

CCCC President's Address CCC Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday November 10st, 2020

Chairperson Massey, Board of Trustees, Chancellor Salgado, Provost Potter, Officers of the District, faculty, staff and all others streaming: Good afternoon!

I'd like to begin by clarifying a few items that I mentioned in November's Board Report. First, our concern for our students' mental well-being, particularly in times like these is at the forefront of all of our minds. I can't be sure if any misinterpreted what I was saying and asking for when I asked for similar programming for our students as what we will deliver to the Chicago Police Department as a part of the Consent Decree. I was not suggesting that we were lacking in services. The District Director of Specialized Student Services, Donell Barrett, has been doing a wonderful job, and there is some really good programing that is coordinated though his office. We look forward to meeting with him in January for updates on the work and our progress toward compliance with The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act. What we were asking for is similar to what the curriculum for CPD aims to do: to offer AND destigmatize health. We have wellness centers, but our students could make better use of those services if we had a real campaign to destigmatize the utilization of mental health care services.

The other Item I wish to redress is the Chancellor extending this programming to our students, staff and faculty. At the time of the last board report, I was unaware of that decision, and couldn't speak adequately to the magnitude of such a decision. I just want to take a moment to thank the Chancellor for his consideration of this issue and decision to widen to reach of these services. In my time teaching within Cook County Jail, one thing became apparent, most of my students were there due to mental health issues that had either never been addressed or in which treatment had lapsed. I imagine that some percentage of the detainees may have never crossed through those doors has the 1) had access to mental health treatment, and 2) weren't afraid of the stigma attached to getting treatment which still exists within many communities, particularly communities of color, and more specifically the ways in which our societal definitions of masculinity exclude men living with mental illness. Our classrooms are filled with individuals who are one traumatic event away from their mental and emotional breaking points. Brain science also suggests that many of our students coming right our of high school's prefrontal cortexes haven't developed to where they are consistently making decisions based on reason and not impulse, nor have they developed the capacity to process the long-term consequences of their decision. Again, this is more pronounced in men. So, choosing to prioritize this issue, is significant. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is in alignment with the equity work in which we are engaged. Again, thank you Chancellor Salgado, and we look forward to your ideas on how we offer something comparable but more specific to the needs of our students. This really means a lot.

FCCC standing committee work is moving along well with our district administrative partners. The Learning Agenda committee has met once to rethink how we prioritize and socialize institutional research projects. This is extremely important and worth while work, and we are glad to see the revival of this committee.

We were unable to meet SGA leadership this month, but we look forward to maintaining a more consistent relationship with them on the upcoming academic year and moving forward.

Our Early College committee has planned monthly meetings for the upcoming to continue to have input and help shop the early college work. Thank you Shavon Taylor and Peggy Korellis for your willingness to collaborate with us and keeping the faculty perspective in mind when meeting with our high school partners. The ability to maintain academic standards and rigor is paramount, and these collaborations make it possible.

Finally, we had the opportunity to meet with the Chancellor in November to think about vision and strategy. This was a good place to continue open dialogue about the world in which we live, the political climate, student needs and how those things and others interface with our leaderships vision for our institution and the strategic plans. We look forward to continuing this relationship and choosing some areas of focus for future conversations. We can't stress enough the value of these conversations in which we can ideate together. That will be, as it has always been, the key to maintaining non-confrontational relationships in which we can confront difficult issues and continue to work in the best interest of our students, even in times of disagreement. In those times, consistency, transparency, and a willingness to listen is what we have to rely upon, both from our administrators and faculty. Our meeting was a good reopening of that door, and I imagine if we hold to being consistent, transparent, and willing to listen, we can't fail.

It has been a year for the books. With vaccines on the horizon, it is my hope that we can make the best of this holiday season, stay safe, and that we will be able to meet in-person again at some point in the new year.

Thank you, and this concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Sprewer on behalf of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago