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FCCCC President's Address  
CCC Board of Trustees Meeting  
Thursday May 7th, 2020

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

My name is Keith Sprewer. I have been English Faculty at Harry S. Truman College for the past 10 years, where I primarily work with developmental students. I am also the newly elected President of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago for the 2020-2019 academic year. I take the role of servant-leader seriously and am committed to bringing the collective voice of faculty to spaces in the spirit of shared governance.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Professor Adriana Tápanes-Inojosa, my predecessor, for her commitment to faculty and her tireless work in this position. As we know, the end of her term was punctuated by the COVID pandemic and she was instrumental in our colleges being in as good of condition as we are now. Her leadership during this time has been remarkable. Thank you Professor Tápanes-Inojosa.

There are new Faculty Council officers at many of our colleges, I'd like to congratulate them on their election, and I look forward to meeting some of them for the first time and continuing to work with everyone who will serve during this academic year.

This has been a particularly trying time for all of us. Being away from our colleges and our students has been difficult to say the least. In January, no one would have imagined we'd be where we currently are and that the world would look as it does. Considering what has happened, I am proud of how our colleges have responded. Within a week, we were able to convert face-to-face coursework to remote learning. Support centers built online structures to continue serving our students; technology was provided for members of our community so that they could continue learning. This is incredible, and faculty, local administrators, and District leadership are to thank.

While we have done great things, this pandemic has also exposed some opportunities for growth. Early in our transition to remote learning, the road was rough. Directives from our district office changed daily; sometimes multiple times within the same day. Certainly, agility is necessary in times like these, but clear and consistent communication was not a problem that began with this pandemic. One of the larger issues was that faculty would hear one thing from District officers in a Faculty Council meeting, others would report hearing something very different in a Union meeting, and

Administrators would pass down directives that contradicted anything that was said to the other groups. I imagine that some of this was due to the changing nature of this situation; however, we can't operate like this, particularly in times like these. The planning for our Summer course offerings is an example of how communication has faltered and miscommunication has in some cases unintentionally created contentious relationships between faculty and their respective College Leadership. Faculty are still unclear as to how a 70% course usage threshold was reached or what concessions can be made. This is particularly an issue considering the average regular semester usage is 72%, as Chancellor Salgado informed us. Dr. Potter has expressed that there is some flexibility in that, but the particulars are still unclear. I imagine that until it is, this will be a source of tension between faculty and local administration.

What I am seeing is that there are no existing structures in which District officers, College Leadership, and Faculty Leadership are in the same space to hear the same message and have cross-conversation. This sometimes leads to decisions that are made based on limited information. That also means that when other information is presented, it sometimes necessitates decisions being altered multiple times. The Presidents Council, the CAOs, and Faculty Council all, at times, serve in an advisory role to our District officers, but we are never in communication with each other districtwide. Either we have to create the opportunities for cross conversation between these groups or we need a way of communicating information quickly and clearly to all stakeholders. We have been in conversation with the provost and the Chancellor and we confront difficult conversations, so I am confident that this can be achieved.

One of the communications that has concerned Faculty has been around online coursework. In communications sent to faculty, a district "long-term vision for online work" has been mentioned, but to many, what that vision is has been unclear. Many faculty are frightened by the idea that the long-term vision is to move our colleges to primarily offering online work, greatly reducing our face-to-face offerings. This is problematic for a number of reasons, namely accessibility for some of our most vulnerable students. My understanding of this vision is very different. My understanding of the vision has been that the goal is to increasingly have each college own their own online coursework. Dr. Potter, in our April 29th Faculty Council Meeting, confirmed that this was more along the lines of what he envisioned. He has committed to creating a written document to clarify this and further flesh out the vision for all stakeholders. This is good news. We have been asking for what I call the democratization of online work for years. By democratization, I mean that the colleges would have voice and ownership of their online offerings within a framework for accountability that could be collaboratively created with District administrators.

There are other issues that Faculty Council is in conversation with District officers about, most of them are COVID related; the status of our sports programs and commitment to students is one of them. We were glad to hear that commitments that have been made will be honored. We also would like more clarity around our Adult education program and their ability to run during these times.

Recently, our federal government has chosen to exclude, but we are pleased to see that the City Colleges have chosen to include. As Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, has made students who are not title IV eligible ineligible for CARE funds, through funds collected by The CCC Foundation, we have been able to support all of our students. We were doing this before the CARE funds were disbursed and Chancellor Salgado committed to continuing to aid our students quickly. This is commendable. The accountability that CCC has provided through our webpage that outlines Covid spending makes it clear that what we have been doing has been in the interest of students. Also, it says something to our community about our ethic of care. It shows that we put our money where our mouth and heart is. While we haven't received federal guidance around how the portion of the CARE funds that may be used to cover Covid related expenses, Faculty would like to be included in conversations about the use of those funds.

Finally, as we look forward to the fall semester, we realized that things are in flux. We learn new information about the virus every day. Many institutions have committed to making decisions about returning to campus in the next couple of weeks. It is our hope that we will do the same. I can't imagine any circumstance in which, by Fall semester, gathering in large numbers will be safe. We need to plan for that world, and a clear decision on what courses will be offered remotely and which we could safely offer either face-to face or hybrid would help us to do that. Students need to make decisions, and faculty and administrators need to prepare. Also, we need clear decisions and messaging around faculty credentialing for online teaching and definitions of remote learning. We are working toward clarity on this with Dr. Potter and Chancellor Salgado.

We are making great progress on many of these issues and others in collaboration with our District Officers. We have been sitting down and really doing the work. It is my hope that we will continue that work, do it even better, and daily renew our commitment to the success of our students. Congratulations to the class of 2020. Stay Safe. Stay at Home.

This concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted,  
Keith Sprewer on behalf of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago