

REMARKS BY CHERYL L. HYMAN
CITY CLUB OF CHICAGO
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Thank you Paul, thank you Jay.

I would also like to thank my boss, City Colleges' greatest champion, Mayor Rahm Emanuel. I am fortunate, as a public sector leader, to have the opportunity to make change on a large scale and at a rapid pace, and the Mayor sustains those efforts every day.

Now, at the risk of being presumptuous, I have a hunch I will be leaving here today with my fourth City Club mug. So it's only fair, Paul and Jay, that you at least have one CCC mug, along with a t-shirt. Here you go.

Sorry, everyone else, not all of you can get a mug and a t-shirt, because I do have to balance a budget.

Speaking of gifts, each table today features our best gift to everyone: Your future workforce. Our Reinvention and College to Careers initiatives are not just about increasing the number of graduates, but ensuring they have the relevant skills to meet the needs of employers, in other words, to bridge the skills gap.

You have in front of you some of the resumes of the nearly 7,000 students who are registered for our Career Network, the online jobs marketplace where they connect with more than 700 employers... and soon, we hope, you, if you are not already looking to our students to build the workforce you need. Please fill out the card to join our Career Network.

Aon is one of our College to Careers partners working with the business program at Harold Washington College. They can vouch for our students. In fact, they have brought on City Colleges students as interns, and have hired several of them. Aon and their CCC hires are here today, can you all stand? Thank you.

The greatest gift of all is help for our students. And that brings me to someone named Tom Roeser.

Many people in this room and across Chicago remember the wonderful contributions Tom made to this city and region. He was president of City Club for nearly 20 years, and was a fixture on our airwaves and newspapers for even longer. Fewer people know he oversaw external

affairs for Quaker Oats, a job from which he took a couple years off to go to Washington and manage the White House's minority business aid program and also worked for the Peace Corps. Those two assignments were in keeping with Tom's big heart, and I am told a fair amount of his Quaker Oats salary found its way to the needy.

I am grateful to announce that the City Club Board has created the Thomas F. Roeser scholarship in his honor.

Each year beginning this fall, two City Colleges of Chicago students will receive a full-ride under this scholarship. So thank you to the City Club, and please keep buying tickets to City Club events to keep the scholarship going.

Tom Roeser reminds me of another great American, whose name few people know. His name is Gene Kranz and he served as flight director for NASA on the Gemini and Apollo space missions. We are going to show you a one-minute clip of his reenactment of his speech to his team after the Apollo 1 disaster, where three astronauts died in a fire on the launch pad.

Kranz found himself having to reshape the culture at NASA after it seemingly had lost its way, and we certainly can relate. Kranz' words, which have come to be known as the Kranz Dictum, resonate with our team as we live with the responsibility of helping 115,000 students shape their future and that of our city.

When we launched the Reinvention of City Colleges in 2010, we ushered in a new era of accountability and demanded, but also rewarded, dedication to results among our staff and faculty.

Last year in my speech here, I unveiled our new five-year plan with quantifiable targets – an effort to ensure what we do, in the words of Kranz, has shelf life. Earlier this year, we released our first scorecard under that plan, and we reached our goal on 20 of 24 metrics, and three of the missed metrics were missed by 5 percent or less. You have the scorecards in front of you.

These successful academic reforms are merely stepping stones to our overarching objective: giving each

Chicagoan an opportunity to join the middle class and rebuild the very social and economic fabric of our communities.

More than 46 years ago, Chicago's West Side was in flames in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination. I was born not too long after the riots, and grew up in the then-new Henry Horner Homes amidst the devastation and poverty brought by the ills that caused those riots.

While most people remember Reverend King's last speech for the line "I've been to the mountaintop", I find the speech's declaration that "We mean business now, and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world" could serve as City Colleges' mission statement: to offer students from all racial and economic backgrounds a shot at the middle class who may otherwise not have it.

Asking for one's rightful place doesn't mean it's simply owed to those among us clamoring for that rightful place. We have to do our part. Put another way, the way it was put to me by mentors in my personal and professional lives: "Work hard. If that doesn't work, work harder." That also means working past your mistakes and

shedding stereotypes that have been applied to you, some of which you may even have internalized.

My own story was, sadly, not original. Growing up in a loving but troubled home, I dropped out of high school. Don't mis-hear me: My parents didn't drop me out of high school. My so-called troubled home didn't drop me out of high school. Society didn't drop me out of high school. I dropped out of high school. To me it is a self-evident truth that we cannot blame others or the world for our own decisions.

I got back on the track I wanted for myself and a few years after dropping out of high school, I graduated from City Colleges of Chicago on my way to a career in technology and business and today as leader of that same institution. That's how my story ends so far; I want to make sure as many students as possible also get to write their own ending.

So much of my story is shared by so many of our students and so many of them walked a mile in my shoes in my pre-City Colleges life.

Take Channel Clanton, the valedictorian at Kennedy-King College this year, for whom playing doctor as a child meant cleaning her mother's gashes from domestic violence. Later, she became abused by her own children's father and attempted suicide. One day, she grabbed her children and never looked back.

Or take Shaunea Brown, the 2014 Harold Washington College valedictorian, who saw her father pass away from a drug overdose and who herself lacked the confidence to tackle college until her late 20s.

So many people have stories like ours, yet too few have walked in my and Channel and Shaunea's shoes across the stage to get their City Colleges diploma.

In the words of Maya Angelou, "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."

The year I received my associate's degree – I won't tell you when, but it was at least a couple U.S. presidents ago

– less than 2,000 City Colleges students received one. When I became Chancellor, 2,000 was still the annual average.

I am proud to say today it is nearly 4,000, the highest ever. Last year we broke the record, and this year we seem on track to beat that record.

So when we say we aim to boost access to the middle class, this is what we mean. One of the ways we measure our impact on the lives of Chicagoans is what we call the “Reinvention Bump.” The Reinvention Bump is the amount of lifetime earnings generated by the additional degrees our students have attained under Reinvention above and beyond the pre-Reinvention average of 2,000.

After just four years, we have awarded nearly 6,000 such additional degrees. Given that Georgetown University researchers have estimated an associate’s degree is worth nearly 425,000 dollars more in lifetime earnings than a high school diploma, the Reinvention Bump stands at 2.5 Billion dollars in new lifetime earnings for our students. That number does not even count any

additional earnings these students may get from further education our associate's degree may make possible.

Another way we measure our impact is this: Under Reinvention, Kennedy-King College in Englewood, a neighborhood that normally makes headlines for violence and poverty, has tripled its graduation rate for first-time, full-time students since Reinvention.

Not only does this give Kennedy-King College one of the fastest-growing graduation rates in the nation, but it makes it one of the best-achieving urban community colleges period. Bringing academic and economic opportunity to our neighborhoods is exactly why institutions like us were created.

This commitment to strengthening our communities is the driving force behind our continued investment in adult education, meaning GED and ESL. Both are a path to improved economic well-being. Last year, I discussed our new contract with adult educators, which was designed to reward progress against this type of metric. Improvements took place, and last fall adult educators received their first performance bonus. GED attainment

is up 20 percent at City Colleges. Transition from adult education to college-level work are up 33 percent.

We have helped our communities make these strides by shifting our faculty and staff culture toward one of enhanced optimism and engagement on behalf of our students, as we make it a rallying cry that low achievement is not some sort of sentence that anyone should accept. In a recent survey of faculty and staff, 77 percent said Reinvention was either important or very important to increasing student success. Only 6 percent said it was “not important.” Now, we didn’t do surveys four years ago, but I can guarantee a survey then would have had a very different result, given the resistance to the idea of Reinvention we encountered across City Colleges, and sometimes beyond City Colleges.

The other part of the culture change we are putting more emphasis on every day is among our students and our communities.

We have put in place many of the tools our students need to succeed: where there were none, today there are tutoring centers, career centers, transfer centers,

wellness centers and veteran centers in each of our seven colleges, funded through the elimination of administrative redundancies and increases in efficiency that yielded more than 51 million dollars in savings.

This academic year, we organized all our academic programs into highly structured pathways that give each student a clear road map to graduation. Already, 30 percent of students registered for Fall, many of them College to Careers students, are on a pathway, and our goal is to be at 100 percent in Fall 2015.

The next frontier is to ensure all our students not only take advantage of those tools but also give themselves the means to succeed. In the words of the Kranz Dictum, students must in turn live up to their own responsibilities and must never stop learning.

One of the lessons I learned as I rebounded from being a high school dropout who left her parents' house to getting my CCC degree was that life may offer you some second and third and even fourth chances, but it's incumbent upon you to do your part to be ready to do something with those chances. We have to be ready to

deliver our best on day one and every day. Because that is what life expects. That is what employers expect. It is our responsibility to make sure students know this.

Every employer we work with says one of the greatest commodities with which we can equip prospective employees is soft skills.

That is why we are building soft skills –from politeness to timeliness – into our curriculum.

That is why we have banned hats from our colleges. That may seem trivial and our students sometimes struggle to understand why, but it is part of an effort to emphasize that the workplace will require them to look professional and abide by someone else’s rules. I have my eye on saggy pants as well.

That is why this summer, we will develop – with our partners and our student leaders –a clear, simple student code of responsibilities that will set expectations as to what they must contribute to their own academic success.

In essence, when a student walks through our door, they enter into a contract, with each party having its own responsibilities. We have to provide colleges that support learning, and students have to do the work that learning requires.

This academic year, we got a clear validation for this need to articulate expectations clearly: Over the last few years, I grew impatient with the pace at which we were bringing all our nursing and health programs to best in class, because any month, any year we are not where we need to be, students' career and life prospects suffer.

So, earlier this year, I announced every health care program across City Colleges would be consolidated at the new Malcolm X College and its virtual hospital near the heart of the Illinois Medical District by 2016. This will allow us to bring together the new best-in-class facility and leverage the best practices from across our institution.

Among academic reforms, we reviewed the nursing curriculum with our healthcare industry partners and raised the bar on academic standards.

Additional special exams were put in place after each course. A student who fails an exam must repeat the corresponding course, regardless of his or her grade in the course.

There were calls against having such “high-stakes tests.” We stood firm because there’s nothing wrong with high-stakes test to prepare students for such a high-stakes profession as nursing.

This was another step in our efforts to further defeat the tyranny of low expectations that City Colleges and some of its students lived under for too long.

According to Gene Kranz during the Apollo 13 crisis, words which applies both to us as individuals and City Colleges as an institution: “I don't care about what anything was DESIGNED to do, I care about what it CAN do.”

That is the philosophy that drove Mayor Emanuel and I to launch College to Careers two and a half years ago. Since then, more than 150 corporate and

four-year college partners have worked with us to redesign our curriculum and our facilities, and to offer our students access to real-world opportunities.

To date, we have paired six of our seven colleges with a College to Careers specialty.

College to Careers is about more than curriculum alignment and partnerships. It too is about helping Chicagoans lift themselves into the middle class. There are high-wage jobs available today in these six fields, but too few applicants with the skills to make employers invest in them and hire them.

About 1,300 students have found a job or internship in one of their College to Careers area of training. New more relevant programs launch each semester. Enrollment in College to Careers has exceeded even our aggressive targets.

The program also is about making every taxpayer dollar go further. Under the old City Colleges model, money was spent on as many as six nursing programs for instance, all with facilities that were at best adequate.

We are concentrating our investments in one place to make sure our students have access to the best academic foundation, faculty and facilities, period.

Because College to Careers is concentrating investments, we are able to shave 10 million dollars off our initial capital plan while still equipping our students to thrive in the real world on Day 1.

To ensure our programs remain within physical reach of Chicagoans as each college gets a special focus, we are launching a new shuttle bus program this fall. My good colleague Forest Claypool can still sleep soundly, because we are not creating another CTA.

What we are doing is ensuring that our colleges are better linked to each other and to L trains, at a time when 1 in 5 City Colleges students already takes classes at two or more of our colleges, a trend that we will further encourage as we move from a model of proximity to a model of relevancy under College to Careers.

Today we are announcing our seventh College to Career industry focus, at the last college without one.

Harry S Truman College will serve as the College to Careers hub in education and will offer specialized advanced coursework for students who already have selected a bachelor's-degree major in human and natural sciences.

More than 39,000 job openings are projected in education alone over the next decade, with starting salaries of up to \$50,000. Like all our other colleges and College to Careers programs, Truman will offer a combination of certificates and associate's degrees. In Truman's case, the education programs will be tailored to those entering the education profession as well as for professionals in need of continuing education.

All these reforms and new programs have been implemented without asking taxpayers or students for more money. We have a balanced budget and strong balance sheet that earned us a AA credit rating, despite a challenging state funding picture. Our strong financial footing has allowed us to move our 500 million dollar-plus capital plan forward that addresses long-deferred maintenance and builds facilities to advance College to

Careers.

On our two largest projects –the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Center at Olive-Harvey College, and the new Malcolm X College, both to be completed in 2015 – we now have foundations and we are proceeding with erecting the rest of the structures.

Much as with those two projects, much remains to be done as we strive toward a more success- and student-focused City Colleges of Chicago, but we can confidently continue to build upon the solid foundation we already have laid.

As we do that, we must never erase Kranz’s two words – tough and competent – from our minds so we continue to operate as leaders who are willing to face up to their failures, learn from them, and refuse to repeat them, and also learn how to leverage successes and maximize their impact.

City Colleges’ commitment as an institution is to always chart our progress and give Chicagoans the information to decide whether we are living up to the Kranz Dictum.

Thank you.