

Faculty Council Report
Thursday, May 4th, 2023

Pre-address Remarks:

Thank you to the board for letting the adult education public speakers finish their remarks beyond 3-minutes. I appreciate the care in that decision. Additionally, thank you to the Board and Olive-Harvey College for supporting health equity in allowing me to present remotely. And, thank you to the all-star team that made these remote logistics possible: Greg Williams, Juan Ortega, Emma Mims, Bonnie Phillips, and Steve Saba. Furthermore, thank you, Chancellor Salgado, for noting the interdependence and courageous conversations FC4 has had with admin, and you may appreciate the themes that follow in this report. So, here goes an approximately ten-minute long report.

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:

To begin with, I want to share gratitude towards Truman College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, for publishing a land acknowledgment statement on their website, which I will reference now:

“We respectfully recognize the Council of the Three Fires: The Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations, and the Illinois Confederacy: The Peoria and Kaskaskia Nations, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. Many other nations including the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Fox, and Sac peoples also call this region home. Indigenous people continue to live in this area and celebrate their traditional teachings and lifeways. We acknowledge that we are on occupied land that was forcibly taken from its original owners. And we affirm that while we cannot change history, we can work for justice and that justice begins with recognition and acknowledgment.” Sources listed included The Newberry Library & the American Indian Center of Chicago.

Thank you, Truman College, for being what we believe is the first of the seven City Colleges of Chicago to publish a land acknowledgment, and I hope that City Colleges of Chicago is open to pairing that with a district-wide action plan for supporting our indigenous students in a culturally responsive way, perhaps in part with the reparative effort of free tuition to those who are the traditional stewards of this land.

Pivoting from the land acknowledgment and action plan request, now seems like a good time to introduce myself. My name is Viggie Alexandersson. I have been faculty at City Colleges of Chicago since 2014, where I have worked in a variety of departments, disciplines, and roles. In the mix of those roles, I am the newly elected President of the Faculty Council of City Colleges of Chicago (abbreviated as FC4). This role, among others, has afforded me the

opportunity to see what exactly makes City Colleges of Chicago seven strong. Distilled from the collective voice of faculty and courageous shared governance conversations, I look forward to sharing some of those insights among other pertinent FC4 matters over the course of this academic year.

First, however, I invite us all to center gratitude as we look back at what FC4 accomplished under former FC4 President Keith Sprewer's leadership. From co-creating the Health and Safety Task Force Committee that established and triaged policies around Covid-19 precautions and exposure, to articulating how CCC can more sustainably uphold its commitment to racial equity, as well as other acts of FC4 service, Professor Sprewer's presidential legacy will continue to impact us district-wide for years to come. Thank you for setting such a high bar for the work that we must continue to do, especially if we want to maintain our identity as seven strong.

Reflecting on the present day, what an election season it has been. Congratulations to newly elected FC4 representatives, and I would be remiss if I did not express extended gratitude for Dr. Enid Wells who is the FC4 VP this academic year. Dr. Wells has consistently been a faculty champion of advocacy in FC4, and I feel so privileged to get to work with you in our new roles.

Broadening my lens a bit, as many of us know, as of May 15th our new mayor for the city of Chicago will take office. Congrats on your win, mayor-elect Brandon Johnson. In the hopes that you are watching this, I hope that you will continue to keep the lines of communication open with CCC. With former mayors of Chicago, our Chancellor at CCC—Chancellor Juan Salgado—has fought the good fight of trying to make it onto the mayor's schedule. And, in many of those instances, has succeeded—not just to discuss pivotal issues, some of which were raised by FC4, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to discuss a plethora of solutions. We know that a mayor's schedule is not the easiest to be added to, but we do hope you will give the appropriate stakeholders at our institution a chance to show up at the mayoral table and in pertinent city-wide discussions, as such has been the case with Vice Chancellor Jen Mason's participation on the 2021 established working group "A Roadmap for a Second Chance City: Chicago's Working Group on Returning Resident's Recommendations" and with Vice Chancellor Stephanie Krah on the mayoral "Gender-Based Violence Advisory Council and Inter-agency Working Group" that put Chicago on the map as the first major U.S. city to create a comprehensive approach to gender-based violence awareness and prevention. In addition to that, Dr. Krah serves as our Access Officer for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. We have immense gratitude for them and their respective teams for how they mobilized coordinated community efforts amounting to 70+ CCC personnel from a variety of departments to ensure we holistically engage in this work. In turn, that provided faculty direct and indirect opportunities of support in matters of curriculum, program development, and professional development. CCC collaboration at the mayoral table also led to, inter alia, CCC campuses serving as vaccination sites, providing CCC community members and the city of Chicago multi-regional access to potentially life-saving supports. Arguably, this helped prevent classrooms and other spaces of coexistence from

becoming superspreader sites. We would like to extend gratitude to Vice Chancellor David Anthony for ensuring that we stayed in conversation with the mayor's office and the Chicago Public Health Department to honor CCC's commitment to public health. We all have a part to play in that. Furthermore, we hope that with what has been mentioned and many of the other initiatives CCC has consistently and effectively collaborated on with the mayor's office, you will keep us at the table. Doing so optimizes how we support our students as well as the city of Chicago overall. Moreover, in a city as culturally and institutionally diverse as ours, interdependence is key in order to succeed. In the case of CCC, we are not separate entities from our surrounding communities. Instead, we are an integral part of them. Our students, faculty, and staff are not just residents, but active members of the community who can contribute to its development. Whether it is community service, civic engagement, research and data analysis, or any other collaboration points, our interdependence and courageous conversations are crucial to the success of our colleges and the City of Chicago.

Now, as many of you know, today is May 4th: National Star Wars Day. May the fourth be with you. Some associate this day with what can be achieved through interdependence and courageous conversations. Some associate this day with what it looks like to stand up against powerful and oppressive forces to create a liberative and equitable world—even if it means risking their lives for the greater good. Those are powerful associations, and I wonder what positive impact National Star Wars Day could have if we reflected on the brave and determined people who have actually done that in real life. In May of 1977, Star Wars: A New Hope hit the big screen. But, fourteen years earlier in May of 1963, youth in Birmingham, Alabama hit the streets—some of them as young as seven years old. From May 2 to May 10, thousands of youth gathered to fight for a quality education and life, which involved brutal opposition from law enforcement and, in some cases, incarceration. They marched peacefully, singing and chanting—expressions of stories and counterstories, expressions of courageous conversations. This shed a light on segregation and helped better inform the nation of the cultural and institutional atrocities taking place. In turn, this was foundational to the ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Present day, we find ourselves at a national crossroads of whether or not to honor that all stories and counterstories are valuable to center in education; that all people are worth being seen, heard, respected, and affirmed in education. And, while the word “all” is being used, it is worth noting the both/and of this. All of our students should have access to an education that values their personhood, and not all students have the same lived experiences and positionalities in systems of privilege and oppression. We can have courageous conversations that express supporting all of our students while recognizing a one-size approach, a one-size curriculum, and a one-size perception of histories do not fit all. At CCC, I know this is not news to us, and I hope that given some of the very hurtful expressions happening on the national level of education, people realize that we at CCC are committed to providing safe, affirming, and equitable access to anyone looking to further themselves academically, professionally, and personally via higher education.

So, how have we made good on that commitment instead of trying to eradicate intersectionality, critical race theory, Black feminism, queer theory, and other frameworks that address structural inequality? Although making good on that commitment goes decades back, here is some of the more recent work being done. In the realm of curriculum, there are nearly a dozen Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies courses that entered the Proposed Academic Curriculum Changes (PACC) process—exploring topics of care, culture, arts, representation, empowerment, social justice, social policy, STEM, healthy equity, and embodiment. In a different discipline, Africana Studies faculty created courses titled Black Chicago and Black Women in the African Diaspora. For all of those courses, we want to thank their respective developers and the Joint Curriculum Development Council led by Associate Vice Chancellor Sarah Lichtenstein for having courageous conversations and helping CCC sustain space for the pluralism that makes us beautifully diverse at CCC. In the co-curricular realm, honoring the aforementioned commitment has looked like Director Elvis Guzman spearheading efforts to support the adoption of the Campus Pride Index and where we go thereafter. It has looked like faculty, staff, and administrators being trained as UndocuAllies by Associate Dean Luvia Moreno to support undocumented students and their families in finding guidance and resources that would support their educational pursuits.

While we do take pride in that work, we also are aware that there is some work to be done in order to ensure the sustainability of that commitment. For instance, how can we keep courses and/or programs in circulation if some of those courses or programs' core resources are attached to renewal contracts that should have a streamlined process? Perhaps one of the quickest examples to share is that it should not take eight weeks for legal to decide whether or not we want to give a contract to a piano tuner who has tuned our pianos in previous semesters. Piano students need a piano that's in tune or the class cannot exist and meet the standards needed for accreditation. Additionally, eight weeks is, in some cases, the duration of an entire course. It seems unfortunate that students could lose out on a course in a particular window of time given the current red tape needed for contracts. Contracts should not create barriers to course and program delivery. We recognize the needs for contracts, but we think there is a better way to go about them. At this point, faculty council has shared requests of what that could look like with the administration to take to legal. We look forward to hearing legal's response.

Adjacently, faculty council had the chance to hear from Deputy Chief Financial Officer Jeff Wong in our last two FC4 meetings. What we want to highlight from those conversations is that there is definitely a very detail-oriented logic of care that goes into how CCC handles its fiduciary responsibilities. Where questions came up around the budget's relationship to program and institutional sustainability as well as how we might address structural inequalities, we were pleased to hear logic that meets both federal and state nuances while also centering that all seven City Colleges are in this together. We would never want to leave one college behind the others for instance, and how the logic of allocation was explained seems to honor that in a practical way.

With that being said, I want to center the African philosophy of Ubuntu, famously translated into the phrase: “I am because we are.” Our interconnectedness is one of the core facets that puts the community in community college because we recognize that our actions impact one another. Our interconnectedness thrives when we have courageous conversations. This is in part how we put forward our best selves and our best curricular and co-curricular efforts (both operationally and culturally). This is in part how we express that we value diversity, inclusivity, and celebration of differences. We take pride in City Colleges of Chicago in part because we are a community that is greater than the sum of its parts. We are seven strong, and our success is intertwined. So, let’s continue to use the two forces of interconnectedness and courageous conversations toward communal success. If those two concepts are not at the heart of FC4, I don’t know what is. With that particular context in mind, I will oblige the Lucas franchise enthusiasts and say “May the force be with you.”

Last but not least, congratulations to the spring 2023 City Colleges of Chicago graduates. Similar to the interconnectedness logic of Ubuntu, “[CCC is] because [you] are.” We are immensely proud of you and look forward to your continued success. 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