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COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 508
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“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

-William Butler Yeats

FCCCC President’s Address

CCC Board of Trustees Meeting

Thursday May 7, 2015

Chair Wolff, Chancellor Hyman, Members of the Board, Officers of the District, and all others present: Good Morning.

My name is Jennifer Alexander, and I am the new Faculty Council President. It is an honor and a privilege to stand before you today. When I began planning my report for today, I reflected on how overwhelming this responsibility could be. Then I realized that we all want the same thing. We all want what is best for our students and the communities that we serve every day. And so I am very excited to have this opportunity to work collaboratively with you towards our shared goals, moving forward.

I would like to take this moment to thank our outgoing President Craan for his service. I would also like to congratulate and welcome our new Student Trustee, Eliana Blancas. Thank you for serving our students! Additionally, please allow me to introduce and welcome the new Vice President of Faculty Council, Jennifer Meresman. Professor Meresman is a member of the English Department at Harold Washington College and is also the Tenure Assistance Program (TAP) Coordinator for the district. I am already impressed with her thoughtfulness, intelligence and professionalism.

I would now like to introduce myself to those here who do not know me. I became a certified early childhood teacher in 1996, when I graduated from DePaul University. Teaching is my passion. It is an art, and a science. I am so proud that I have been a teacher for almost 20 years- my earliest preschool students are now graduating college!

I joined the Child Development faculty at Richard J. Daley College in 2007. My students take classes with me to learn how to work professionally with young children. Informally I call myself a “teacher-teacher.” My students are incredibly diverse in both their talents and their cultural backgrounds. In any given class, as many as half of my students are English language learners. I am fortunate to work with the same students in multiple classes and over semesters and years. We develop meaningful relationships and I am so proud to see their growth.

You see, building relationships is what teachers do, and relationships only exist within communities. I know from my years of experience at Daley College that “community” is essential to student learning and retention and we experience community in our classrooms as well. I have witnessed many examples of students helping each other to persevere in their coursework despite numerous personal obstacles. They help each other get to school, complete their homework, learn how to register online, learn how to use PowerPoint... the list goes on and on. As you know, one of the goals of the reinvention initiative is increased “retention”, and to accomplish this goal community must always be considered.

In 2014, on behalf of the Child Development Department, I joined Saint Xavier University and Moraine Valley Community College in a collaborative effort, which has been grant-funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. We are working to ensure that all of our programs are aligned to state standards, and exploring ways that our City Colleges Child Development students can transfer to 4-year institutions. This month we learned that our grant has been funded for an additional year. This work has been very educational for me in my understanding of articulation, updating curriculum, and interpreting state and federal standards in teacher education. This ongoing collaboration is instrumental to increasing transfer options for our students.

Finally, I want to talk about another critical component to student success: faculty. The City Colleges of Chicago has an incredibly talented, dedicated and hard working faculty body. I am honored to represent them today, during Teacher Appreciation Week, as

Faculty Council President. I have been listening carefully to my fellow faculty members and certain themes have emerged. Faculty want to have a voice in the decision making process at both the college and district levels. This, of course, is the heart of shared governance. Not only do we want our voices to be heard, but we also want you, the administration of the City Colleges of Chicago, to see what we do! It's quite amazing, really. And so in closing I would like to invite you into our classrooms. Meet our students, and see us teach! My door is always open. Let's continue working together in shared governance.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer Alexander
Assistant Professor
Richard J. Daley College