

FCCCC President's Address  
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting  
Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Chairman Cabrera, Chancellor Hyman, members of the Board, Officers of the District, faculty, staff and all others present, Good morning.

A new day, a new Board of Trustees, new Presidents of the Colleges and a new Faculty Council Executive Board. New leadership all around.

My name is Polly Hoover and I am the new President of Faculty Council. I have thought a lot about what needed to be said in my initial address to the Board: should I include specific initiatives, faculty challenges, the goals of Faculty Council or the specific issues of our last meeting? All are topics appropriate for this forum. After much thought, I wanted the first address to be positive and to signal the faculty's willingness to collaborate in improving the City Colleges -- with some clarifications.

What I will not be discussing in depth in this address is the erroneous reports in the media that enrollment is down. Using the District Office's own data, total unduplicated headcount (without the military enrollment) has risen from 114,365 in 2006 to 127,517 in 2010. At my home college, Wright, we have seen an increase in enrollment of about 4,000 students, 2,000 of whom are career credit students, and we have little physical place to put them.

Nor am I going to discuss the problematic 7% graduation rate bandied about in various forums. This number is problematic for a number of reasons, not the least that it reflects data that only captures those students who complete their degree in limited time, not, as the vast majority of our students do, the students who take twice as long to complete their work at the community college, who are part-time students, and who may not be graduating in the traditional sense but transferring to other institutions, opting-in and opting-out.

Even the U.S. Department of Education's Committee on Measures of Student Success, which published its draft recommendations on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011, acknowledges how problematic the IPEDS measures are for students in the two-year cycle and recommends eleven changes, including, and I quote, "us(ing) the IPEDS Graduation Rates 200 (GR200) Survey as a vehicle for expanded and reframed outcomes reporting for two-year institutions," "includ(ing) part-time, degree-seeking cohorts in the GR200 tracking domain," "identify(ing) remedial and non-remedial cohorts," and "allow(ing) for an independent and discrete reporting of outcomes for awards and transfers; not report(ing) using a hierarchy." (Working Group on Progression and Completion Measures, Draft Recommendations, May 27<sup>th</sup> 2011, accessed June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011). I will talk at a later date in greater detail about these recommendations and why this 7% number doesn't even begin to capture student success at the City Colleges. Can we do better? Absolutely.

Should we use this measure alone? No; the metrics don't reflect the reality of community college student success.

Nor am I going to discuss the profound disappointment shared by the faculty concerning the process by which the new administration has chosen the new presidents and this process' reflection on the erosion in shared governance. I am also not going to talk today about academic freedom and the administrative encroachment into academic areas that we've undergone this past year. Those topics will be for other addresses.

Today, I want to focus on the faculty's role in student success.

I come from a long line of educators: some of my grandparents were teachers; my father was a college professor of forty years; and I've taught humanities for almost thirty years at a variety of institutions, including the University of Chicago, the University of Wisconsin, and the Ohio State University, as well as the City Colleges. Like many of my colleagues, I have multiple degrees, having earned two master's degrees and a doctorate. Like many of my colleagues, I am engaged in my discipline: I consult for the National Endowment for the Humanities; I present papers and workshops in my field; and I serve on a number of statewide and national educational committees, including the Illinois Articulation Initiative Steering Committee.

Recently, I was asked to address students from the University of Chicago who were interested in teaching at the community college level. The event was standing room only and most of the students stayed longer than the two hour allotted time. I was not, however, particularly encouraging because I presented the realities of teaching at a community college. Most jobs now are part-time adjunct positions. The pay is poor and the benefits are eroding, even if one is lucky enough to get a full-time position. The work is demanding and the paperwork bottomless. The challenges of teaching do not diminish with experience; they merely change. And we are in a cultural and historical period that devalues education and demonizes educators.

So, why do we do it? In a word, students. This is not a service industry; students are not our clients who, if the philosophy class doesn't please them, cannot return it for an economics class or another philosophy class. We don't pour information into the students' heads and call it teaching. No, for a student to be successful, for a student to walk out of the classroom with the tools to think more creatively and critically, with the tools to be able to conceptualize the problem, to provide multiple solutions to the problem, and to address possible counterarguments, we must engage that student, challenge her assumptions and knowledge (and our own), and coax, push, entice, collaborate with, and finally teach the student. And in this effort, we all learn; we all grow into more thoughtful adults.

And the challenges are great: we live with an economy that keeps us all up at night; an educational system that rewards glib memorization, not deep understanding; political

divisiveness and a legislature that wants to make curriculum decisions; and economic and social demands that distract us all. But the rewards are even greater, especially for our students. And that is why we do this job, why we teach. We are on the frontlines and in the trenches working to help our students succeed because their success is our success, and our success is their success.

And so we support the goals of the reinvention, if they reflect a nuanced understanding of the complexities of the issues. But the faculty have been here before; we've undergone waves of reforms with little substantive change. The low hanging fruit isn't always the ripest. The quick win is often a superficial fix. Consequently, we are profoundly skeptical and cautious when confronted with the new best thing. We hope that this is a brave new world; we fear that this is Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Hoover

President of FC4