

CCCC President's Address CCC Board of Trustees Meeting  
Thursday, February 2nd, 2023

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

It is really good to see the board meeting circulating through the colleges. For issues related to accessibility, FC4 asked that the meeting circulate to the colleges. It has taken some time, but here we are. Thank you Dr. Jackson and the operations and facilities teams here at Truman for the work you've put into hosting. We look forward to the same hospitality at the other colleges.

Last month, FC4 held its annual officers election. I am proud to announce Professor Vicky Alexandersson of Malcom X as President Elect and Dr. Enid Wells of Kennedy King as Vice President Elect. Both have served as members of FC4 and besides faithfully attending and lending their knowledge, passion, and compassion to our meetings, both have participated in some of our most critical committee work. As an outgoing leader, one of the scariest things you can do--and must do--is be clear when you've accomplished what you've set out to do and to, with grace, hand it over to someone else. If you've done an ounce of good, you have left things better than you found them, but with great concern, you hope that those who follow you will care for the work in a way that will allow it to continue to grow in new and different ways that you can't even imagine. I am both lucky and pleased that in the election of Professor Alexandersson and Dr. Wells, I have no reservations about their commitment to faculty, their love for our institutions, and their ability to continue the work. We are in good and capable hands. I would like to congratulate them and offer my support in any way that I can be of service.

While my term continues through the end of the semester, when knowing that your time is coming to an end in any arena of life, you begin to think over your time and what you were able to achieve, and in some cases what you were unable to. I won't go too far back because the last three FC4 presidents' time in office, including my own, span over almost a decade--just one year shy. Each of us lead during some time of crisis. Professor Jennifer Alexander was a beacon of light during Reinvention, a markedly dark time in our institution's history, but she also presided over the transition to our current administrators. Adriana Tapanes-Inojosa lead at the very beginning of the pandemic and was crucial in shaping policy and a sense of community when everything fell apart in

that first semester. I can't imagine how she felt leading during such an unprecedented time, but she did it. I came in both during the early stages of the pandemic, but I also began during a time in which a racial reckoning was taking place across our country with the releasing of the footage of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers.

Yesterday, Tyre Nichols, another black man who was viciously murdered by police, was laid to rest. I can't help but to think about how my three years in office as FC4 president is bookended by the killing of black men by those sworn to protect and serve. Shortly after the video of George Floyd's murder went viral, protestors took to the streets demanding justice for Floyd and other victims of police brutality and police reform, neither of which have been fully realized in a substantive way nationally. Certainly, the passing of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 did some good; however, negotiations on a reform bill collapsed later in that same year. In response, The Board and Chancellor Saldago announced plans to establish an anti-racism advisory committee comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni and administrators. To date, that committee has never met, and I imagine that apart from me saying it just now, most had forgotten that the idea had even existed--including those who proposed it. And if they haven't forgotten about it, I also imagine that they wish the rest of us did. From the beginning, and I said it then and still stand by the sentiment, while it was well meaning and had the opportunity to be transformative, it felt like a knee jerk reaction to my criticism of a careless announcement sent after the rioting that accompanied the protests to all in our CCC community, centering CCC property over the trauma of black people within our institutions and city.

Institutions across the country joined the racial healing bandwagon, and we were no exception. We hired Dr. Bruce King as the Inaugural Associate Vice Chancellor for Racial Equity. This position and hire held great potential, but the position lacked clear direction, structure, and purpose. Dr. King soon resigned, and the position was never backfilled. I have to be fair and highlight that just because that position wasn't filled doesn't mean that the work necessarily stopped. Erica Farris is working hard in her position as District Director of Equity Initiatives to both articulate and realize the goals of equity at the City Colleges; however, she was hired as staff under Dr. King, why doesn't she have the same support? She's doing all the work that Dr. King would have done--arguably more--with less support, and as a director, not an AVC, she also does it at less pay. This is all very

telling about how we value the work and Black women. Much of the equity work that is happening silos the various constituents of our institutions to some extent, barring the work laid out in the equity plans; however, that was established prior to 2020, and was, for all intents and purposes, done at the behest of an outside organization whose idea of equity has primarily centered on eliminating developmental education, which isn't equity at all.

Moreover, we can't ignore that in the midst of this focus on anti-racism, as an institution we completely abandoned conversations about how the movement that thrust us into action was due to police brutality: state sanctioned domestic terrorism on US citizens by law enforcement and shielded by laws. FC4 has raised the issue of the role of police within our institutions time and time again, and it seems to be met with relative indifference. While institutionally, we champion being caring campuses and espousing trauma-informed practices, we wholly ignore the trauma that our citizens and students carry, particularly black and brown people--especially black men, by seeing these atrocities carried out on people who look like them on the news and on social media. None of this is to suggest that our law enforcement partners have no place here--though some would and have argued that--but where is the trauma-informed practice when students are greeted, and in some cases, confronted, by police officers when they enter our buildings? I've personally witnessed police recruiters sit at tables at our doors and attempt to convince students to leave school and become police. I say this with confidence because I was mistaken as a student and one had such a conversation with me. We often host CPD for training on our campuses; they walk our halls in large groups in uniform. I hope you can see how traumatizing that can be to people with a history of being abused by police. We exist in a perverse harmony with law enforcement officers within our buildings and nothing is being done about it.

What is interesting in the case of the officers charged with killing Tyre Nichols is that five of them are black. This underscores a particular social problem that exists in our society at large and within the City Colleges. People were surprised and perplexed that black officers would do something so hangout to a black person. I am not surprised whatsoever because white supremacy, when not refining and disguising its methods, has always enlisted black people to aid in their agenda. It was Johnny Washington, a black man, who did the dirty work of going to capture Emmett Till. Washington threw a black boy on the truck, and when he found that the boy he kidnapped wasn't Till, Washington

threw the boy off the truck, breaking the boy's teeth. To do something like that requires a certain fragmenting and suppression of the self. This is not only found among police ranks. We frequently require black people to disassociate themselves from their blackness in ways that white people and other people of color are not asked to un-race themselves. It is so pervasive that we unknowingly, and sometimes with full knowledge, become co-conspirators in our own demise. In many of the initiatives that the City Colleges that faculty have called out as inequitable, there inevitably stands some black person leading the charge. Reinvention, which decimated our enrollment, endangered our programs, and limited the educational options of black and brown students across our city, happened under the leadership of a black woman who has since moved into other white spaces and speaks and has written proudly of what she "accomplished." Again, this is no shock as white supremacy is masterful at making victims complicit in their oppression.

FC4 has been very much invested in the conversation of expanding Healthcare fields to colleges other Malcolm X. It is a fact that Reinvention's consolidating the nursing program to Malcolm X resulted in the graduating of fewer healthcare professionals, especially those of color. Time and time again we hear of the need for more black healthcare professionals because of racialized bias in healthcare. NPR reported this morning that, nationally, fewer people are entering the healthcare fields, down roughly 4% from last year, further diminishing the number of black professionals in this field. This is the legacy of Cheryl Hymon--whether the plan was of her creation, or that of other powerful players, it's her legacy. As we have done nothing substantive to correct that, this is also the legacy of the City Colleges, all with more black and brown leadership than I've seen at any point during my tenure here. We have requested that the basic nursing certificate be expanded to other colleges and we invite a serious conversation about how we view the other colleges' role in supporting the growth of healthcare professionals through access to education in their own communities.

So as we celebrate another black history month, we have to consider the ways in which we act as oppressor and how we can turn that around. How do we create space for black thought and creativity to thrive? How we are a part of the writing of black history and how do we want to be remembered and documented in it.

While much of our recent history is mired in documented actions that, when viewed through the lens of racial equity are not becoming, it doesn't mean that initiatives aren't happening to redress this. Healing circles, equity plans, and a concerted effort to improve the outcomes for black students are a few examples. But we have to be careful not to be shortsighted in our work. Getting black and brown students in and out of our doors does not equate equity. In some cases expedience in the name of equity is the exact way that white supremacy exacts its revenge for the gains that black people have made. After Greenwood, the black area of Tulsa, Oklahoma, rebuilt--in many ways stronger than it stood before--without any government help after being burn to the ground by white mobs, the second destruction of the area didn't happen by fire, but by strategy: the building of a highway through the middle of it and the demolishing of public housing with the promise of rebuilding it better. To date, the land remains bare and hundreds of families were displaced. We have to take care to participate in the rebuilding and not the destructive strategy which always comes smiling, using gentle voices, looking like and promising progress, all while ensuring demise. We can be better than our past if we so desire. And if we have nothing else, like in Greenwood, we have people among us who are invested in our survival, people who stay and rebuild, who fight with or without help. These are people who believe in our missions, and more so, believe in our people and communities and want us to live. As my time as FC4 president ends, faculty rallied with me on these issues when I began, they rally with me now. We invite you to rally with us, not just in word, but also in deed to be a life affirming institution in a society insistent upon death.

If there are no questions or comments, This concludes my report.

Keith Sprewer

Submitted on behalf of the Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago