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FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting
Thursday, June 9, 2005

Good morning! Chairman Tyree, Chancellor Watson, members of the Board, Officers of the District, faculty, staff and all others present.

We can all feel that summer has announced its arrival with a blast of late-July-like heat, forcing many of us to confront rather too soon the inevitable question: "What are you going to do with your summer?" as though each of us possessed our own special version of it. But we actually do: what summer means to me differs greatly from what summer means to each of you. Nonetheless, I think we can all agree that summer has its own unique rhythms and cadences for each of us.

As for me, every summer has been different. For instance, two summers ago my fiancée (now wife) and I planned our wedding. Last summer I was traveling in Mexico and the Southwest. And this summer is shaping up to be quite unique as well: my wife and I are purchasing our first home. Add to this my duties as Faculty Council President and other familial responsibilities, and not mention all of that reading I never seem to catch up on, I think I need an extended summer. Perhaps the Board has the authority to extend it through October?

Seriously, though, summer for me is a time of reflection and renewal: I reflect on the last academic year, reviewing what worked and did not in my classes and I renew my teaching spirit through reading and travel. In a profession such as ours where we're not dealing with widgets but rather human beings, it is vital to step back, contemplate and *not* think about work for a while – to paraphrase, "feed the academic mind and soul."

On that note, the Executive Committee met on Monday. Although we do not go into the meetings with a theme in mind, it became very evident to me that a common element had, indeed, woven itself throughout the wide-ranging discussions that we had: align. "Align" is defined in Webster's Dictionary as: "To adjust to produce a proper condition or relationship." One such alignment involves the Math departments across the district regarding the redefinition of Intermediate and Beginning Algebra to include geometry. On the surface it may appear to be insignificant but this was no easy task and both faculty and administration should be applauded for their spirit of cooperation to accomplish this. Another major alignment was announced by Vice Chancellor Lewis and Associate Vice Chancellor Aybar regarding the aptly titled, Project Align, whose objective is to develop student-learning outcomes across three systems (CPS, CCC and 4-year Illinois universities). After years of inertia, I'm told, thirty-five CPS high schools are

going to implement the CCC mathematics and English curricula recommendations to make sure that entering CPS students are college-ready. This is an unprecedented achievement and, once again, both faculty and administration should be commended.

The theme of alignment also prevailed in our discussions about Exit Competencies. This fall, after a one-year hiatus, the CCC is going to reconvene discipline meetings district-wide to begin the horizontal and vertical dialogs among the faculty and the administration regarding exit competencies and the assessment of student learning outcomes. What is sought is not uniformity across the district but rather finding core elements and the minimum objectives that each course should have.

All of this is tied to raising standards and, I must caution, as standards increase, a commensurate amount of resources must also mirror it. It must be recognized that these efforts require long-term financial and policy commitments to see them through. At the same time, the raising of standards requires us, the faculty, to rethink our students. We tend to believe that they will not respond to these challenges but, as the Chancellor pointed out when he stopped by our meeting, it is essential that our students do. The global marketplace is more than a cliché – it is reality – and we, the City Colleges of Chicago, need to respond much sooner rather than later to these very dynamic changes. To that end Chancellor Watson gave us two assignments. The first is to read Thomas Friedman's The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (I'm certain he's assigned it to you as well). The other is to examine requiring a second language for graduation in light of our ever-flattening world. Of course, as a language teacher, I'm all for it but at the meeting we recognized that it would be quite a difficult task to accomplish.

Nonetheless, it can be done under the framework of shared governance..., which brings me to nursing. We need to disentangle and refocus our collective energies. We have already seen shared governance in action with the success of Project Align. It was spearheaded by an administration that had vision and resources and supported by faculty whose expertise was consulted and integrated. Project Align is the best example of shared governance: trust had been established and the sincerity of participation was genuine. Everyone bought in and, most importantly, there was open and honest communication from top to bottom and vice versa.

So I'm wondering why this same model cannot be utilized to resolve the nursing situation. You have talented leaders here at District and experienced faculty from every campus willing to do what it takes for our students. However, when I speak with nursing faculty, distrust and suspicion are foremost in their minds. I urge everyone involved to step back from the proverbial brink and begin a district-wide dialog among nursing faculty and administration for the sake of the students and the institution.

We should also consider perception versus reality, which, as we're all aware, prevails more often than not. And it is the *perception* of what may or may not happen that dominates the discourse irrespective of motive. During the January 2005 Board meeting, the "Sunset Policy and Procedures" resolution was adopted in response to APSA: the Annual Programs and Services Analysis. Now, I know that it was adopted in anticipation of the cancellation of numerous never-used and antiquated programs. However I would like to read a portion of it that raises red flags and affects perception:

The inactivation or withdrawal date reported to the ICCB will serve as the "sunset date." It is the date selected by the college(s) which complies with ICCB Administrative Rules which states as follows: "...the College must inactivate the program by not enrolling any additional new students and develop a plan for an orderly discontinuation of the program for students currently enrolled."

The intention of the administration may be to revitalize the nursing programs at Kennedy-King and Olive-Harvey but the perception as outlined in the sunset policy and the actions currently being taken seem to belie this. A written declaration clearly indicating the intention of the CCC regarding the Kennedy-King and Olive-Harvey Nursing Programs would do much to reduce tensions.

My final point is in the form of a question that perhaps can be answered more in-depth at the next Board of Trustees meeting. I ask this question in the spirit of openness: How have the nursing program resources changed at Kennedy-King and Olive-Harvey in the ten years from 1995 to 2005? We should not look backwards to find blame but rather apply constructive analysis in order to not repeat mistakes and fix the current situation.

I believe that we as an institution are still seeking reconciliation in the aftermath of a severely disjointed year. We need to continue building trust and searching for avenues that will allow us to align ourselves to produce proper relationships.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Lakin
President, FCCC