[75]

While diverse new hires have increased over time from 21.8% in 2013 to 30.8% in 2018,[76] the percentage of diverse employees (23.3%)[77] is not yet representative of the community (34.8%)[78] or student (46%)[79] diversity. Additionally, certain employee groups are less diverse than others, as shown below.[80]

Employee Group	Diverse		White		Unknown		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Academic Support	6	13.64%	35	79.50%	3	6.80%	44
Administrative	8	19.51%	31	75.60%	2	4.90%	41
Classified	38	20.32%	148	79.10%	1	0.50%	187
Custodial - Maintenance	35	36.08%	59	60.80%	3	3.10%	97
Professional Technical	45	26.01%	127	73.40%	1	0.60%	173
Supervisory	13	13.68%	76	80.00%	6	6.30%	95
Teaching Faculty	80	11.92%	532	79.30%	59	8.80%	671
Other	17	9.83%	67	38.70%	89	51.40%	173

Adapted from 2017-2018 Fact Book, Exhibit 7.7

Further, the Institutional Effectiveness Measure (IEM) related to underrepresented employee separations *needs attention*. The College's target for this IEM is to achieve a separation rate for

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[74] Harper College *SWOT,* p. 11.
[75] *2018 National Community College Benchmark Report*, p. 5.
[76] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. 17.
[77] Harper College *Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard FY2018*, p. 1.
[78] Harper College *Fact Book 2018-2019,* p. 7.
[79] Harper College *Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard FY2018*, p. 1.
[80] Harper College *Fact Book 2018-2019*, p. 64.

underrepresented employees that is equal to or lower than the overall employee separation rate. Trend data indicate this target was met in FY2013 and FY2015, but achievement has not been sustained.[81]

Underrepresented Employee Separation

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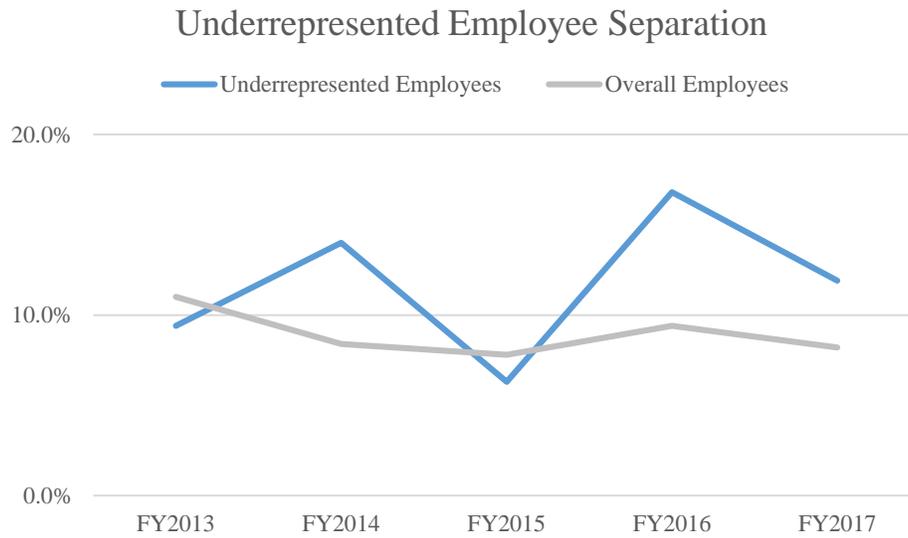
[81] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. 18.

Weakness 4: Enrollment

Item Description:
Harper's credit student enrollment has steadily declined in recent years, and the decline is projected to continue. Declining enrollment, along with uncertain state funding, places substantial strain on the College's financial resources.
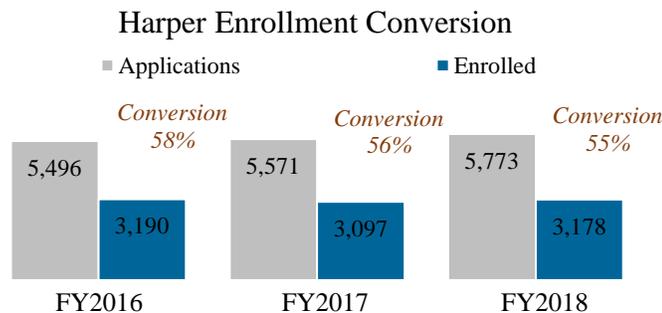
Supporting Information:
Harper's enrollment has decreased over the past several years and continues to fall below budget.[82] While Harper has experienced enrollment increases in many individual market segments, such as the Hispanic student population, Apprenticeship programs, and Fast Track, overall College enrollment continues to decline. FY2018 data indicates:

- Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment is down 3.1 percentage points, while Harper College budgeted for a 1.8 percentage point decrease.
- Enrollment shows a -6.2% change in unduplicated headcount from FY2017.[83]
- Enrollment of new students with prior college decreased by 28.2 annualized FTEs, while the College planned for its efforts to result in a 40 annualized FTE increase in enrollment for this group.

Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment

	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
FTE	10,542	10,223	9,951	9,668	9,372
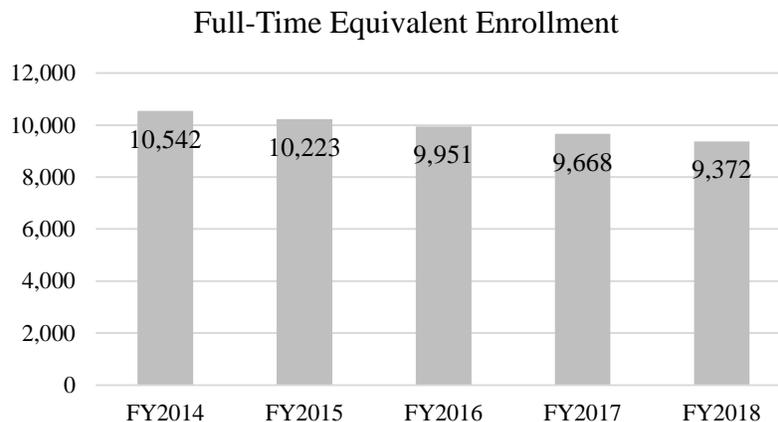
Application and enrollment numbers indicate that while applications have increased, the enrollment conversion rate has decreased slightly.[84]

Harper Enrollment Conversion

Applications   Enrolled

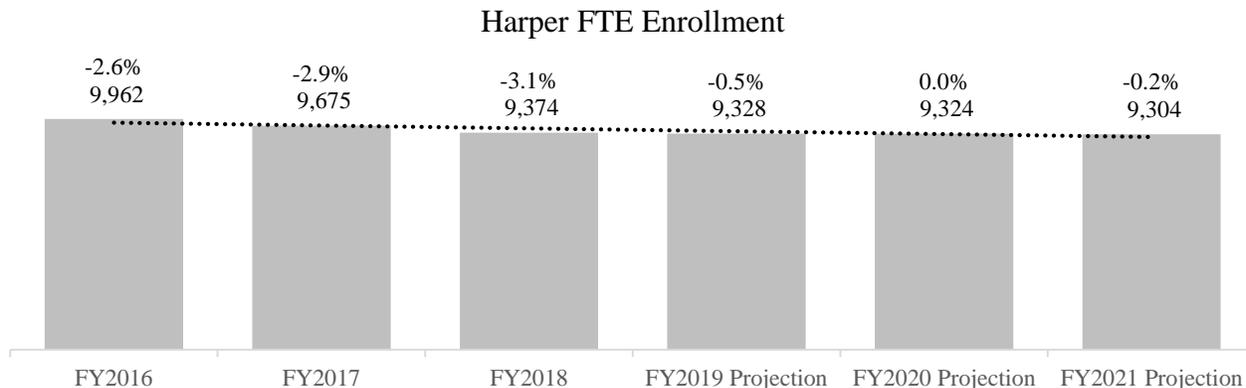|	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Applications	5,496	5,571	5,773
Enrolled	3,190	3,097	3,178
Conversion	58%	56%	55%

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[82] Harper College *Institutional Accountability Report 2017-2018,* p. 54.
[83] Fiscal Year 2018 Official Final Enrollment Report, accessed January 15, 2019, https://hip.harpercollege.edu/ourstudents/enrollment/Documents/FY%202018%20Official%20Enrollment.pdf.
[84] Harper College *Admissions Snapshot report: Enrollment Conversion Fall 2018*.

Research indicates that enrollment will continue decreasing for community colleges. While students from underserved communities are enrolling at higher rates, overall community college enrollment is at a decline and expected to remain low, then drop dramatically by 2025.[85] Harper's annualized FTE enrollment trend data and projections[86] also suggest enrollment will continue to decline slightly from previous fiscal years.

Harper FTE Enrollment

FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019 Projection	FY2020 Projection	FY2021 Projection
-2.6% 9,962	-2.9% 9,675	-3.1% 9,374	-0.5% 9,328	0.0% 9,324	-0.2% 9,304

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[85] Ashley A. Smith, "Community college enrollment rates expected to keep falling." Inside Higher Ed, June 21, 2018. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/06/21/community-college-enrollment-rates-expected-keep-falling?width=775&height=500&iframe=true.

[86] Harper College *College Plan 2018-2019,* p. 125.

OPPORTUNITIES

An opportunity is an external trend or situation that, if acted upon, may have a positive impact on the institution.

Opportunity 1: Alternative Means of Earning Credit and Alternative Delivery Methods

Item Description:

In many accredited public and private universities across the United States, credit may be given for adequately documented and validated experiential equivalent learning of a postsecondary nature. Providing alternative means for students to earn college credit decreases both the cost and time for obtaining a credential or reaching other educational goals. Key drivers to the expansion of alternative credentials are low unemployment rates and concerns about rising student debt levels.[87]

Supporting Information:

Alternative Means for Earning College Credit

Competency-based education (CBE) has become an increasingly common means of earning college credit and has caught the attention of federal and state policymakers, foundations, and higher education institutions.[88] Broadly defined, CBE is a form of education in which credit is provided based on student learning rather than credit or clock hours. CBE programs are often a far more affordable route to college credit and credentials than traditional programs.[89] CBE takes two primary forms:[90]

- Prior learning assessments, granting credit for content previously mastered; and
- Competency-based coursework, where mastery of academic content is demonstrated.

An opportunity exists for higher education providers to broaden the availability of CBE, for example by engaging employers as partners in these programs. Specifically, employers working more directly with educational institutions can provide the inputs needed to effectively create, clarify, and assess competencies, providing connections to careers that deliver a beneficial return on investment to students who complete CBE programs.[91] Additionally, employer enthusiasm for CBE programming positively correlates with awareness. As employers learn more about CBE and its advantages to students and business, they become more eager to hire CBE graduates.[92]

In addition to recognizing and offering competency-based education, institutions of higher education are beginning to credential various forms of "informal" learning. New versions of academic transcripts are emerging with credit given for achievement of learning outcomes related to co-curricular activities and well as identification of areas of mastery and competency.[93] These transcripts are referred to as "comprehensive student records" and communicate what students know and are able to do in ways that traditional academic transcripts do not.

Industry recognized credentials aligned to postsecondary programs are another means of awarding

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[87] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 8.

[88] Robert Kelchen, "The Landscape of Competency-Based Education," Center on Higher Education Reform American Enterprise Institute, January 2015, p. 1.

[89] Ibid, p. 8.

[90] Ibid, p. 2.

[91] Chip Franklin and Robert Lytle, "Employer Perspectives on Competency-Based Education," Center on Higher Education Reform American Enterprise Institute, April 2015, p. 1-2.

[92] Ibid, p. 3.

[93] Work Group Report, "Connecting Credentials Building Learning-Based Credentialing Systems," November 2017, p. 7.

credit. Often, these credentials are required by employers to affirm competency in the knowledge, skills and abilities required in jobs within specific areas such as finance, manufacturing, information technology and healthcare. Alignment of credentials creates educational pathways from high school to community colleges and ultimately to four-year institutions that connect to employment. [94]

Alternative Delivery Methods
Alternative methods for delivering higher education represent additional opportunities. Accelerated delivery options and online programming are the leading alternative delivery methods. When adults in Harper's district were asked about preferred formats for earning a certificate or degree, 58% were interested in attending accelerated or online programs, 54% were interested in programs with a class offered the same night each week for a year, 46% were interested in programs meeting once a month with online work, and 36% were interested in attending weekend programs.[95]

In 2016, 71% of district employers used online training, citing its convenience, efficiency, topic specificity, and timeliness as reasons for choosing this modality.[96] Employers believe that alternative degree formats would make their employees more likely to enroll in degree programs.

- Accelerated degree programs: 55% of smaller employers (100 or less than employees) and 64% of larger employers (more than 100 employees) reported they believe their employees would be more likely to seek a degree if an accelerated degree program was available.
- Online degree programs: 59% of smaller employers and 74% of larger employees indicated they believe their employees would be more likely to seek a degree if an online degree was offered. Additionally, 53% of smaller employers and 73% percent of the larger employers also agreed that their employees would be more likely to enroll in a degree program if it met locally once a month and had online work associated with it.[97]

Online programs can offer decreased cost and time to completion for students.[98] Examples include programs at Arizona State University and the University of Arkansas:

- Arizona State University (ASU) offers students free, ASU-designed courses on edX. Upon successful completion of online, synchronous courses and a proctored exam, students can choose to pay $600 per course for ASU course credit. These credits can be applied to a degree after enrolling at the University or another institution.[99]
- The University of Arkansas System created a fully online eVersity to remove barriers for adult students who commonly enroll with large numbers of credits from other institutions.[100]

Higher education has the opportunity to increase online offerings as new forms of credentialing are introduced. If experts are correct, the online education field will continue to expand, with early adopters, from community colleges to research universities, separating themselves from the rest.[101]

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[94] New Skills for Youth. 2018. *Credential Currency: How States can Identify and Promote Credentials of Value*, pp 2-3.
[95] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 38.
[96] Ibid, p. 70.
[97] Ibid, p. 84.
[98] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 29.
[99] Ibid, p. 32.
[100] Ibid, p. 34.
[101] Ibid, p. 6.

Opportunity 2: Changing District and Student Demographics

Item Description:
Harper's changing district demographics present an opportunity to assess and address the needs of the changing community. Diversity in the Harper community is increasing, bringing with it additional changes, such as decreases in household income and increases in foreign born residents. As a result of district changes, Harper's student population is changing. As an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, Harper has an opportunity to increase the completion and retention rates of Hispanic students, the majority of whom enroll at community colleges.

Supporting Information:
The Harper College district population continues to become more diverse in numerous ways:
- Harper's district population is 33.8% non-white, an increase of 3.7% from 2010 to 2015.[102]
- Asian and Hispanic populations have seen large increases from 2010-2015, while the White non-Hispanic population has experienced a large decrease.[103]
- District families reporting annual income of less than $30,000 increased from 2.5% in 2013 to 9.3% in 2016.[104]
- Residents reporting a primary language other than English spoken in the home increased from 5.5% in 2013 to 11.2% in 2016.[105]
- Harper's district has seen large increases in foreign-born students arriving from Mexico, India and Poland.[106]
- Residents who have lived in the district for less than five years has increased from 6.5% in 2013 to 12.8% in 2016.[107]

These district changes have contributed to changes in the Harper student population:
- Enrollment of Hispanic students has increased from 25.9% in fall 2015 to 28.3% in fall 2018, during the same time, enrollment of White students decreased from 53.8%% to 49.5%.[108]
- Enrollment shifts bring more first-generation students to Harper as 82% of Hispanic students are first-generation, compared to 47% of non-Hispanic students.[109]
- Many Harper students are experiencing basic needs insecurity. In FY2017, 405 students completed a survey with results indicating 45% of respondents identifying as food insecure and 44% responding as housing insecure.[110]

Given these changing demographics, colleges and universities need to adjust and discover alternative ways to support the students, inside and outside of the classroom. Students with "nontraditional" backgrounds will become more prevalent and traditional methods for meeting their needs will no longer prove effective.

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[102] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies. 2017, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 26.
[103] Ibid, p. 27.
[104] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 33.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies. 2017, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 31.
[107] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 32.
[108] Harper College *Fact Book 2018-2019,* p. 23.
[109] Harper College *Latinx Success, A vision for Harper College,* May 2018, p. 5.
[110] Wisconsin Hope Lab. Report for Fall 2016 Survey of Student Basic Needs, p. 2.

Opportunity 3: Partnerships with Educational Institutions, Business and Industry

Item Description:
Partnerships with educational institutions, as well as businesses and industry, are vital to providing relevant educational opportunities to students, meeting workforce needs of the district, and ensuring the College's role as a leader in community college education. Partnerships across all levels are critical for designing coherent education and career systems.[111]

Supporting Information:
Harper has developed partnerships with a variety of external organizations. Partnerships with K-12 educational institutions include elementary and middle school participation in campus tours, the ambassador school program, efforts to increase college-readiness for district high school graduates, development of the Promise Scholarship Program, and increased dual credit offerings. Partnerships with other higher education providers can be seen in the development of the University Center and the Education and Work Center. Additionally, partnerships with business and industry include apprenticeship programs, clinical sites for students, and program advisory committees.

While Harper and the community have benefited from strong existing partnerships, maintaining, enhancing, and growing partnerships is essential to advancing the community college mission.

- College-Readiness/Remediation: Partnerships with K-12 educational institutions can help students by increasing college-readiness, decreasing the need for remediation, and ensuring alignment of curricula.[112]
- Quality/Accessibility/Affordability: Partnerships with other community colleges can lead to shared curricula,[113] resource pooling and collaborative supports for students,[114] and cost reduction through cost-sharing initiatives.[115] Partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions can benefit students by decreasing costs, reducing the number of credits lost, and improving retention and completion rates.[116]
- Workforce Needs/Skill Development: Partnerships with business and industry can help meet the needs of the workforce. District employers identified the availability of qualified employees as their most significant barrier to growth,[117] followed by current employee skill level.[118] These needs are echoed by national research.[119] [120] Partnerships with business and industry should focus on matching education and training with jobs, reviewing labor market

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[111] "Empowering Community Colleges To Build the Nation's Future, an Implementation Guide," American Association of Community Colleges, 2014, p. 43.
[112] Ibid, p. 15.
[113] Ibid, p. 24.
[114] Ibid, p. 28.
[115] Douglas J. Guth, "Coming Out of the Dark," America Association of Community Colleges, Community College Journal, October/November 2018.
[116] "These 2-Year and 4-Year College Partnerships Keep Students From Falling Through the Cracks," last modified April 30, 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.chronicle.com/article/These-2-Year4-Year/243283.
[117] Clarus Corporation. 2016. *Harper College Community Survey, April 2016,* p. 50.
[118] Ibid.
[119] "Empowering Community Colleges To Build the Nation's Future, an Implementation Guide," American Association of Community Colleges, 2014.
[120] Dennis Pierce, "Use What You've Got Community Colleges are Finding Creative Ways to Grow Revenues," American Association of Community College, October/November 2018.

trends and employers' needs, and closing the skills gap.[121] [122] For example, the College might create customized programming for local employers in high-demand skills[123] or work with local businesses to ensure employees can take advantage of tuition assistance benefits.[124] The College might also offer customized information sessions, financial aid planning, on-site enrollment, and academic advising at job sites.[125] Furthermore, partnering with industry provides faculty with the opportunity to better embed industry standards into the curriculum and provides students the opportunity to have real-world experiences with actual industry clients.[126] Finally, the industries benefit from the students' work in areas of innovation and client relations.

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[121] "Empowering Community Colleges To Build the Nation's Future, an Implementation Guide," American Association of Community Colleges, 2014, p. 20-21.
[122] Dennis Pierce, "Use What You've Got Community Colleges are Finding Creative Ways to Grow Revenues," American Association of Community College, October/November 2018.
[123] Ibid, p. 25.
[124] Ibid, p. 26.
[125] Ibid.
[126] "The NMC Horizon Report: 2018 Higher Education Edition," New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2018, p. 11.

Opportunity 4: Strategies to Attract and Retain Students

Item Description:
Community colleges continue to experience declines in enrollment and low completion rates. With the traditional-aged college-going population decreasing, the opportunity exists to attract students from different demographic populations. Additionally, once students are enrolled it is essential to implement programs that will positively impact persistence and completion.

Supporting Information:
National enrollment projections continue to show a decrease in traditional-aged students.[127] In Harper's district and elsewhere, birthrates and K-12 enrollments are declining, negatively impacting enrollment. To increase enrollment, community colleges need to attract non-traditional students. This includes baby boomers, dual-credit, veterans, and reverse transfers.[128] A large potential growth market is adults as 37 million Americans have some college credit but no degree.[129]

Community colleges are a quality, affordable sector of higher education. Marketing their affordably, especially to non-traditional student populations, may increase enrollments. Community colleges have lower tuition rates and smaller annual increases in tuition than four-year colleges and universities. Recent data indicate that the average in-district tuition/fees at a community college is less than half of the average in-state tuition/fees at a public, four-year university, $3,570 and $9,970, respectively.[130]Additionally, community college students have lower debt than their four-year counterparts, with 59% being debt free.

Colleges can implement strategies that increase affordability, thereby attracting students. Such strategies include:

- Promise programs which provide low or no-cost education for the first two-years of college.[131]
- Adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) in the classroom dramatically decreases the cost of textbooks for students.[132]
- Z-Degree programs, those with zero textbook costs for students, build on the use of OER. In addition to saving students money, Z-Degree programs reduce the number of dropped courses and increase course success rates.[133]
- Acceleration of developmental course sequencing.[134]

Colleges can implement strategies that increase retention and completion of those enrolled. Pathways is an example of a strategy that can positively address enrollment and completion, as well as

[127] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 8.
[128] Grace Chen, "7 Trends in Community Colleges, Community College Review," August 17, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/7-trends-in-community-colleges.
[129] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 9.
[130] "Fast Facts 2018," American Association of Community Colleges, accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/.
[131] "About the College Promise Movement," accessed January 22, 2019, http://collegepromise.org/the-promise/.
[132] "Open Educational Resources (OER) Degree Initiative," accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.achievingthedream.org/resources/initiatives/open-educational-resources-oer-degree-initiative.
[133] "Proliferation of Open Educational Resources." NMC Horizon Report 2018 Higher Education Edition, p. 15.
[134] "California's new effort to fix remedial education," The Hechinger Report, accessed May 9, 2019, https://hechingerreport.org/californias-new-effort-fix-remedial-education/.

workforce skills gaps.[135] Pathways provide a framework for the College's interaction with the student and are a partnership between student and institution, with expectations for both parties. Critical to their success is the construction of coherent, structured pathways to certificate and degree completion, and ensuring that students enter a pathway soon after beginning.[136] When students develop clearly articulated education plans and enter pathways, they make informed decisions about coursework, future employment and potential earnings.[137] Early research regarding the impact of pathways on retention and completion is positive. For example, since implementation of guided pathways, completion rates at Georgia State University have increased almost 20% for white students and more than 30% for African American and Hispanic students.[138] The City University of New York has experienced similar increases for students in their Accelerate Study program.[139]

Colleges can increase student persistence and completion rates by focusing on careers and job placement.[140] Community colleges need to ensure alignment of program offerings with workforce needs and projected job growth. Education in preparation for employment is receiving bipartisan support as it is clear the nation needs skilled workers and education is the vehicle to develop these workers.[141] Community colleges play a critical role in developing a skilled workforce. Job opportunities for graduates are improving in fields where community colleges have robust programs: manufacturing, professional and technical services, finance and industry, and health care. Community colleges must develop, sustain, and market programs in areas with job growth and strong wages.

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[135] "Empowering Community Colleges, To Build the Nation's Future, an Implementation Guide," American Association of Community Colleges, 2014, p. 6.
[136] Ibid, p. 8.
[137] Ibid, p. 11.
[138] Rob Johnstone, "Guided Pathways Demystified: Exploring Ten Commonly Asked Questions about Implementing Pathways," National Center for Inquiry & Improvement, November 2017, p. 6.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Grace Chen, "7 Trends in Community Colleges, Community College Review," August 17, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/7-trends-in-community-colleges.
[141] John Colbert and Leander J. Folley III, "Emerging trends to watch in Washington," American Association of Community College, October/November 201, p. 5.

THREATS

A threat is an external trend or situation that, if not acted upon, may have a negative impact on the institution.

Threat 1: Funding and Financing Higher Education

Item Description:
The reduction in state funding of higher education coupled with changes in federal regulations, places financial burdens on educational institutions and students. With two of the three community college revenue sources, state appropriations and property taxes, decreasing or projected to decrease, colleges are forced to find alternative revenue sources or rely on the remaining source of revenue, which is student tuition and fees. This comes at a time when those who have the most need for higher education are least likely to be able to pay.

Supporting Information:
Funding for higher education has been negatively impacted by a reduction in state appropriations and an increase in pension liability.

- Despite steadily growing student demand for higher education since the mid-1970s, state fiscal investment in higher education has been declining since 1980. Based on funding trends since 1980, average state fiscal support for higher education will reach zero by 2059.[142]
- Of the 49 states analyzed, 44 states spent less per student in 2017 than in 2008, with Illinois experiencing a -36.9% change.[143] The only states spending more in 2017 were Indiana, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming.[144]
- Although Illinois increased support for higher education between 2010 and 2015, over one third of the increase was to shore up pension funds rather than to provide educational services.[145]
- Threats to shift state pension obligations back to the employee could result in significant annual costs to the College.[146]

Individual ability to finance higher education has decreased as a result of cuts to state and federal aid, high state taxes, and declining household incomes.

- Higher education federal policy appears to be heading towards deregulation, student aid cuts, and the gutting of programs that help the neediest students, including PELL grants.[147]
- The gap between those who are eligible for funds from the Illinois Monetary Awards Program (MAP), but did not receive an award, continues to widen. Among those who are eligible, only 36% were awarded, leaving more than 219,000 Illinois students without MAP assistance.[148]

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[142] Thomas G. Mortenson, "State Funding: A Race to the Bottom," American Council on Education, Winter 2012. Retrieved from https://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/state-funding-a-race-to-the-bottom.aspx.
[143] Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson, "A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 23, 2017, p. 5.
[144] Ibid, p. 2.
[145] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies. 2017, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 18.
[146] Jose Sanchez, "Examining Another Plan to Shift Pension Cost Back to Schools," Better Government Association, March 27, 2018, Retrieved from https://www.bettergov.org/news/examining-another-plan-to-shift-pension-costs-back-to-schools.
[147] Karen A. Stout, "Top 15 Trends in Community College Student Success and Philanthropy," Achieving the Dream, September 1, 2017, p. 1 item #3.
[148] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies. 2017, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 57.

- The state income tax increase resulted in a large increase in the overall tax burden. The State's tax burden is currently the 5th highest in the nation. Illinois ranks as one of the highest in property tax rankings, putting an additional financial burden on taxpayers.[149]
- Median household income declined in 16 of the 23 communities in the Harper district between 2010 and 2015. Incomes in these communities experienced decreases as large as 24.6%. Ten communities experienced a greater rate of decline than the State average 5.2%.[150]

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[149] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies. 2017, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 19.
[150] Ibid, p. 12 and 27.

Threat 2: Higher Education in a Competitive Market

Item Description:

In today's interconnected world, education is an increasingly competitive commodity.[151][152][153] To remain relevant in an environment where alternative credentials and education providers are growing, colleges and universities must offer quality education in ways that meet the needs and demands of students and employers.

Supporting Information:

Population decreases coupled with large numbers of education providers have created an increasingly competitive market. Illinois' population, for example, has decreased by over 27,000 residents since the 2010 census.[154] Additionally, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* projects a 13.0% decrease in high school graduates in Illinois from 2018-19 to 2028-29.[155] Further, the College's recent Environmental Scan points to more than 70 education providers within 25 miles of Harper's main campus, offering approximately 600 degree, certificate, or other training programs.[156] Competition for students also exists outside of this radius. Public and private institutions in nearby states are enrolling large numbers of Illinois freshman. In fall 2017, nearly 17,000 Illinois first-time students enrolled at a public or private institution in Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, or Wisconsin.[157] In addition to the competition from both in-state and out-of-state traditional brick and mortar education providers, the growth of online and non-traditional education providers further complicate the higher education landscape. As such, colleges need to adapt and innovate in order to remain relevant.

According to recent research, a third wave of postsecondary education, termed demand-driven education, is occurring. In this setting, postsecondary education must adapt to the needs of workers over the course of their lifetimes.[158] This convergence between education and employment must be met by higher education institutions in order to remain viable in the global economy. Other organizations, both inside and outside of higher education, are already expanding their work with a variety of students in order to meet these demands. For example, Southern New Hampshire University has partnered with a non-profit that serves disadvantaged populations in order to create new learning and workforce strategies such as micro-credentials, badges, and playlists.[159] Additionally, IBM has issued more than 500,000 badges or micro-credentials to both employees and external learners who want to build skills and develop competency-based portfolios.[160]

[151] "Universities must prepare for a technology-enabled future," last modified January 9, 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://theconversation.com/universities-must-prepare-for-a-technology-enabled-future-89354?xid=PS_smithsonian.

[152] Gary W. Matkin, "Alternative Digital Credentials: An Imperative for Higher Education," February 2018, accessed January 28, 2019 https://cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/rops.cshe.2.2018.matkin.altdigitalcredential.1.30.2018.pdf.

[153] "Universities Must Expand Reach to Stay Competitive," last modified February 12, 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://scs.georgetown.edu/news-and-events/article/7116/universities-must-expand-reach-stay-competitive.

[154] "United States Census Bureau," accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.census.gov/.

[155] "Compare the States," last modified August 19, 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/almanac-2018?cid=cp218.

[156] Northern Illinois University, Center for Governmental Studies, *Harper College Environmental Scan,* February 2017, p. 110-126.

[157] "National Center for Education Statistics," Fall 2017 enrollment data retrieved May 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data.

[158] Joe Deegan and Nathan Martin, "Merging work & learning to develop the human skills that matter," Pearson, p. 6.

[159] "#2: SNHU's new program reimagines the concept of college," Robert Lerose, last modified December 28, 2018, accessed, January 28, 2019, https://www.ecampusnews.com/2018/12/28/2-snhus-new-program-reimagines-the-concept-of-college/.

[160] Work Group Report, "Connecting Credentials Building Learning-Based Credentialing Systems," November 2017, p. 4.

The number of providers of alternative credentials, both accredited and non-accredited, has grown with large numbers of students engaging in non-traditional approaches to higher education.[161] Many corporations, professional organizations, and labor unions are working to address the educational needs of their employees by offering industry-specific competency-based offerings, either with or without a higher education partner.[162] Additionally, certificates are being issued by employers and other non-college education providers. These credentials often take less than two years to complete and feature assessments that are based on job-relevant skills.[163]

Institutions of higher education need to be adaptive and work with employers to develop employee skills, or they will be left behind.[164] To remain competitive in the education market, colleges and universities need to acknowledge that not all students want or need a traditional degree. Student needs vary and require alternative paths to success, and employers require skills over degrees.[165] As employers move towards competencies required for job roles and career paths, higher education must align itself with these needs. In a recent survey of colleges and universities, 94% of institutions reported awarding some form of alternative credential, with 70% offering noncredit training, 20% awarding digital badges, and 13% offering a form of micro-credential.[166]

Nationwide, online enrollments are increasing while overall postsecondary enrollments are falling.[167] In recent years, the growth rate of online credit course enrollments has been approximately ten times the overall growth rate of higher education enrollments.[168] The percent of all students enrolled in postsecondary education who take at least one online course has grown from 24.8% in 2012 to 33.1% in 2017.[169] [170] This 33.1% equates to approximately 7 million students nationwide, the majority of whom are community college students.[171] Additionally, the largest growth in online education is occurring in public and private nonprofit institutions, rather than for-profit institutions. At public institutions, from 2016 to 2017, the percent of students enrolled exclusively in online courses increased 7.2%, as did the percent enrolled in some online. At private nonprofit institutions during the same time period, the percent of students enrolled exclusively in online courses increased 8.2% and those enrolled in some online courses increased by 6.6%.[172] With decreasing enrollments overall, colleges need to expand opportunities for students to learn via an online platform in order to remain competitive in the digital era.

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[161] Michelle R. Weise, "Alternative Credentials and the Pathway to an Unbundled Higher Ed Environment," last modified September 2016, accessed January 28, 2019, https://evolllution.com/managing-institution/higher_ed_business/alternative-credentials-and-the-pathway-to-an-unbundled-higher-ed-environment/.

[162] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 5.

[163] Ibid, p. ii.

[164] Michelle R. Weise, "Alternative Credentials and the Pathway to an Unbundled Higher Ed Environment," last modified September 2016, accessed January 28, 2019, https://evolllution.com/managing-institution/higher_ed_business/alternative-credentials-and-the-pathway-to-an-unbundled-higher-ed-environment/.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 8.

[167] Doug Lederman, "Online Education Ascends," last modified November 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/11/07/new-data-online-enrollments-grow-and-share-overall-enrollment.

[168] Peter Shea and Temi Bidjerano "Does online learning impede degree completion?" last modified 2014, accessed January 29, 2019, http://www.sunyresearch.net/hplo/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/c-e-paper-2014.pdf, p. 103.

[169] Doug Lederman, "Online Education Ascends," last modified November 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/11/07/new-data-online-enrollments-grow-and-share-overall-enrollment.

[170] Doug Lederman, "Who is Studying Online (and where)," last modified January 5, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/01/05/new-us-data-show-continued-growth-college-students-studying.

[171] Peter Shea and Temi Bidjerano "Does online learning impede degree completion?" last modified 2014, accessed January 29, 2019, http://www.sunyresearch.net/hplo/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/c-e-paper-2014.pdf, p. 103.

[172] Doug Lederman, "Online Education Ascends," last modified November 2018, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/11/07/new-data-online-enrollments-grow-and-share-overall-enrollment.

Threat 3: Uncertain State of Higher Education

Item Description:
The state of higher education at the national level continues to be uncertain. The future of higher education is uncertain and will be impacted by actions and decisions on policies related to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the DREAM Act, and review and/or removal of previously enacted Department of Education rules. Additionally, changing perspectives on the value of higher education have the potential to negatively impact the College.

Supporting Information:
Value of Higher Education
Anxiety around higher education is growing in America. Historically, a degree has been the key to a good job. But rising fees and increasing student debt, combined with shrinking financial and educational returns, are undermining the perception that earning a degree is a good investment. Today, nearly half of all students who begin college do not graduate within six years. Additionally, students who borrow for college but never graduate are three times more likely to default on loans.[173]

With the Higher Education Act overdue for reauthorization, it is inevitable that policymakers rewrite federal higher education policy in the next few years. However, the development of new policies based on the same assumptions about the individual and economic benefits of debt-financed education will only continue to deepen our country's student debt crisis.[174]

Some question if a college degree still has value. The consensus is a resounding yes. Researchers estimate college graduates earn about $1 million more over their lifetime than those without a degree.[175] Additionally the college wage "premium" – the difference in average earnings between college graduates and those with just a high school diploma – has averaged approximately 56% over the last three decades. When digging deeper into the data it becomes clear that, although the premium has remained stable, the value of a degree is eroding. While there is evidence that a higher education provides a gateway to a better paying job, the return on a college degree can vary widely. Thus, pursuing a postsecondary education remains a risky and expensive investment for families – and one whose value diminishes if costs increase faster than wages. [176]

Immigration and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
The DACA policy was implemented in 2012 to protect individuals who entered the United States from foreign countries as children.[177] This protection includes work authorization and deferred removal action. Many of those protected by DACA are enrolled in institutions of higher education. In 2017, the President of the United States declared an end to DACA with no new applications accepted.[178] While in the appeal process, DACA holders can apply to renew DACA status. This is a

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[173] Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) analysis.

[174] Julie Margetta Morgan and Marshall Steinbaum, "The Student Debt Crisis, Labor Market Credentialization, and Racial Inequality," Roosevelt Institute, October 2018, p. 34.

[175] Jaison R. Abel and Richard Deitz, "Do the Benefits of College Still Outweigh the Costs?" Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Volume 20, Number 3, 2014 p. 4.

[176] Ibid.

[177] "Secretary Napolitano Announces Deferred Action Process for Young People Who are Low Enforcement Priorities," last modified June 15, 2012, last accessed January 30, 2019, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2012/06/15/secretary-napolitano-announces-deferred-action-process-young-people-who-are-low.

[178] "Trump Ends DACA Program, No New Applications Accepted," last modified September 5, 2017, last accessed January 30, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/trump-dreamers-daca-immigration-announcement-n798686.

positive step for immigrant families, but not a permanent solution. Until there is a clean DREAM Act that provides Dreamers with resolution, the future of DACA, and those impacted by it, is uncertain.

Deregulation of Education
The Department of Education is reviewing rules and considering deregulation as a method to bolster the development of alternative credential pathways. This deregulation includes adjustments to rules that govern accreditation, the faculty role in online programs, the outsourcing of programs to non-accredited education providers, and the definition of the credit hour.[179]

The Department of Education is aiming to reimagine higher education and promote innovation by changing the rules for accreditors and the providers of competency-based and online programs.[180] These changes would include adjustments to rules regarding access to federal financial aid. Current regulations state that in order to access federal aid, academic programs must be offered by accredited colleges or universities with no more than 50% of a program contracted out to a non-accredited provider.

While deregulation has seen modest bipartisan support as a means to grow funding options for online and nontraditional credentials, concerns exist about the lack of oversight. Deregulation could lead to abuse, by both for-profit and nonprofit education providers, especially if additional federal funds are directed towards these programs.[181]

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[179] Paul Fain, "On-Ramps and Off-Ramps: Alternative Credentials and Emerging Pathways Between Education and Work," Inside Higher Ed, 2018, p. 51.
[180] Ibid, p. 53.
[181] Ibid, p. 11.