

RESOLUTION:

In consideration of the concerns expressed in President Jennifer Alexander's November 5, 2015, Board Address regarding District Office's potential impact on our HLC Accreditation, Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago passed the following resolution at its meeting on November 18, 2015:

Faculty Council of the City Colleges of Chicago, representing the seven independently-accredited City Colleges of Chicago (District 508), submits the following complaint to the Higher Learning Commission directed against District Office.

Summary of District Office's violations of Higher Learning Commission policies and standards.

District Office has systematically taken control over all academic planning and decisions concerning the City Colleges of Chicago. This transfer of academic control from the seven colleges to District Office is not legitimate. An institutional change of this magnitude involving a transfer of "substantial academic and operational control" requires prior HLC approval, and none of the City Colleges has sought approval for such a transaction.

City Colleges' faculty are fully committed to positive and thoughtful change to strengthen all our Colleges' academic programs and thereby best fulfill our public obligation to City Colleges' students and communities. We believe, however, that many of the changes enacted by District Office under the "Reinvention" initiative are *not* in the best interest of our students or our mission, and many District Office decisions are diverting the City Colleges from their primary responsibility to provide education and promote the public good.

As a direct result of this assumption of control, District Office is jeopardizing our colleges' individual HLC accreditations by disregarding: 1) "assumed practices" considered "foundational" in that they are necessary (though not sufficient) conditions to any granting of HLC accreditation; and 2) expectations embodied in Accreditation Criteria One, Two, and Five.

District Office ignores practices deemed essential by HLC (specifically, "assumed practices" A.7 and D.6):

- District Office is *not* adequately informing nor accurately portraying to the public the specialized accreditation status of the health sciences and nursing programs poised to consolidate in January 2016.
- District Office has eliminated the position of "chief academic officer," an administrative position *required* by HLC.

District Office fails to meet basic expectations outlined in HLC Accreditation Criteria One, Two, and Five:

Criterion One. Mission. "The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations." *Concern: The Mission of the City Colleges of Chicago is changing and with no public discussion.*

- The mission published on the CCC website no longer contains language (still found in 2013 and 2014 documents) stating that City Colleges will "proactively" address "inequities" in higher education by working to "overcome causal factors underlying socio-economic disparities." This revision (unacknowledged and unclaimed) severs an essential connection between our mission and our largely poor and minority student population.
- District Office plans to eliminate or consolidate the vast majority of City Colleges' academic programs and to prioritize job training. Further, the designated focus area locations serve to reinforce Chicago's ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. These changes will significantly undermine our mission to offer equal educational access and opportunities to Chicago's least-privileged students.

Criterion One, Core Component 1.D., "The institution serves the public good and its educational responsibilities are primary." *Concern: District Office consistently privileges private interests over the public good.*

- In 2011, Mayor Emanuel announced to a private meeting of the Economic Club of Chicago that he was unilaterally changing the City Colleges' mission in order to provide the industry and business leaders gathered there with "the skilled workers they need."

- Private entities such as the Civic Consulting Alliance, the Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Company, and Accenture have been involved in Reinvention from the beginning, developing plans for program restructuring and specific strategies for implementing those plans. The strategic blueprint for Reinvention was set years ago with no faculty, student, or community input.

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct.

District Office is exploiting “consortial agreements” as a strategy to allow “District to effectively add or move programs between colleges without requiring external approval from ICCB/HLC” (District Office presentation, July 1, 2015).

- One consortial agreement announced in a Board Report and included in the recent Academic and Student Policy Manual draft states that all City Colleges agree to accept courses from any other City College. This agreement allows a student to graduate from a City College even if she has earned less than 50% of her credits at that College. HLC policy requires that this type of agreement receive prior approval.
- Two other consortial agreements (one for the Health Sciences and one for Nursing) are in fact *not* consortial agreements according to HLC definitions but rather an acquisition of academic programs from another institution, a different change request and one that requires prior HLC approval. Thus the imminent consolidation of healthcare programs rests on shaky ground.

District Office does *not* present itself clearly and completely to students.

- Information on program consolidation and specialized accreditation has been withheld from or misrepresented to students, who grow more confused with each passing day of uncertainty and miscommunication.

The Board of Trustees for the City Colleges of Chicago does *not* have adequate autonomy and independence from political influence. Mayor Emanuel appoints all members of the Board of Trustees as well as the Chancellor.

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. “The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission... faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes.”

- District Office’s unwarranted appropriation of academic control has left the colleges with limited autonomy and diminished effective leadership.
- Administrative turnover at the colleges is extensive and unremitting: of the seven presidents currently in place, fully *five* of them were hired less than two years ago.
- Faculty, staff, and students continue to be excluded from academic decisions. Chancellor Cheryl Hyman and Executive Vice Chancellor Rasmus Lynnerup repeatedly insist that academic decisions are made by the Chancellor and are not to be questioned; faculty’s role is to implement her decisions in the context of the classroom.
- The corporate governance model in place at District Office is antithetical to the ideals of *shared* governance essential to fulfilling our educational responsibilities.

Due to these urgent concerns, it is hoped that the Higher Learning Commission will consider launching a comprehensive evaluation of District Office and the academic control it has assumed. HLC Policy on the Monitoring of Institutional Change (INST.F.20.060) states, “The Commission reserves the right to call for a comprehensive evaluation when changes made or proposed by an institution are so extensive that they call into question whether they fundamentally alter the nature or character of the institution.” Faculty, students, and our communities deserve a voice in these critical decisions that will determine educational access and future educational opportunities for Chicago’s least advantaged citizens.