

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday November 5, 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.

Thank you to everyone who spoke today during the public participation, I am so proud of my student Denise Garza and all of our part-time faculty who are fighting for a fair contract.

I would like to begin my address with a quote from the Philosopher and Educator John Dewey, who stated in 1895: "It is...advisable that the teacher should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered. He is not like a private soldier in an army, expected merely to obey, or like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit energy; he must be an intelligent medium of action."

Over the past several months, Faculty Council has asked again and again for District Officers to share data that supports recent changes being made throughout the district. For example, we have asked to know how our students' voices are being solicited and considered, or how faculty can have true, meaningful input before major decisions are made at District . We also want to know that District Officers have considered either positive or negative potential outcomes, especially for our students, in their decision-making process. These questions remain unanswered. And now, after all of these months, we have to ask: why? Why won't anyone at District Office provide us with any of the data or answers we have respectfully requested? Why not? Where is the transparency? Where is the data? Why can't we have an open and honest dialogue?

Faculty and impacted students are asking me these questions, now increasingly with frustration and anger, and I do not have the answers. Faculty, Professionals, Staff, Students, and even Administrators at our seven colleges, each in their own way, are experiencing uncertainty and fear about the future. What programs will we have? Why is District rushing to close high-quality, vibrant programs? What is going to happen to our

college after these programs are closed in the name of “consolidation”? Why are top-down decisions being made that make us feel an “us” (colleges) vs. “them” (district office) conflict? Many of us have been left to conclude that changes are being made in haste, without thoughtful consideration or dialogue with students, faculty, or communities. Again we ask: where is the transparency?

The seven Colleges that comprise this district are independently Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. As I am sure each of you is aware, The Higher Learning Commission has many criteria for Accreditation. Faculty are noticing discrepancies between where the district is heading, as compared to the stated criterion upon which HLC bases our accreditations. Three stand out as having direct applicability to our concerns.

First: Criterion 1A states, “The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.” As we have repeatedly stated in previous Board Addresses, faculty are very concerned that “consolidation” decisions undermine our overall mission to serve communities. We are asking for a response to this concern.

Secondly, Criterion 2B states, “The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.” We have asked before and are asking again: please: show us evidence that students, communities, or faculty have been engaged in meaningful dialogue PRIOR to major decisions being made. Otherwise, we are left to conclude that they have not been considered or consulted.

Third: Criterion 5B states, “The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.” When faculty are told, bluntly, that there is no room for discussion or compromise on program closures or other major changes, that we feel directly undermine our mission, then there is no evidence of “collaboration”.

Faculty did not dream up the idea of “shared governance”: rather, it is REQUIRED by HLC for our Accreditation. Further, a healthy academic institution should WANT to engage with faculty expertise and student experience. We don’t understand why faculty and students’ concerns are being dismissed.

That all having been said, I conclude today with good news! There is still time to reverse course! I am here to ask our Board, our Chancellor, and our District Officers who are here today to please slow down and think about what Faculty and students continue to implore of you. Please come to the table to discuss our deeply felt concerns about the proposed changes and closures that haven't yet happened. Please reconsider this top-down administrative-mandate style of governance and instead set up time to meet with faculty council representatives, other faculty and students in programs that are threatened with closure and actually discuss concerns and alternatives. Please.

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