

Dr. Maria Coons
Chief of Staff and Vice President of Institutional Planning and Strategic Alliances
Harper College, Palatine, IL

Dr. Coons leads planning, accountability and strategic partnerships at Harper College. This includes the development of a community-based strategic planning process, overseeing institutional research and outcomes assessment initiatives, as well as developing and delivering programming with strategic partners in high-growth areas, supporting small business development, working with the unemployed, and credentialing adult learners. To support this work, Dr. Coons has successfully procured more than \$23 million in workforce grants. She also served as a member of the Operating Committee for the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (AMP 2.0), a White House initiative focused on talent pipeline challenges in the manufacturing sector.

Dr. Coons led the development of the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant for Harper College. As a result, the College was awarded a \$2.5 million grant in 2015 supporting the development and expansion of apprenticeship programs in traditional and non-traditional industry sectors.

During her 30-year tenure at Harper, Dr. Coons has served as a full-time faculty member and department chair where she taught a full complement of management, marketing and finance courses, developed curricula, and managed adjunct faculty. She also developed and managed the Fast Track program, which provides cohort-based learning opportunities for adults.

Before pursuing a career in education, Dr. Coons was Assistant Vice President of Check Operations at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. She holds a doctorate in Higher Education from National Louis University, a Master's degree in Business Administration from Loyola University's Quinlan School of Business, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business.