

Possible Writing/Discussion Areas for Use of *Harper College, The First 50 Years* as a Class Textbook

From Anne Davidovicz

- Why was there community resistance to the establishment of Harper College?
- Chapter 1 explores certain biases about community college education. Describe those biases and apply them to your personal experiences at Harper. Would your experiences here dispute or uphold assumptions about a community college education? Use specific example to develop your argument.
- Comment on President Lahti's vision of a community college. What defining phrase did he avoid? Why? What is your vision of a community college? Does it coincide with Lahti's?
- Harper's history displays the impact of a patriarchal culture. Point out at least three specific examples of sexism in its early years. Next, explore whether or not such a culture still exists today in the college. Use specific examples from Thoreson's text or personal observation to support your response.
- What were the college's early attitudes toward vocational education? Do you agree that the vocational programs at Harper should require students to take general education requirements (Eng. 101, Speech, etc)? Provide ample evidence in your discussion.
- A former employee (Jeanne Pankanin) noted that in its early years Harper projected "a proud, friendly environment. A spirit of adventure." Do her sentiments still hold true today? Use specific examples to support or dispute her observation.
- Review the history of Harper's *Harbinger*. Currently, the newspaper is defunct. Are school papers a thing of the past? Should the paper be resurrected? If yes, pretend you are a consultant providing advice for how to make the paper a valuable part of the Harper experience. If no, develop an argument that provides reasons for it to remain shelved. You may interview students or employees of the college to develop your response.
- Discuss the irony in Harper's early position on cigarette sales and smoking.
- Review the dispute (in Chapter 2) revolving around former faculty members Kalish and Enbysk. Note that such termination of employment is still a hotly debated issue at Harper. Should administration have the right to dismiss non-tenured faculty for "no specified cause?" Consider setting up an interview with the tenure committee chair and the provost to fully understand the tenure process.
- Chapter 2 addresses Harper students' political involvement on the campus--from protests against America's involvement in the Vietnam War to shifting attitudes about the Student

Senate. In light of the recent presidential election, what is the political climate on campus today?

- Analyze three problems/controversies encountered by the college. Discuss whether and/or how they were overcome. Include critical feedback on the situations, as well.
- Compare and contrast the governance styles of Presidents Lahti and McGrath. Which style was most effective in your opinion? Which man made the largest contributions to the college?
- Analyze each successive presidents' contributions to the college. Which individual had the strongest influence on the progress of the college? Why?
- Describe the shifting face of labor relations at Harper College over the years. What issues surface again and again? Provide concrete suggestions for long-term changes that might allow such relations to mend.
- In Chapter 1, it is noted that "Community colleges had always been seen by some as potential 'shock absorbers' for the four-year school system." Explain how the text explains this comment and then discuss whether or not this is still the case today—or, maybe you could redefine the role of community colleges as "shock absorbers."