

Faculty Council Report
Thursday, June 1st, 2023

Pre-address Remarks:

Thank you to the Board and Harold Washington College for again supporting health equity in allowing me to present remotely.

Again, thank you to the all-star team that made these remote logistics possible: Greg Williams, Juan Ortega, Emma Mims, Bonnie Phillips, and Steve Saba. The following is an approximately 8-minute-long report, and you might notice some shared themes and acknowledgments of what is currently happening at City Colleges of Chicago.

FC4 President's Address at CCC Board of Trustees Meeting:

Chairperson Massey, Board of Trustees, Chancellor Salgado, Provost Potter, Student Trustee Yehuda Goldbloom, officers of the district, faculty, staff, students, community members, and beyond, greetings:

Until June 7th, faculty are technically on intersession. However, there are still some critical points that are worth sharing.

To begin with, we want to share our appreciation for Director Nathan Blair's accessibility team. On May 18th, Global Accessibility Awareness Day, they launched a new accessibility website that provides a wealth of resources, including the comprehensive accessibility plan that faculty have been looking forward to as a means to learning and addressing both our curricular and co-curricular inquiries. Thank you again to Director Blair's team for this work that infused centering a spectrum of voices through shared governance to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders' relationship to accessibility culture, technology, infrastructure, curriculum, and policy.

Another set of inquiries that faculty were curious about as it relates to the professional development purview of FC4 was travel authorization logistics. We also want to share our appreciation for Accounts Payable Manager China Bouldin who went over and beyond to explain where we are now with processes, policies, and resources related to travel authorizations and reimbursement. Manager Bouldin already has more than enough on her plate, typically working from the 7 a.m. hour to the 9 p.m. hour in one of the most short-staffed departments at CCC. We greatly appreciate that Manager Bouldin was able to make time for us, especially this close to the end of the fiscal year. FC4 executive leadership's meeting with Manager Bouldin was quite illuminating, and we believe some of what we learned are seeds for shifting from frustrated travel authorization reactions to better-informed travel authorization responses. This spring several changes were made in direct response to faculty requests. We were impressed by what Manager Bouldin's department has done to ethically navigate how to make the travel authorization process easier for faculty, staff, and administrators.

While it comes as no surprise that the travel authorization process can be quite frustrating for some, we were able to pinpoint some of the logic as to how that might end up being the case.

What we believe we have identified as the main pain points with the travel authorization process actually stem from local colleges' optional election of additional travel authorization hoops. Some colleges have added extra travel authorization steps, probably for what were very well-intentioned reasons, but they are having potentially unintended consequences. For example, some tenure-track faculty members have extra obstacles between them and meeting their student-serving professional development objectives for tenure-track. Consequently, they are positioned to have an unequal experience to that of their peers in the Tenure Assistance Program (TAP), which is obviously not a fault of the TAP process but is instead the result of, again, very well-intentioned yet inequitable access to travel authorization processes at the college level. There's a simple solution to this though, which is to stick to the district-level guidelines about travel authorization without adding extra steps. Besides tenure-track faculty members, anyone who is co-presenting and/or co-lodging, for reasons that may include ensuring that expenditures are under the U.S. General Services Administration rate, are put in an inequitable position too. In other words, a local college's extra steps with the travel authorization process do, at times, directly impact other colleges' faculty and/or staff travel authorization. Travel authorization gives us access to a multitude of ways of knowing and being as well as how we translate that into the classroom and further our academic presence as leaders of research. Therefore, we invite the administration to consider following the already thoughtful and equitable process that the district level has without adding extra steps. If this could be achieved, we believe this would also free up some of Manager Bouldin's department's time so that they could create what both Manager Bouldin and faculty agree is ideal—multimodal supports including videos to support the travel authorization and reimbursement processes.

Besides knowledge-sharing and building among other doors that approved travel authorizations lead to, CCC has another relationship to travel supports. After all, travel can be anchored to a gamut of situations, including asylum-seeking. Outside of curricular pursuits, CCC has authorized an intergovernmental agreement to allow for parts of CCC facilities to serve as respite centers for asylum-seeking people. For instance, last week, there was an emergency board meeting where the board met to discuss authorizing part of Wright College as a respite center. Leading up to that, several stakeholders including community members voiced a spectrum of thoughts on whether to approve housing the asylum seekers or not. In that space, some thoughts seemed like reactions while others seemed like responses. Later, when it came to reflecting on how all people deserve to live with dignity and respect instead of being discriminated against, exploited, and otherwise harmed, the board expressed a well-thought-out and empathetic response. They observed, learned, and responded by authorizing Wright College as a respite center. We appreciate that and the former authorization given to Truman College. We are also hopeful that the board will approve Daley College as a respite center when voting on today's board resolutions 1.02 and 1.03. FC4 stands in solidarity with the board's approval of those resolutions, and we hope that students will see this as a lesson beyond the classroom on humanization as well as civic engagement.

Speaking of humanization and the spirit of lifting each other up, June 1st marks the first day of LGBTQ+ Pride Month. Although this observance typically celebrates how LGBTQ+ Americans have contributed to the U.S. (according to the Library of Congress), I want to note that many of us have a very expansive understanding of the identities sometimes associated with the plus sign or beyond the initialism entirely. For instance, there are many indigiqueer identities including but not limited to two-spirit identities that deserve dignity, respect, and celebration as well. Additionally, but non-exhaustively, there are non-binary identities that when not filtered through Western constructed language, may or may not fall under the Trans umbrella, but are just as deserving of dignity, respect, and celebration. With that in mind, what is CCC willing to do to affirm and celebrate non-binary people, Two-Spirit people, genderqueer people, people with other genders not yet mentioned, agender people, and more who do not fall into the categories of cisgender men and women? We look forward to that answer and how it can augment more students' sense of belonging at CCC. We also have ideas that you are welcome to run with if you have not thought of them already. In today's board report, the RAMP report for the fiscal year 2025 aligns an eight-million-dollar project budget for bathroom renovations and galvanized piping replacement. Please consider the depths of inclusivity and humanization that having gender-neutral bathrooms in those plans would foster. That has been a repeated request from both faculty and students.

Just as importantly, when it comes to autonomy, agency, and affirmation of individuals who have been historically marginalized and oppressed, the month of June has another observance that comes to the front of my mind: Juneteenth. We want to thank CCC stakeholders on all sides of the table for adopting Juneteenth as a holiday in the latest faculty contract bargaining agreement. Although we are given the day off from work, I want to encourage people to learn the history of Juneteenth and support Black scholars and Black-owned businesses. Moreover, to me, this day always reminds me of the popular quote from Fannie Lou Hamer, "nobody's free until everybody's free." Thank you to those of you who are putting in work to support Black communities and recognize the wholeness of a people and a nation. And, in this realm, thank you to CCC for affirming that Black studies has a place at CCC along with other expressions of, as Chairman Massey put it, freedom, education, and achievement.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Viggy Alexandersson on behalf of the Faculty Council of City Colleges of Chicago