

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday November 1st, 2018

Good morning Chairman Massey, Board of Trustees, Chancellor Salgado and Provost Potter. I am happy to be here today to speak on behalf of faculty council. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Trustee Darrel Williams. Thank you for serving the students and the mission of the City Colleges of Chicago.

FC4 has been incredibly busy working on a number of initiatives in conjunction with Officers of the District. We have several new initiatives and meetings coming up in November that I will talk about at next month's Board meeting. However, for the purposes of today's meeting, I will use my time to amplify and highlight the concerns that our English faculty are having around the topic of placement.

I want to thank my colleagues – your faculty – who came here today to speak on this issue. They are the content experts and we should listen to them. They provided great evidence for their concerns to the rest of faculty council who may not be as well versed in placement nuances. I believe them and I believe their evidence, as should everyone in this room today. There are certain issues that are very specifically academic issues, and those fall squarely into the prevue of your faculty. Placement, and the academic consequences of erroneous placement is an academic issue that can have very negative consequences for vulnerable students: not only in their English courses but in other courses as well. This is a teaching and learning issue, and we need to listen to faculty when making decisions in this matter.

Let me tell you a little bit about your English faculty that you may not know. They have been innovating and changing their curriculum for “developmental education” for the entire three years that I have been FC4 President. I am incredibly proud of all of the work they have undertaken in this endeavor. I say this both to congratulate them on excellent work, but to also dispel any notion that this faculty is in any way resistant to change. They have voluntarily and at great cost of time and energy undertaken extraordinary measures to best meet our students needs. Every educator at CCC owes them a debt of gratitude. Thank you for helping our students

become more prepared for their coursework. Let us please do away with the rhetoric that “dev ed is an additional hurdle.” That is insulting to the work these faculty and students undertake in their developmental courses. It is important work that should be respected and valued. Dev ed is not a barrier, it is a catalyst into college-readiness. Faculty would appreciate the support of our own administration in acknowledging our innovative dev ed program.

As you have already heard, our Chancellor and College Presidents have decided to change the way we place students as “English 101 eligible” without any faculty input. This is an unacceptable top-down decision making process that flies in the face of shared governance. English and placement faculty from across the district prepared evidence for a meeting earlier this month with district officers and college administrators, but it quickly became obvious that the decision was already made. I have since talked to faculty who felt disrespected and demoralized by this experience. Please remember that your faculty are tenured for a reason: so that we can speak truth to power.

“FC4 urges our administration to reconsider the lowering of the English 101 eligibility standards for incoming students. In the interest of shared governance and in recognition of the expertise of faculty, we demand that faculty be involved in the genesis of any system-wide placement decisions. Lowering placement standards is not in the best interest of access or equity. Our work is to prepare students for success, not to simply assume that students who are not yet college-ready will independently perform at the college level because the placement standards have been lowered. Accurate placement is necessary so that students will have the scaffolding of support necessary to ensure college level performance that leads to college level success. We know that our students, with proper placement and support, can achieve their dreams. We call on Provost Potter and other officers of the district to keep placement standards in place so as not to undermine our students’ success.” In closing, let me say this to our Trustees, District Officers and other administrators here today: trust your teachers.

Thank you very much for your time today. This concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Alexander, on Behalf of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago with support, data and research from the Wright College Faculty Council, the CCC Placement Coordinators and the English Department.