



**RICHARD J. DALEY COLLEGE**  
ONE OF THE CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO

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FCCCC President's Address  
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting  
Thursday, May 03, 2007

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

Before jumping in to the heart of the matter, I have some 'nuts and bolts' news. At the last Faculty Council meeting of the year on April 18, I was re-elected to serve as the Faculty Council President for a third and final year. Keith McCoy was re-elected as Vice President and Julius Nadas was re-appointed Secretary. New members were introduced and we commended Ron Thompson, from Daley College, for his outstanding work as the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, a thankless but necessary job. He made my job so much easier and he will be difficult to replace. He plans on spending his last year focusing on teaching and writing his dissertation. Our next Faculty Council meeting will be the Faculty Council Retreat on August 18<sup>th</sup>. We hope that some of you will be able to attend to meet the Faculty Council.

On April 16 a mentally disturbed student killed thirty-two people on the campus of Virginia Tech before killing himself. By all accounts a number of his English professors and the English Dept. had noticed his erratic and moody behavior and had referred him to the Dean of Students office and campus security. While university officials were acting within the guidelines of state law and Virginia Tech campus policy, unfortunately, it was not enough to prevent this tragedy. There are a number of factors involved in this case: gun control, gun ownership, mental illness, individual rights and violence in society. Each of these issues alone is worthy of a three-hundred page white paper so I won't delve into them today. However, at our final Faculty Council meeting, we wondered how our system would respond to a similar tragedy.

If it were to happen, the standard procedure would be to call in crisis counselors (generally from the Red Cross) who would be available immediately to assist students, faculty and staff in need. We realized, though, that we have no system in place beyond the immediate crisis. In many instances a delayed reaction is very common, including anxiety, survivor's guilt, stress, depression and aggressive behavior. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder sufferers may experience emotional numbness or withdrawal from themselves or others such that they lose interest in usual activities (social, work, school). Some individuals may exhibit symptoms including having difficulty concentrating or having difficulty sleeping. PTSD manifests itself in many forms and can ultimately lead to alcohol and drug abuse long after the traumatizing event occurred.

Shortly after the shootings I heard an alarming statistic: nationally, there is one counselor to every 1,700 students on college and university campuses across the country. The American Counseling Association recommends, at the maximum, a ratio of 1:800. Of course, at the City Colleges of Chicago, there is no ratio. We have no counselors.

It will be five years at the end of this semester since the Counselors were fired and replaced with the current system utilizing College Advisors. At the time, we were told, it was to increase the number of advisors for students and that the Counselors had outlived their usefulness. The Chancellor is quoted in an article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on April 12, 2002, stating, "But over time, like a lot of community colleges, our student population has changed drastically. ... We are educating many more adult students, work-force-development

has changed drastically. ... We are educating many more adult students, work-force-development students, students that just don't fit into the credit mold. ... Our counselors had not kept up with the times." (<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i31/31a03001.htm>)

Chairman Tyree echoed the Chancellor in the same article stating, "We're a college. We're not running a mental-health institution."

I do agree that we are not a mental-health institution but we have to acknowledge that we have students, credit and non-credit, adult, non-traditional as well as traditional, who have mental health needs. The current College Advisor description reads, "CCC's College Advisors assist students with program planning, course selection, career exploration, college selection and job placement." No where is there a mention of mental health assistance.

The current plan for a student with mental health issues is to refer him or her to the City of Chicago's Dept. of Health and Human Services. Once there, if the need is not immediate, i.e., exhibiting suicidal tendencies, then the student can expect to wait six to eight weeks to see a staff counselor who himself is more than likely overworked. In the meantime, we risk losing that student who, in most instances, is depressed, feeling overwhelmed and stressed out and needs to talk to someone about his or her problems.

I can remember when I was at the University of Kansas, feeling depressed, overwhelmed and stressed out and needed to speak to someone about my problems. Fortunately for me, I was able to see a counselor within a day who helped me work through some of the issues that I was experiencing and kept me on track to complete my Masters. Before seeing her I was seriously considering dropping out. How many students in the City Colleges have the same needs but, unlike me, do not have access to counseling services? How many have we lost in the past five years? Our current system seems to be penny wise and pound foolish.

Susan Eubanks, the former associate executive director of the National Board for Certified Counselors, stated in the same *Chronicle* article, "The trend should be bolstering the number of people who are certified to handle the kinds of problems that students at urban community colleges are probably more likely to be dealing with..."

We advocate a two-tiered system that all of our suburban community colleges have: counselors *and* college advisors. Both would assist in career and program planning and both would help coordinate the newly recreated "College Success Seminar" that is being piloted this summer at four campuses. Additionally, the counselors would be required to have a Masters degree like before and would assist the so-called walking wounded in our system. They would work with outside agencies to coordinate treatment, if necessary, and help students navigate their insurance policies. Most importantly, they would be on campus and available to help students in need.

The current set-up is not viable and needs to reflect reality. All of us would hate for anything remotely similar to the Virginia Tech shootings to happen here. Nonetheless, the shootings have spurred campuses across the country to reassess their policies and plans to help prevent such a tragedy.

Let's be proactive and not reactive. Bring back counseling services.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Lakin  
President, FCCCC