



RICHARD J. DALEY COLLEGE

ONE OF THE CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 508
NOVEMBER 9, 2006

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting
Thursday, November 9, 2006

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

First, I would like to congratulate President Roberson. I had an opportunity to get to know her at the Salzburg Seminar this past summer and, based on that experience, I believe that she'll "do right by" Olive-Harvey College.

This week and next is chock full of activities for the CCC. Tomorrow is the long-anticipated "No Boundaries" conference at Malcolm X College. Nearly 200 faculty, staff and students have signed up to participate and, with the agenda and speakers set, it promises to be enlightening and enriching. I look forward to it. And this coming Monday and Tuesday, representatives from the *Universidad de Salamanca* (where the Chancellor studied this summer) are going to be visiting the CCC to meet with Spanish-language faculty and prospective students who will be going to Salamanca, Spain, to participate in an intensive language program this coming June.

The other activity that has consumed the CCC this past week has not been as public as the "No Boundaries" conference or the visit from the Salamanca people but certainly will have a greater effect on the long-term sustainability of the CCC: the tenure portfolio. Around this time every year across the district the non-tenured faculty hired in the summer or fall submit a portfolio for evaluation to either receive a second- or third-year contract renewal or tenure. I went through it, as have most of my colleagues who have been in the system for the past fifteen years or so. However, speaking to them and having experienced it myself, I can categorically state that the tenure portfolio process as it is currently designed is not meaningful and it is leading to a decline in faculty morale that ultimately has a negative impact on the institution and, most importantly, our students.

This is not to say that a portfolio isn't a *good* idea. On the contrary, best-practice evidence indicates that a well-designed *teaching portfolio* becomes a collection of materials that document a professor's teaching goals, strengths, and accomplishments. Most significantly, a teaching portfolio enhances teaching. However, the City Colleges' portfolio program tends to have a minimal impact on teaching quality.

For instance:

- CCC portfolios have required elements that serve to justify bureaucratic demands for accountability that are not linked to effective teaching. Often times it seems that it is more important to verify that a piece of paper is included behind every required tab than what is actually on that piece of paper.
- CCC portfolios are poorly designed. For example, faculty are required to submit the same materials in multiple places within the same binder - isn't once enough?
- CCC portfolios are excessively long and difficult to evaluate. Take my first portfolio from 1998. Each successive one only became thicker with more paper. Multiply this portfolio times 50 (for just one class) and you'll see that the reading and evaluation of

portfolios is a daunting task. As a result, constructive evaluation is nearly impossible and faculty rarely receive formal feedback by administrators who, themselves, are often overwhelmed by the process. At Daley most recently an administrator visited a first-year faculty member's class to evaluate his teaching. She arrived twenty minutes late and only stayed for fifteen minutes. And now she's going to write a fair evaluation based on a fifteen-minute visit?

- CCC portfolios have evolved into a burden that consumes an excessive amount of a new faculty member's time. Rather than focus on teaching the students, becoming familiar with the culture at their campuses and establishing collegial relationships, new faculty are more concerned about filling up the binder and its numerous sections with pieces of paper that have *nothing* to do with their teaching ability and everything to do with bureaucracy.
- CCC portfolios are inconsistent across the district. What is acceptable at one institution is not at another. This leads to confusion and resentment.

In addition to the cumbersome portfolio requirements, of major concern to faculty is the selection and approval of what the CCC has termed the "research/paper project." This emphasis on research is troubling – especially at a community college – where teaching should be the major focus. Our very own ad campaign stresses that, while many CCC faculty could teach anywhere, they have chosen to teach at the City Colleges of Chicago. They have made this choice for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because they love to teach. Rather than encouraging and promoting the teaching mission of the CCC, they are obligated to complete research papers along the line of a Master's thesis. These research papers do little to benefit departments, colleges, or the district – much less enhance the teaching abilities of our new faculty.

Nearly all non-tenured faculty at Daley College have had multiple proposals for topics rejected by administration despite the fact that many of these proposals have been reviewed and approved by faculty, department chairs and two "Illinois Professors of the Year." Yet, no feedback regarding what needs to be changed to gain administrative approval is provided. Remarks on the proposals simply state, "more thinking is required." One of my new colleagues has a PhD in psychology, has been published and sits on the editorial board of a peer-reviewed journal yet his research-based project proposal has been rejected.

The CCC tenure manual requirements state:

"A tenure contract will not be recommended unless the faculty member, in addition to meeting all other requirements, satisfactorily completes a research paper or project that has been approved in advance. **By the end of the first year of employment** all topics for papers or projects must receive prior approval from the local college administrator responsible for the faculty member's evaluation" (emphasis added).

The CCC's very own policy contradicts the current practice of requiring research project proposals before the end of the first semester, not at the "end of the first year of employment." However, first-year faculty have been told that this must be accomplished prior to the end of the first semester and included in their tenure portfolio or otherwise their contract will not be renewed. Where in this entire process are we attempting to enhance the teaching effectiveness of the new faculty?

It is no secret that the City Colleges suffers from a poor public image. The CCC is frequently referred to as "last chance U." Nonetheless, our new faculty are impressive. Many

hold PhDs and have already made significant contributions to their disciplines. These faculty should be encouraged to engage in projects which directly impact our students and community while improving the image of the CCC. My own tenure project, titled: “¡Amigos! Enhancing Cross-Cultural Learning in the Urban Community College,” was a simple yet effective concept that united English as a Second Language student volunteers with Spanish language students, bridging two different communities (college credit and adult education) within the same college. Additionally, you are all familiar with the work Professor Connie Mixon has done in Political Science and the attention she has brought to civic education. Her tenure project resulted in the CCC’s participation in the Model Illinois Government program that raised City College’s image and the role it plays in the political process. Currently at Harold Washington an art teacher’s tenure project involves creating a student artwork portfolio capstone project to be used for submission to either galleries or for admittance to a four-year university’s art program. These practical projects are much more worthy and beneficial to the City Colleges than esoteric research papers that will sit on a shelf and do nothing to improve our institutional status, public image, quality of teaching or service to our local community.

One of the key components of a teaching portfolio is a “philosophy of a teaching statement” prepared by the faculty member. This statement enables portfolio evaluators to judge how well instructors are meeting individual and institutional goals. Moreover, simply reflecting on why and what one does in the classroom is likely to improve teaching. Faculty should be encouraged to utilize the teaching portfolio to demonstrate their creativity. Unfortunately, this key component of a teaching portfolio is not included in the portfolio requirements. Instead, instructors submit copies of agendas from every meeting they have attended. Does attending “x” number of meetings result in good teaching?

The current structure belies the importance of the tenure process and the long-term effects on the institution. Awarding tenure to a faculty member *is* serious business and *we* must get it right to ensure the vitality and longevity of our organization.

The Faculty Council recognizes this and, in the spirit of shared governance, proposes that we, the faculty and administration, form a committee to remake the tenure portfolio process one of *purposeful* activities that stresses teaching, first and foremost. Faculty who have been identified as “model teachers” in addition to administrators should evaluate portfolios. First-year faculty should be allotted two semesters to discover a tenure project that will enhance their classroom and their teaching. Ten weeks is entirely too short to put forth a thoughtful proposal. New faculty should not have to concern themselves with multiple committees in order to fill up a binder but rather one so that they can begin to integrate themselves into the academic life of the institution while still maintaining focus on why they’re there: teaching. Finally, new faculty should be mentored by and shadow master teachers at their institutions to learn from the best to be the best.

Once again, I want to reiterate that we are not against a tenure portfolio. We are, however, against the current set-up and urge you to consider revamping the procedures to ensure that the City Colleges of Chicago fairly evaluates the new faculty it hires.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Lakin, President, FCCCC