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FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting
Thursday, May 5, 2005

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

My name is Todd Lakin. I am the newly elected President of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago for the academic year 2005-2006. Joining me this morning are the other members of the executive committee: Keith McCoy, Vice President and, continuing as Secretary, Julius Nadas, both of whom are faculty members at Wright College. I have confidence in the new Faculty Council leadership, a blend of faculty both young and ... experienced.

Before saying a few words about myself, I would like to thank Polly Hoover for her six years of service to the Faculty Council, the last two of which she served as President. She is taking a much-deserved sabbatical after a tumultuous year. She has earned this time to research, write and develop new courses for the City Colleges. Her love is Humanities and the Classics and no doubt her sabbatical year will be fruitful. In fact, we expect to see flawless syllabi from her in September 2006 when she comes before the Council to present her new courses for approval. I also want to thank former Vice President Bev Anderson from Malcolm X and we wish her well as she focuses her energies on strengthening the Nursing program.

In a few short weeks I will have completed my seventh year in the City Colleges at Daley College. I grew up thirty miles west of Chicago in St. Charles. After high school, rather than go directly to college, I spent a year in Spain as an exchange student where, unbeknownst to me at the time, I would discover my career choice: Spanish. I attended Elgin Community College and earned an Associate of Art degree, then transferred to Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa where I graduated with a B.A. in Spanish and continued my education at the University of Kansas in Lawrence where I earned my Masters in Latin American Studies.

I always mention my Associate degree from Elgin. My experiences at E.C.C. formed my strong belief in the ideal and the promise of the community college. My extensive travels have only reinforced my belief that the community college is a uniquely American phenomenon -- it is ours and we should be proud of it. It embodies the American ideal of meritocracy. Early on I knew that I wanted to be a professor in the community college.

So now I'm living my dream as a teacher, a builder, and a scholar. As a teacher and a builder I continue to create new learning opportunities for Daley's students. One example is my tenure portfolio project, which won both national and state recognition for Daley College. I also reorganized and expanded the foreign language offerings with high academic standards to meet the growing needs of our diverse community. And as a scholar I keep myself up-to-date on current academic trends and explore new vehicles to improve the curriculum. Last summer I was awarded a grant from the prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities. During the intensive six-week institute, I and twenty-three other scholars traveled to Mexico and the U.S. Southwest to examine cultural links between the Aztec and the Native American cultures. I have brought that experience to my classroom and although it sounds like a cliché, those six weeks

last summer not only broadened my horizons but also strengthened my connection with Latino students. Over these next twelve months I think you will discover that I am an optimist with a dose of skepticism but overall I think that you'll find me to be a fair, reasonable and direct person who thrives on solving problems.

So let's cut to the chase. The strike is still present --- yet today I still wonder why every decision, big and small, must lead to a fight. I asked this question to a friend who has been through a strike or two and his response to me was blunt: "A strike is a declaration of war in which the rules of the game change, feelings are hurt - and stay hurt - and emotions, which are raw, do not heal easily. Even though the war is officially over, the battles continue."

I am not here today nor will my presidency be about reliving or belaboring the actions that occurred leading up to, during and after the strike. I do not wish to focus on right and wrong, lies and innuendos, or which side won. Quite frankly, and without hyperbole, we are at a tipping point and how we, the faculty and administration, move forward will determine whether the CCC remains the positive agent of change that it should be --- or becomes irrelevant. Unfortunately those who are caught in the middle of the fray are the ones most harmed by the win-at-all-costs strategies that seemingly benefit a narrow minority at the expense of a much larger majority: the students.

We have an opportunity after all these months of acrimony, distrust and working against one another to begin anew or, at the very least, declare *détente*. Some *one* or some *body* must take that first step to reestablish trust in the faculty-administration relationship, not for our own sake and sanity but for the students who desperately need and deserve a top quality education. The boundaries are shrinking even though the city's population is growing. We have direct competition from Moraine Valley, Triton, Harper and colleges not even in our state because of web-based courses and degrees. Unless we provide an educational environment superior to these suburban and far-flung schools, we will not have any CCC left to fight for.

Lately the buzzword bandied about has been "*Shared Governance*," whose concept is great: everyone within the organization has a stake in its success from top to bottom and bottom to top. Shared governance succeeds, though, when trust has been established and the sincerity of participation is genuine and where honest and open disagreements not only exist but are valued in order to seek out the best solutions for the student and for the institution. Shared governance can be more than a buzzword provided that it does not seek out winners and losers and, most importantly, the voices of the faculty, professionals and staff carry equal weight with administration. Declaring that you believe in shared governance does not make it so. Only through concrete actions and tangible results will it become a reality.

Finally, please indulge me. As a Spanish teacher, I must point out that today is *El Cinco de Mayo*, an often misunderstood Mexican and Mexican-American holiday. Many think that it is to celebrate Mexican independence (which is actually September 16th). In reality, it is a celebration of the Mexican spirit: at the battle of Puebla in 1862 an overwhelmed and undermanned Mexican army routed the French army. They may have won that battle but the Mexicans eventually lost the war and France occupied Mexico for five more years.

Perhaps we, too, at the City Colleges, are feeling besieged these days, under funded and attacked. Take heart, though: Mexico eventually prevailed through its will and spirit. Working together the City Colleges can, too.

I look forward to more of these conversations.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Lakin
President, FCCCC