

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday April 7, 2016

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.

Your faculty have been very busy this month working on behalf of our colleges and our students. Faculty from every college have volunteered to serve on committees with District Officers to plan Faculty Development week, and to explore possible Learning Management System vendors including Blackboard for an upcoming RFP. We continue to work on the ongoing Policy and Procedures Manual revisions as well.

After months of asking our Board of Trustees and Chancellor for a district-wide Town Hall, and having being denied this request, on Monday March 28th our Faculty, staff and students – in conjunction with our union - held our own Town Hall at Grace Church. Approximately 200 people attended this event, which lasted more than 2 and a half hours. Our Town Hall was an amazing success. You should have been there.

Speakers included union leaders, faculty and students. More than 30 people waited for their turn to speak during the public participation. I sincerely wish we could have hosted this event in conjunction with you, our Board of Trustees, District Officers and our Chancellor so that you could have heard all of the powerful messages that were shared at our Town Hall. I will do my best today to summarize the event for you.

Our audience included students, faculty, staff, families, community leaders and legislators including Aldermen and State Representatives.

Our theme: “Keep ‘Community’ in Our Community Colleges” – speaks to our strengths at the City Colleges of Chicago, all of the good that we do, and all that we add to our students’ lives and our communities.

However, many concerns were raised during our Town Hall.

I’m going to go off script here- I’d like to add that 3 of the students in the valedictorian presentation earlier today represent programs that are closing at those colleges- Auto tech at Truman, Nursing at Truman, and Child Development at Olive Harvey College. What would have happened to them? Where would they go?

I’ll return to my prepared comments now.

Faculty, staff and students talked about the fears we share over the loss of vital community programs in the name of so-called “consolidation.” We heard an eye-opening presentation about the importance of proximity for student success. We have spoken to you numerous times and at length about the disastrous impact closing programs has on students and communities, and we are increasingly frustrated that we have not received any answers.

Additionally, students who are now being disproportionately impacted with the new tuition structure- namely part-time and international students- discussed their experiences. If they could go to school full-time, and enjoy the benefits of the new tuition structure, they would. Many of our part-time students would LOVE to go to school full time and quit their jobs, but they can’t. Asking these students to pick up extra courses through the tuition “incentive”- and at the same time keep up with all of the challenges of their lives, which often include family responsibilities, transportation challenges and jobs; is an undue and impractical burden.

Speakers at the Town Hall discussed how District Office measures and advertises “success” and what that data leaves out. According to our current CCC metrics, and from what we see in the news and on posters at all of our colleges, the

conversation is all about “completions” such as graduation and certificate attainment. As my colleague discussed earlier today, this IPEDS data focuses on first-time, full-time students. Although we fully understand the importance and value of diplomas and certificates, we also know that these numbers leave out many other student success stories that highlight the value of our community college educational opportunities.

The Town Hall that we held on March 28th is very important and you all should be paying attention to what was said at the event and what this event symbolizes in the larger picture. We did it ourselves. We will not stop advocating for our students. We will not give up, throw up our hands and go home. Your faculty and staff are deeply concerned that we are abandoning our mission. If my report today sounds similar to what has been said to this Board over the past year, that is because our concerns remain unanswered. It is extremely frustrating that we have to go so far outside the City Colleges to address problems that could easily be handled internally through Shared Governance. How much energy is being used, and how much innovation has been lost, when we have to go so far to make our voices heard? We are talking to reporters, we are writing articles, and we will not stop. We want answers. We want Shared Governance. Board of Trustees: please open up the lines of communication and truly listen to ALL of the people who care about the City Colleges of Chicago. We have great collective, historical wisdom to share with you.

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

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