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MAY 4, 2006**RICHARD J. DALEY COLLEGE**

ONE OF THE CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO

FCCCC President's Address  
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting  
Thursday, May 4, 2006

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

Today marks my one-year anniversary as Faculty Council President. It seems hard to believe how quickly one year has passed – and what a year.

On behalf of Faculty Council, I would also like to congratulate the first place Radiologic Technology team from Malcolm X College. You do the City Colleges of Chicago proud.

At the most recent Executive Committee meeting, EVC Lewis informed us that, effective Summer 2006, students who cannot demonstrate the ability to write or read at the English 101 level will only be allowed to enroll in a very limited number of college-level courses such as Art, Photography and Introduction to Microcomputers. The underlying assumption is that, since nearly all our college-level courses require writing essays, compositions and research papers, if a student is unable to write at the college level then the student's chance for failure is greater.

Initially it seemed like a good idea but, after mulling it over and discussing it with colleagues, I have to say that I am opposed to this plan, not because of its intended goal but because of its unintended consequences on the students.

First, we need hard data to measure. We all have anecdotal evidence but I think we need to examine success rates and track students in the pre-credit programs who are also taking college-level courses and compare them to students who are English 101-eligible before deciding to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

Secondly, I am not confident that our pre-credit writing and reading program is up to this monumental task as it currently exists. I cannot speak for the other colleges but at Daley College none of the instructors in the pre-college program are full-time and there is constant turnover in leadership positions. Whatever plan exists is ever-changing with dismal results. I think we need to be brutally honest about this program that we euphemistically call "pre-credit" or "remedial" or the "New Learning Academy:" it's high school redux. We have high school graduates, many from the Chicago Public Schools, who are not college-ready, either in math or in English and reading skills or both.

A recent *Sun-Times* report noted the difficulties that CPS graduates have finishing college in five years in large part due to their under preparedness for college. We recognize that problem and realize that simply blaming CPS is not the answer. With that in mind the City Colleges is addressing this problem in Project Align, spearheaded by AVC Aybar. As I've noted in previous addresses, Project Align is an ambitious program to streamline the CPS math and English curriculum with the City Colleges and other university partners so that CPS graduates are able to enter college as true freshman. Project Align is an excellent, long-term solution that, in theory,

will lead to less and less pre-college courses. However, we will not begin to benefit from Project Align for a few more years.

So, what about the short term? There's a saying in Spanish that roughly translates to, "You don't begin to build a house with the roof." And that's the essence of the problem. We are setting ourselves up for failure by not strengthening our foundation. We need to completely rethink and revamp not only the pre-credit program but also the delivery method before moving forward with any drastic measures. It is essential that we figure out exactly *what* is "pre-credit" and how it fits into the City Colleges. The staff that teaches in the "pre-credit" program is non-tenured, non full-time instructors who do not have to have the same degeered credentials as faculty. What's their investment in the success of the system? I find it hard to believe that we're eliminating Adult Educators from our ESL programs when we desperately need them to prepare ESL students for colleges. As a language teacher, I can certify that the best language teaching is done in context. This has been practiced for the past three decades yet we teach our writing courses, even at the English 101 level, as separate, stand-alone courses whereas they need to be integrated into other academic courses, similar to, but not exactly like writing across the curriculum.

Once again, the spirit of the decision is correct: students need to have the proper skill set in order to succeed. Is there a problem? Yes. Is this the answer? No. But simply doing "something" for the sake of doing it does not address the underlying problem. Before drastically altering our prerequisites in mid-stream with this decision, we need to have the proper foundation solidly in place.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Lakin, President, FCCCC