

**Testimony of Dr. Maria H. Coons, Vice President - Harper College
for the
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee
on
Apprenticeships/Career and Technical Education
April 25, 2018
Washington, D.C.**

I am honored that Chairman Cole, Congresswoman DeLauro and members of the Committee and staff have provided me, on behalf of Harper College's President Dr. Kenneth Ender, the opportunity to testify on apprenticeships and technical education as alternatives to four-year degree programs. Harper College has a rich background in these areas and is nationally known for innovative approaches to work-based learning, and career and technical program offerings. Harper is a comprehensive community college located 30 miles northwest of Chicago and serves 23 communities, serving more than 40,000 students annually in degree and certificate programs, workforce training, continuing education, accelerated degree options for adults, and developmental education. Harper offers 34 career and technical (applied) associate degrees, 108 career and technical certificates and seven transfer degrees. Our student population is becoming increasingly diverse, particularly among the Latino/a and Asian populations. We also serve more than 20,000 businesses of all sizes, representing multiple sectors including manufacturing, supply chain/logistics, finance/insurance and retail. Our mission specifically speaks to collaborating with partners to transform individual lives and the workforce. For purposes of this briefing, two areas will be addressed: Career and Technical Education and Apprenticeships.

Career and Technical Education is a key focus at Harper as it provides an investment in human capital that benefits local businesses and prepares students for promising careers. The end goal of career and technical education programs is employment. Harper prepares students for these careers via the applied associate's degree, a two-year program that integrates theory,

general education and practical skills. Certificates of completion also help students prepare for employment, but are focused on specific employment skills and thus can be completed in one year or less. In 2017, Harper awarded 468 applied associate degrees and 1,816 certificates. The table below highlights the types of degrees and certificates awarded.

Applied Associate Degrees	Certificates
Nursing	Medical Coding/Medical Assistant
Business Administration	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
Dental Hygiene	Welding/Fabrication
Law Enforcement/Forensic Science	Supply Chain Management
Fire Science	Graphics Arts/Package Design
Manufacturing/Welding	Certified Nursing Assistant

Perkins funding is instrumental in supporting career and technical programs, as are Pell grants and other programs supporting the neediest students in their pursuits of credentials with labor market value. In 2017, Harper received \$344,660 in Perkins funding of which \$197,100 was spent on access, equity and opportunity for advisors in career and technical programs, and \$133,150 on enhancing curricula and program improvements for program development and equipment. Harper awarded approximately \$19 million in financial aid to students in 2017. The maximum Pell award of \$5,920 per year more than pays for a full-time student's tuition and fees at Harper, which are \$4,500. These funding streams are paramount in supporting students and ensuring curricula and equipment remain relevant in today's dynamic business environment.

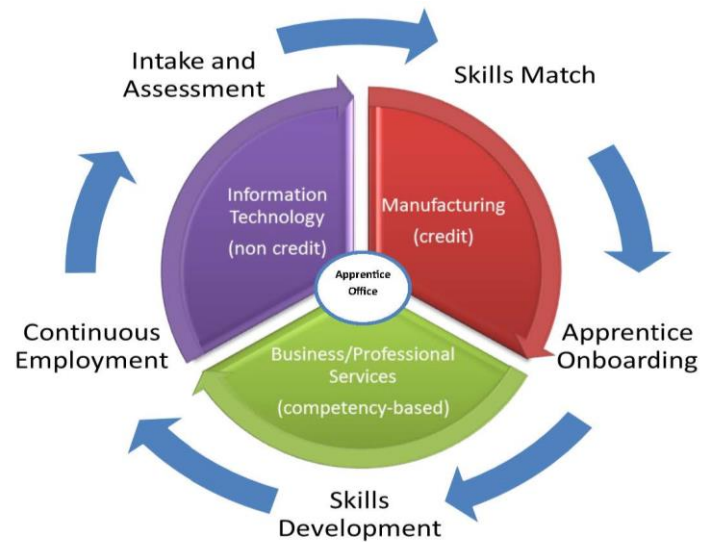
Harper's Office of Institutional Research recently released a longitudinal report highlighting student outcomes after students leave Harper College. Employment data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security and credentialing data from the National Student Clearinghouse were merged with Harper student data to provide information about post-Harper outcomes. Overall, earning a Harper credential increased the likelihood for gaining stable

employment and earning higher wages as compared to those students who left Harper without a credential. In addition, students who left Harper with a credential were earning higher wages than students who left without a credential. These data highlight the importance of completing a program of study. Harper has placed a great deal of focus and has dedicated resources to increasing the completion rate. Over the past 10 years, our completion rate has increased from 14% to 28.41%. We continue to work with state employment agencies to gather wage data.

Harper has also been instrumental in leading a local consortium of workforce boards and community colleges in the Chicago area referred to as the Northern Illinois Workforce Coalition (NIWC). Labor market data for the region indicates there are many jobs requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. By 2020, 45% of the area's well-paying, career-track jobs are projected to require these "middle skills" in such occupations as health care, information technology, and business services, yet only 25% of the area's current workforce is qualified to perform these jobs. NIWC has three goals which are to: 1) award credentials that have labor market value; 2) close the skills gap in the regional workforce; and 3) work collaboratively to leverage resources to advance workforce initiatives in the region. This includes maximizing the use of federal workforce funds. Last year, all NIWC members joined a compact where in-district tuition rates are now being charged to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) customers approved for study, regardless of where they live. It is estimated that this is saving the system more than \$200,000 annually.

Apprenticeships are relatively new to Harper College. Apprenticeships On Demand (AOD) was developed by Harper to encompass any apprenticeship program. This is a fully employer-driven system focused on three industry sectors: Manufacturing, Information Technology and Business/Professional Services. AOD was designed to have uniform guidelines

for apprenticeships. This apprenticeship model is scalable to adapt to the changing needs in the local marketplace and is easily adapted in communities nationwide. The AOD system is illustrated below.



The business and professional services sector has not traditionally offered apprenticeships. Rather, in the United States, most think of apprenticeships in “trades” such as plumbers and pipe fitters. Harper is offering apprenticeships in claims adjusting and underwriting with Zurich North America and Aon by modifying the credit-based Business Administration program into a competency-based model for the insurance industry. Students are able to enter apprenticeships from a myriad of life experiences. Harper College, along with its partners, initiated a strong marketing campaign to recruit student apprentices. Once an applicant is ready to enter the program, they complete an intake and assessments, have their identified skills matched with a program, undergo a comprehensive onboarding process and enter a registered apprenticeship (RA) program.

The AOD system is unique in that it provides a flexible design that it is customizable to the needs of a particular industry or business. AOD also offers options to students seeking credit-

based degrees and those seeking industry-recognized credentials in an accelerated pathway leading to a paid position and viable career. Harper currently offers apprenticeships in Banking/Finance, CNC Precision Machining, General Insurance, Graphic Arts Print Production, Industrial Maintenance Mechanic, Logistics/Supply Chain Management, Sales/Retail Management, Cyber Security and Information Technology Generalist. Employers pay all related educational costs, thus apprentices graduate debt free and gain work experience as they are completing a program. Most importantly, the apprentice has a full-time job upon completion.

Harper was awarded a \$2.5 million American Apprenticeship Initiative grant in 2015. These funds were instrumental in starting-up and growing apprenticeships at the College. There are 99 apprentices currently enrolled at Harper, and 50 companies that have hired or are in the process of hiring apprentices. The grant funds were also critical in supporting Harper's efforts to become a RA program sponsor. As a sponsor, Harper is responsible for overall operation of the RA program including complying with reporting requirements, which lessens the burden on local companies that normally function in this role.

Student data related to apprenticeships is compelling in that the retention rate for these students is 86%, compared to an overall retention rate of 73% for the College. Area businesses are embracing this unique approach to filling their skills gaps evidenced by their willingness to hire additional apprentices. Harper has been called upon frequently to explain the AOD apprenticeship model and assist others in implementing similar programs. The chart below highlights this work. For more information go to: <http://www.harperapprenticeships.org/>

	2016	2017	2018
Presentations and consultations	33	236	42

Notably, on October 8-9, Harper is hosting the first National Community College Conference on Implementing Registered Apprenticeship Programs. All are welcome to attend.