

FCCCC President's Address CCC Board of Trustees Meeting  
Thursday May 6th, 2021

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

On the heels of the hatred we've seen enacted upon our Asian siblings, I want to acknowledge Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. We know that hatred and prejudice are often rooted in ignorance, so it is my hope that the districtwide programming will help us to all better recognize the contributions and influence of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States.

I'd like to welcome our new Student Trustee, Imran Fazal Hoque. It was nice meeting you at the last DSGA meeting. FC4 looks forward to working with you, and continuing our relationship with DSGA.

As we are wrapping up this academic year, many of us are wrapping up our terms on the faculty council. Each college determines when they will hold their elections, so some will not hold them until fall; however, I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all of the members who will be leaving FC4. This past year has been wild and our institutions, our committees, and our students are better off because of the ways you all have shown up to ensure that even during a pandemic, we hold to a standard of excellence. I won't list those individuals by name today, as there will be others who will cycle off in the fall, but I want them to know that they are greatly appreciated. I have been elected to a second term and will continue to serve through the 2021-2022 academic year.

Yesterday, Illinois House Joint Resolution 27 passed, which, if it passes in the Senate, will create a task force designed to study and strengthen Higher Education in Prisons. , Diverse stakeholders, including formerly incarcerated scholars, program administrators, and government officials, will come together to (1) assess barriers and opportunities to HEP in Illinois and (2) recommend a legislative action plan to expand access for all incarcerated and formerly incarcerated scholars. As you know, this is work that FC4's Committee H has been involved in for the past five years. FC4 supports this resolution, and it is our hope that our administration and Board members—many of you who have expressed support for this work and believe in CCC's role is addressing the needs of our communities by widening access to higher education to those impacted by the carceral system—will also support this resolution and the work. Just yesterday, I received a copy of a hand written letter from one of Professor Jennifer Alexander's students from the program that she, Professor Jessica Bader, and I began as volunteers three years ago which Professor Alexander has continued as a correspondence course through the pandemic. In the letter that student praised Both Professor Alexander and Bader for their work, but also to ask for advice about his future. He wants to enter an associate degree program in psychology so he can be a resource to individuals like him self who life circumstances can seduce them into a life of crime. He wants to change things for himself and for his community. Unfortunately, right now, his only option is a correspondence program. Red flags should go up for anyone listening that knows anything about course delivery modalities. The rigor of such courses is questionable, they

are often unaccredited, and the federal government doesn't fund correspondence courses. Our program has given this student the confidence to seriously consider an academic track, we have all the resources to get him on it; however, because of inaction on the issue over the past 5 years, we will have to hand this student off to an organization that may not be beneficial to him. Our chancellor as assured us of the completion of an MOU in the first quarter of 2022 that will allow CCC faculty to teach credit bearing courses in Cook County Jail. We are grateful for that and hope that this young man's drive will inspire us to continue to prioritize this work. He is but one individual; there are many more like him whom we have an obligation to serve.

Last week FC4 had the pleasure of meeting with Chancellor Salgado concerning FC4's new legislative and political affairs committee. More and more, we are finding that changes in higher ed are happening in Springfield and are primarily being led by special interest groups who don't always have our students and our institutions in mind. Instead of always being on the defense, FC4 wanted to think about how we could be leaders in these conversations and help to shape the way issues affecting higher ed are discussed in the legislature. We wanted to take the opportunity to partner with our Chancellor to work toward common legislative goals. I won't go too much further about the meeting, but I think that this is what shared governance looks like. We create spaces to work collectively for the good of our institution. Thank you Chancellor for joining us, thank you for your openness, and we look forward to meeting in the fall to begin think about the issues that are most beneficial for us to throw our collective energy behind for the 2022 legislative session.

That meeting with the chancellor, gave me an opportunity to think about what has happened in FC4's relationship with our Board of Trustees as of late. Over the course of the last four months FC4 has addressed the very serious concern of what we believe to be a conflict of interest concerning Vice Chair Swanson in her roles on our Board and the Board of Partnership for College Completion. Last month I responded to a letter FC4 received from Chairperson Massey regarding this issue. As I said then, it was terse and the tone dismissive. I am speaking very personally about this now: I don't like how any of this has played out, and while we may have ended in the same place, I don't think it had to have happened *this* way.

Currently, the way in which the elected representatives of faculty communicate to the board sets us up to have confrontational relationships: I come to the board and make a report; I am thanked for my report by the board, no matter how inflammatory the statements I make; and we either hear nothing back concerning the issue we bring forth, or I request a formal response, and at that point, we aren't engaging with each other, we are documenting grievances and responses. What kind of relationship is that? What good is any relationship in which people talk at each other and not with one another? One thing that I think we have been able to do well with our Provost and Chancellor has been to engage each other. It doesn't always bring us to a place of consensus, but when we do disagree and the power to make a decision lies in the others hand, both parties expect that whatever they have brought to the table has been thoughtfully considered and the rationale for the final decision reflects that process. Meeting monthly, committing ourselves to listen and understand, and really dialoging is the mechanism which allows this. That doesn't exist between faculty and the board.

Honestly, I don't know if that is something that happens between board members and faculty anywhere else. I understand that there are rules around boards and what constitutes a public meeting which can make scheduling difficult, particularly as you all are volunteers. But so are we. I receive release time to carry out the duties of this office; however, everyone is a volunteer and they do this work on top of their contractual duties. We are committed to coming to the table. We'd like you to join us. Despite the issue that we with which we are still unsatisfied with its resolution—if it can be called that—I'd like for us to do the same thing we are doing with the chancellor: to seek out genuine opportunities to work together. As we are seeing legislation that could change the way our Board members are selected, this seems like a good opportunity to think about our relationships outside of who and how many and how you got there, and focus on what we can do together and how. To do so, I think we have to consider the roles of the board and FC4 and reimagine how we interact. The goal isn't to shift the institutional decision-making structures—I'm not sure that would make any difference, rather, the goal is to create a mechanism by which voices can be heard and affirmed by authentic responses that are nuanced, and thoughtful, and respectful. That applies to all parties. I am proposing that in the fall, some number of the board members which allows us to be nimble in meeting, gather to discuss our roles and how they align with other institutions, but also in what ways we can do something novel. Even with the hope of a return to something similar to a per-covid normalcy, perhaps there are some things and ways that haven't served us well and are best left in the past. I will reach out to Chief Advisor Phillips to see if we can coordinate an opportunity for us to meet under different and better circumstances to work in a unified manner.

This concludes my report.

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

### **Addendum**

Last month, I intended to include the written comments from the three public speakers concerning our adjunct faculty and their fight for a fair and equitable contract so their struggle can be documented in public record. They were inadvertently omitted. They are attached here:

My name is Alyssa Adamson and I have been an adjunct lecturer at the City Colleges of Chicago for the past 2 years. I currently teach 4 courses at Harold Washington and Malcolm X College. I have a PhD in Philosophy and 4 years of college level teaching experience. I regularly teach between 8 to 11 courses per calendar year but I on average make only \$25,000 per year. I teach at least 80% of the load of fulltime faculty at City Colleges, but I am paid 50% less for the same work with the same credentials. My only access to medical care is through Medicaid, and I have had to use SNAP benefits to meet my grocery needs.

I have dedicated the last 10 years of my life to becoming a community college professor and I am absolutely dedicated to my students at the City Colleges. I spend anywhere from 40-50 hours per week attending to my courses. I write student's letters of recommendation for transferring to 4 year universities, for their internships, fellowships, and study abroad opportunities. I connect my students to on-campus services and resources. I make sure my curriculum, assignments, and rubrics are relevant and up-to-date given student's needs and desires. I grade hundreds of papers, discussion posts, and projects. I answer student emails and meet with them in office hours. And finally I teach for a total of 12 "contact hours"—which are the only hours out of the week I am actually paid for.

Across City Colleges adjuncts make up 65% of all faculty, but a majority of us live below the poverty line. There seems to be a contradiction in working for an institution that purports to alleviate poverty, while a majority of its faculty are condemned to a lifetime of poverty if they make teaching at the City College's their life's work. Many adjuncts have crippling student debt that will never be paid on our current wages, and defaulted student loans become another barrier to further employment.

I wonder if any of you have tried to secure housing in the City of Chicago on wages and impermanent contracts such as ours. Trying to convince a landlord that while you only have a 4-month job contract that already puts you at the poverty line, they should still let you sign a lease. For most of my adult life I have not been able to afford legal housing, and even today with multiple jobs and a PhD, securing housing is one of my biggest struggles. Teaching is my passion and my vocation, and after a decade of working towards the job that I have always wanted, I now have the amazing opportunity of working with City Colleges students. However, when students see the effects of poverty on their teachers, what do you think that does to their morale? What will students think about City Colleges when they hear it is committed to alleviating poverty, but on the other hand it also condemns a majority of its educators to poverty?

I urge the Board of Trustees to push City Colleges to attend to the needs of its impoverished majority of educators, and to provide a living wage to all of its workers, who quite literally make the City Colleges run.

Thank you.

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CCCLOC Speech on Market Competition

Read at 4/8/2021 City Colleges Board of Trustee Meeting

Good afternoon college presidents, members of the board, and Chancellor Salgado. My name is Randy Miller and, as president of CCCLOC, I represent the adjunct professors, part-time librarians, and vocational lecturers who teach 65% of credit-based courses at

City Colleges of Chicago. CCCLOC members have been working without a contract for ten months.

Whether Black, brown, or white, native Chicagoan, or hailing from abroad, every student living in every zip code in Chicago deserves a quality education with well-resourced educators who foster student growth, student success, and a life-long love of learning.

However, City Colleges has consistently rejected the union's calls for a market-based salary adjustment that is essential for attracting and retaining quality educators for our students.

On the eve of signing our most recent collective bargaining agreement, Chancellor Salgado wrote a letter to former CCCLOC president Loretta Ragsdell, stating "CCCLOC members are valuable assets to our students and to City Colleges, and I want to attract and retain CCCLOC members to provide an excellent education for our students. You will find in this offer that the average pay... is directly comparable to the average pay for those credentials across our region." The letter also touted the agreement's "market-competitive" pay rates, recognizing the clear connection between competitive salaries, the retention of faculty, and student success.

We agree! Which is why the adjunct educators that the Chancellor praised in his letter can't understand why City Colleges has chosen to turn away from that practice. CCC has ignored the Chancellor's own words. Does City Colleges leadership no longer believe that attracting and retaining quality professors and librarians is necessary for our students?

In the last two years, City Colleges has raised salaries for its administrators and leaders by 18.2% in FY19 and then an additional 18.4% during the last year, while adjunct faculty have struggled mightily during the pandemic. How can City Colleges say that it is putting students first when it consistently chooses to put adjuncts last?

The path to "Seven Strong," the perseverance of City Colleges, and our ability to deliver quality education to the students of Chicago demands a real investment in the classroom, and that starts with its adjunct faculty. "Seven Strong" should not end at the classroom door. Our students deserve nothing less.

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Hello, my name is Beth Harris. I teach English at Truman College.

Yesterday we received an email from the Chancellor and Provost thanking faculty and staff for the work we have done in supporting our students during this challenging time. I have to admit that getting this letter did not make me feel appreciated – because as an adjunct faculty member, a part-time faculty teaching the same classes as my full-time colleagues, I am financially undervalued by the City Colleges. The words of the thank-you note do not change that and make me feel angry, not appreciated.

My anger and stress – the realities of my being underpaid - are not good for my students.

Today my students submitted proposals for their second multisource essays. I am curious to know how much time the district and board think that I spend with these assignments. Five minutes each? That would not be enough to read them carefully and to provide the kind of productive feedback that my students need. I teach argumentative writing. I am here to help my students to develop their critical thinking skills and find their voices. I put in the time. I get my satisfaction from the work that I do – from the challenge and stimulation of working with my students. I love working with my students – and it is a very time-consuming job.

I do not stay at City Colleges of Chicago because I cannot get another job. I am not a mediocre faculty.

During this pandemic, I was not able to do the other jobs that can bring in about half of my income. I was left with my City Colleges job where I teach about half the load of a full-time faculty. Now this should pay about half of my income, but because adjunct faculty are paid less than half of what full-time faculty are paid per course, this job, in which I teach the same courses as my full-time colleagues to the same students, pays me in actuality less than a quarter of my income even though it takes more than half of the work that I should be doing to make a full income. I make under \$3,000 for a 3-credit class. At my pay rate, teaching a full-time load of 4-5 classes per semester (depending on discipline) I would be earning between \$24,000 and \$30,000 dollars in an academic year. That would be my salary converted to full-time. This is less than what we hope our students will earn when they graduate City Colleges with Associate's degrees.

I am lucky that I have been living at a friend's place, or I could have been out on the street during the pandemic.

This is not a hobby for me. City Colleges of Chicago needs to pay its adjunct faculty.

We talk about equity issues at City Colleges, and yet we have gross inequity in the way the majority of our faculty are paid. The faculty who teach the majority of the classes, the majority of the students, are grossly underpaid. We talk about the importance of developmental education at CCC and we spend time and money trying to improve our programs. Yet the faculty who teach most of the developmental education classes are the underpaid adjunct faculty. As we know, faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.

During his talk, Chancellor Salgado spoke of how we get stronger at City Colleges of Chicago. He celebrated our students and their successes. But the words did not ring true to me. We do not get stronger by exploiting the majority of our faculty. We do not get stronger by being hypocritical. These students we are celebrating – adjunct faculty are

teaching them. And, yes, we go above and beyond to teach and support our students. We are a community.

City Colleges of Chicago has the money. It is well past time that we fix this situation.

Make it happen. And while you are doing that, I will get back to working with my students' writing.

Thank you.

Beth S Harris

*This is a more complete written version of the comments that I made at the April board meeting.*