

FCCCC President's Address  
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting  
Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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

The Higher Learning Commission Conference has just ended in Chicago, and for this board report, I will piggyback on some of the national issues debated at that conference because they mirror the wider issues of our own faculty.

On the national level, we've seen some welcome movement on the completion agenda, from a move away from an emphasis on graduation as a marker for student success in the credit division to focus on transfer rates and a concomitant acknowledgement that community colleges serve more than just students who want to go to a four-year college.

Indeed, both the recommendations for changes in the IPEDs reporting (which haven't accurately captured 20 to 40% of our students) and new data from the National Student Clearinghouse (which shows that 43% of all transfers are students transferring to the two-year institutions, even from four-year institutions) clearly indicate the complexity of determining appropriate metrics for our student success. And as the deputy director of the IBHE, Bob Blankenberger, suggested in an HLC session, the completion agenda, complex enrollment trends and lack of funding problematize oversight, as well.

At the City Colleges, we have begun to address some of these issues with the Key Performance Indicators Committee, which completed its first stage in February. The committee has produced a dashboard that allows for nuanced reporting of metrics to illustrate our success in four categories, and we are at the forefront of comparable institutions across the nation in the integration of administration and faculty toward a common goal and in Illinois in considering a GECC (General Education Core Curriculum) credential for our students who intend to transfer to four-year institutions. It is a good start, but it is merely a beginning.

But faculty at the City Colleges are also not alone in their concerns about some of the curricular proposals that emphasize workforce development and jobs that offer little social mobility. In a policy report published two days ago by the Center for the Future of Higher Education, the authors, echoing many of the worries articulated by our faculty, find that "community colleges are *rebooting* their curriculums to put more emphasis on narrow job training and *workforce development* and less on broad liberal arts and sciences education necessary for continuing on for a Bachelor's degree. By focusing on providing short-term certificates in response to the immediate needs of the corporate private sector rather than on educating students for transfer to a four-year school, community colleges are seriously narrowing their educational purpose."

The report goes on: “Traditionally, our community colleges have been critical portals of entry to higher education for underserved students. They enroll high proportions of Latino/a, African American, and Native American students and high proportion of students from lower-income and working class families. It is these students whose futures are being compromised by recent enrollment and curricular trends that are refocusing community college on a narrower range of students and educational goals.” (Executive Summary, [http://futureofhighered.org/uploads/ClosingTheDoorFINAL\\_ALL32812.pdf](http://futureofhighered.org/uploads/ClosingTheDoorFINAL_ALL32812.pdf))

These are our students and these are our concerns.

These are all issues in a national dialogue with much wider implications and raise questions such as: For whom do we educate and why? What are the long-term consequences of a movement toward relying solely on quantitative measures without the nuance of qualitative assessments? Who regulates oversight: private sector industry, Illinois Board of Higher Education, or the Department of Education and how is that regulation manifest? I don’t know, and in this period of change, it’s not clear that anyone knows. But without these discussions, I do know that we won’t serve our students well.

As a side note, the FC4 meets for its last meeting of the year at the end of the month; at that point, we will vote on a new president, and I hope that you will have a new voice of the faculty who will bring pertinent issues to the table.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Hoover

President of FC4