

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday December 10, 2015

Chairman Middleton, Chancellor Hyman, members of the Board, good morning. I am happy to be here today to deliver this report on behalf of Faculty Council.

We've been in the news a lot lately, Chicago. Amidst the swirling, often upsetting news coverage, our city is rhetorically being referred to as "A Tale of Two Cities." Here we are downtown, across the street from one of the most famous skyscrapers in the world. We can easily walk to the world-class Millennium Park from here, and enjoy the view of our magnificent lake, or Buckingham Fountain. Chicago can be beautiful. Go to the Shedd Aquarium on a summer night and enjoy the view while listening to live Jazz. It's a truly beautiful city.

Then there's the other Chicago. That Chicago is most certainly not a popular tourist attraction. In fact, the average Chicago visitor will leave here with a completely different impression of our city than the one many of us know to also be true. The "other" Chicago has more than 50 schools that have been closed, young children who wait more than a year to receive dental care, homeless people that live in camps under viaducts, and mental health clinics that are shuttered despite a desperate need for their services.

Chicago is in the news, nationally and internationally. These days especially, people around the country and the world can see for themselves the disparity that exists here, the disparity that longtime residents of this city have known (whether we wanted to look at it or not) for a long time.

Some people who live in Chicago don't know very much about the City Colleges of Chicago and the important role we play in this city. I have always bragged about what

we do: we provide educational access for adults of any age, the most affordable higher education opportunity in the city. We offer any resident of this city the chance to learn something new, to meet new people, to “reinvent” their lives at any age! Anyone in this city, and this includes immigrants, low-income residents, and people with disabilities, can come to their local City College and begin or resume their college career. We offer a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance and on and on, for anyone who wants to try to make a change in their life, pick up a new skill, or just try to do things a little differently. A person who once dropped out of high-school can decide to get their GED and begin to take classes for college credit. Students who already have degrees can come to the City Colleges for a career change or for personal development with an art or language class. Our students may be juggling difficult circumstances, such as working full-time while trying to attend school, or family responsibilities. We do our best to accommodate and educate all of our students, including so-called “non-traditional” learners. What we do, what we contribute to this city, is remarkable and it is your faculty and staff that do these remarkable things every day. This is important. It MATTERS.

Given the controversy we have been living through in Chicago, it seems lovely and positive and wonderful and important that the City Colleges are available to serve the diverse communities Chicago. I have begun to see that our classrooms are often a bright light – a safe space – in what can be a very messy and dangerous city. This is important and IT MATTERS. It makes faculty incredibly proud to serve such an important function- public education for anyone and everyone! This happens everyday when faculty come to work and so we are upset and confused that vibrant programs at many of our colleges are being closed in the name of “consolidation.” In October, Faculty Council

conducted an anonymous survey for all full and part time faculty. In the open-comments section, faculty wrote about their concerns about “consolidation” more than 65 times.

Why would you close programs? Why would you take away positive educational opportunities for the people of Chicago? The Chicago away from the glimmering skyline and Museum Campus need **more** educational opportunities, not less!

That brings me back to the idea that Chicago is “A Tale of Two Cities.” What if instead of perpetuating this disparity, the City Colleges of Chicago commit to continue to support our stated mission? Stop the consolidations! Keep the “community” in our community colleges! Your faculty are committed to this mission and we want to believe that our district leaders are as well. The city, the nation, and the world are watching us now. Let’s be on the right side of Chicago history.

This concludes my report. I thank you for your time today.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Alexander on behalf of the
Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago