

# Harper College –

## Community Scan 2022/2023



# *Background, Objectives, and Methodology*



# *Background & Objectives*

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- Community Scan conducted every three years since 2004
  - Delayed one year due to COVID
- Scan consists of two surveys: Resident and Employer
- Gathers information on:
  - community needs,
  - how the College is fulfilling needs,
  - information sources used to learn about the College,
  - awareness of and attitudes toward the College,
  - the relative success of the College, and
  - additional work that would assist area businesses and students.

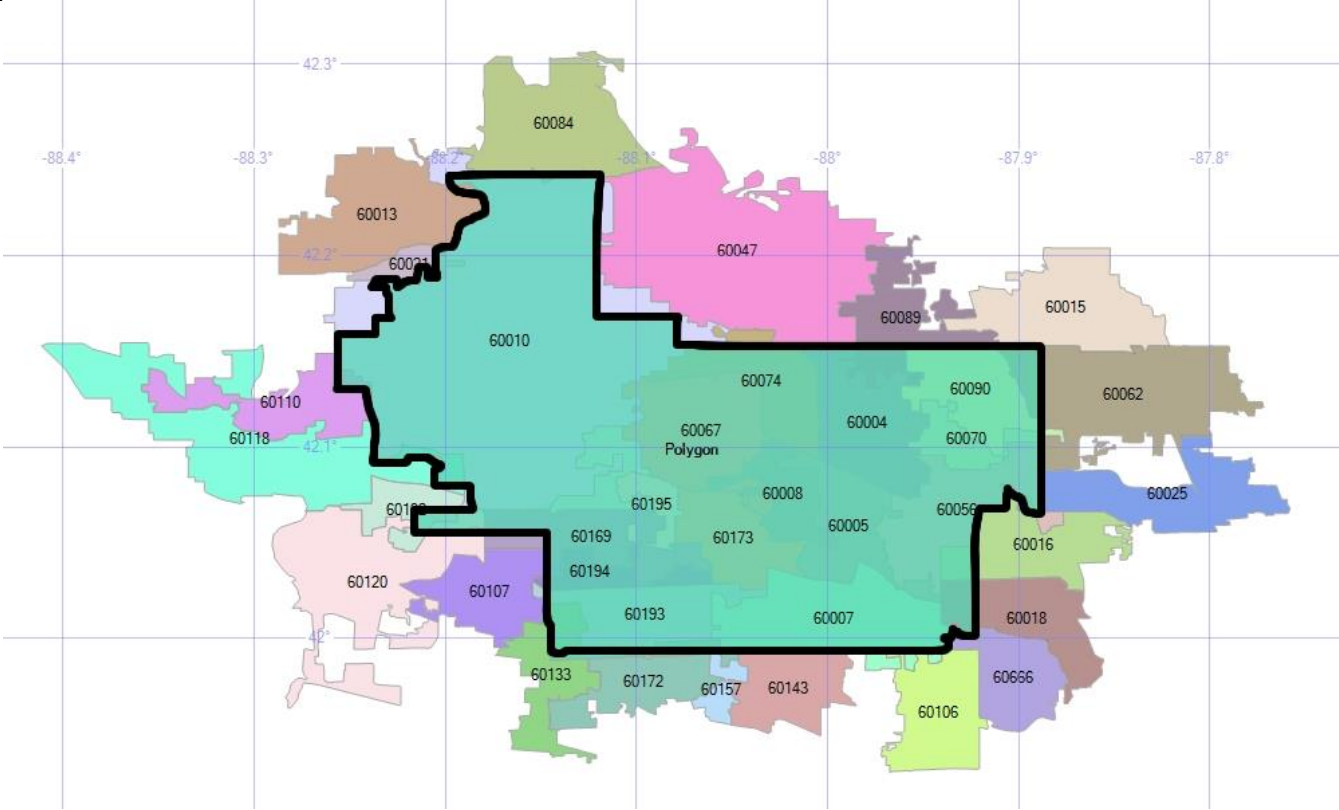
# Methodologies

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- Initial study phase – leadership interviews
- Primary study
  - Conducted during the final three months of 2022
  - Utilized a telephone research methodology for both Harper College district residents and businesses.
    - 500 residents surveyed
    - 277 businesses
  - Statistics were collected at the 95<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles.
    - If a result is statistically significant, it is mentioned;
    - If a result is interesting but not significant, it is described as “directional.”

# Representative Sampling

This study utilized *stratified random sampling* to ensure that all sectors of the Harper College district were represented proportionate to Harper's district population.



# *Executive Summary – District Residents*



# *Unaided Awareness of Harper – First Mention*

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- Harper was the most frequently mentioned college or university
  - Current study – 77%
  - 2019 study – 45%
- Awareness of Harper as “my local community college”
  - Current study – 88%
  - 2019 study – 77%
- More mentions of Harper if
  - Respondent lived in the District for over 10 years
  - Respondent had an income over \$50,000

# *What is Harper Best Known For?*

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- 28% I don't know/nothing
- 13% Academic reputation
- 13% A specific academic program
- 9% Transfer path to a four-year college
- 6% Good cost/value opportunity
- 5% Convenient to attend



# *How Important Is It For Harper To Offer:*

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- Of 15 features, five scored as most important:
  - Offer courses that transfer easily
  - Have an affordable tuition and aid packages
  - Offer programs/courses leading to specific area jobs
  - Provide a safe environment; and
  - Offer career technical programs designed to meet current area needs
  
- When looking at ratings from a historical perspective:
  - Whenever “campus safety” is rated, this attribute is consistently in the most important group
  - Offering courses from early Monday morning through late Friday afternoon is rated highly
  - Offering weekend classes is the second-lowest rated attribute.

# *How Important Is It For Harper to Offer: Local Partnerships*

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- The highest-rated partnerships align with the traditional role of community colleges:
  - Focus on transfer students, offering college credit to HS students where warranted;
  - Work with local employers to train underemployed workers; and
  - Interact with businesses to identify good jobs for the future.

# *Respondent Relationships with Harper*

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- 15% of respondents had at least one high school student in their household.
- Three-quarters of respondents have visited the campus, primarily to take a course but also for a variety of additional reasons.
  - These two relationships are important, as directionally those who are familiar with the campus from personal and/or family visits tend to rate the College higher across all features and tend to be aware of more positive attributes than those who haven't.
- 49% have taken a course at Harper, compared to 36% in previous years. Also, more have attended an on-campus event in current study.

# *Importance For Harper To Ease Enrollment Barriers*

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- Most important for Harper to offer:
  - More forms of tuition assistance;
  - Paid mentorships and internships; and
  - Counseling assistance throughout for any student who asks.
- Only 12-43% of respondents are aware that Harper offers programs such as these.

# *Do Residents Seek Out Local and/or Harper Info?*

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- As in prior years, respondents are more interested in information about local events than in information about college events.
- Just over half of respondents want to continue to receive all course information and scheduling.
- Approximately one in five respondents would like to hear about events open to the District.
- 44% say they would like to receive updates quarterly.

# *How Likely Are You To Recommend Harper?*

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- When asked how likely they would be to recommend a Harper education to a friend or relative, 70% responded with a rating of “6” or “7.”
- The most frequently mentioned reasons for this high rating were:
  - 27% affordable/value
  - 20% good start/transfer
  - 20% reputation
  - 18% (positive) experience
  - 12% variety of courses
  - 10% quality of professors
  - 10% convenient location
  - 8% local asset to community

# *Executive Summary - Businesses*



# *What Is Harper Known For?*

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- Area businesses gave responses similar to residents:
  - Harper is most known for academics, including both overall reputation and specific programs;
  - Harper is known for transfer programs; and
  - Harper has a convenient location
  
- Businesses were significantly more likely to mention Harper's academic reputation, 29% v 13%.
  
- Companies in construction were significantly more likely to be aware of Harper's transfer program than companies in manufacturing or retail.



# Job Openings

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- 89% of businesses have had job openings in the past year.
- This is due to:
  - Normal turnover (55%)
  - Business growth (40%)
- In the current study, significantly more companies are increasing to accommodate growth (52% v 27%).
  - For-profit entities are significantly more likely to be growing than governmental agencies (42% v 24%), and
  - Construction firms are significantly more likely to be experiencing growth than companies in other industries (91% v 18-36%).

# *Finding Employees*

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- 70% of respondents expressed problems in recruiting qualified applicants.
  - Especially in construction, manufacturing, and utility companies.
- The most mentioned difficulty was identical to that seen in the previous study, “applicants lack relevant work experience” mentioned by 40% (46% in 2019).
  - In the previous study a lack of technical knowledge and necessary education were important, while in the current study these were mentioned along with a **lack of communication skills**.
  - Additionally, in the current study, more applicants were unwilling to accept the compensation offered.

# *How Would You Recruit Today?*

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- The largest employers would be significantly more likely to utilize Internet sites for recruiting.
- In the current study, there is greater reliance in using references from current employees to add to the number of applicants (61% v 27%).
- One in four companies would recruit Harper students or graduates, increasing to one in three if focusing on larger companies.
- Government agencies are significantly more likely to recruit from Harper than for-profit companies.
- Two-thirds of those who did recruit from Harper were satisfied with the recruits, especially those smaller businesses that did recruit at Harper.

# *Specific Openings That Proved Tough To Fill*

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- The most mentioned difficult to fill were technical trade jobs such as machinists, technicians, and service personnel. In total, approximately 260 difficult-to-fill-jobs were mentioned.
- Most reported openings were at the mid and lower end of the wage/salary range.
  - About half the jobs had a high school degree or equivalent requirement, with the other half requiring a mix of degrees and experience (or proof of experience via certifications).
  - While there were some differences in actual percentages, the overall ordering of the difficulties did not change from 2019.

# Employee Training

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- 74% of companies offered training for their employees, similar to the rate in 2019.
- Most training is hands-on, specific to the equipment used or the company needs, and even specific to individual machines.
  - Most training is within the company location, often hands-on with the specific machinery involved. 62% of training is led by company employees.
  - In prior studies, employers had a greater tendency to utilize classroom, on-line, or computer-based training than today's more hands-on focus. The percentage providing training has declined over the past few studies.
- Today employee incentives are less monetary focused (e.g., tuition reimbursement) and more likely non-monetary (e.g., courses at the company, time-off to attend).
- Only 8% of current respondents have used Harper to provide training, although those who have used Harper appear satisfied.

# *How Would You Contact Harper; How Should They Contact You?*

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- The most frequent means respondents would use to reach out to Harper are an **Internet search** starting at the College website.
  - This implies that there must be an easy, one-click means of reaching Harper Business Consulting from the main website.
  - Additionally, approximately one in five expected to **use the telephone**.
- A significant majority of respondents only want Harper to send them targeted e-mails rather than any other communication.

# *Expected Change In Number of Employees*

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Respondents were optimistic for the future, with 97% indicating their employee count will either increase or stay the same over the coming year.

# *Implications/Potential Areas for Improvement*





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## Resident survey:

- Limited detailed knowledge about Harper College
- Low visibility in the community
- More information about emerging careers and education
- Increased opportunities to visit the campus

## Employer survey:

- Specialized study to dig deeper into the needs of the district business sector
- Centralized contact area for businesses
- Limited detailed knowledge about Harper College
- Increased two-way conversations with businesses
- Alignment between general outreach to residents and businesses

# QUESTIONS?

