

## Presidential Address 2018

**Dr. Kim:** Thank you. Thanks for being here this morning. I set this arrangement like this for a very specific reason. I think a lot of you know I actively dislike podiums, but it's not just that. You'll see later this morning, my glasses right now have this very strange film attached to the inside that's actually a series of prisms. This is an optical experiment right now that my eye doctors are working with me but it's ... Since I have some notes, I have to stay close to my notes. If I'm standing like this, it's going to be very awkward, so please forgive me for that. Thank you for coming out this morning on this cold and blustery and kind of messy morning.

I felt like it was time for us to re-engage in an ongoing conversation about our college, and where we are, and why. I want to start by acknowledging what I believe is true. I actually believe that we're all here—not just in this room, but at this institution—because we share a common belief in the value and the importance of Columbia College Chicago. This is a very unique place with its fundamental focus and commitment to creatives and their success and I know that for me—many of you have heard me say this before—when I read those words, the core of the mission statement that we were committed to preparing our students to become authors of their culture, of their times.

That created a sense of being pulled in, that continues to this day. And I think, I hope that's true for all of this because that statement sets us apart from any other similar institution that I know of and proposes two things: that if we get this right we send our students out into the world with a powerful sense of agency, and it also suggest that we have a really unshakable belief as an institution in their inherent value in the world. I just want to put that out there, as something which I believe ties us together. I feel it's very important for me to acknowledge that our college is in tough times and has been for a while. I'm going to talk about this core issue of enrollment a little bit later.

I'm not going to ignore that because that's essentially at the very core of my observations for you this morning. My sense right now, of our college and our community, is some of the challenge comes from the combination of three things: everyone being asked to take on more, scarcity of resources and a lack of clarity, a lack of communication, a lack of conversation about what is happening and why, where are we going, what's the point. Again, this morning is intended as an opportunity to begin, that's all it is. A beginning of that ongoing conversation. I also want to acknowledge that for a while now, I had not been as present to the college as I would like to have been.

I've had my head down for quite some time now. It's had to do with a lot of operational issues, a lot of focus on working with our board of directors, building up their understanding and their knowledge of the college. To use an expression I just heard, getting them to understand the business of the business, not just the business. That's taken a lot of my time. I feel like I'm finally at a point where I can begin to lift my head back up and be more present. Hopefully, today is also the beginning of a period of

ongoing re-engagement. As I said, where we are today, how we got here, where we're going, why?

Right now, what I've noticed, at a period of time in the college's life when people are worried, people are concerned, one of the narratives, which is very strong, at least in certain parts of the college, is this longing for the past. This idea that the solution for many of our challenges is to find ways to return to an earlier period of the college's history. I examine that a little bit and I brought just a few data points. I'm not really sort of a data nerd but sometimes it's good to see numbers just to see. To me, it's interesting to compare the years: 2008, which was the year this college's peak enrollment.

In 2008, our total enrollment was close to 12,500 students. The one thing we can say for sure, without looking at any other data, is that the college had a lot more resource to work with in 2008. I wasn't here but I can see it from the record, there was more opportunity to start new projects, to initiate new ideas. There was just a lot more stuff, if I can say that here at the college as opposed to today. Here's some interesting numbers: the average new freshmen in 2008 had a high school GPA of less than 3.0, so 2.96, and an ACT score of 21. The minority population of the student body was 28 percent in 2008, which goes very much against what some people have said to me, but these are the numbers that the school tracks.

Only 20 percent of new freshmen in 2008 received any scholarship at all from the college, and the college back then awarded a total of 7.5 million dollars in scholarship support. The six-year graduation rate for students who entered then, or that cohort, was 35 percent. Those are just numbers, but I want to contrast them with the numbers from this past fall, just to give you a sense of at least the need to question the assumption that things weren't inherently better. In the fall of 2017, the average high school GPA was 3.3, as opposed to 2.96. And I know GPA is what it is. I'm not saying it's the be-all and end-all.

The ACT average was 23, so there's a significant increase, a measurable material increase in academic qualifications between '08 and '17. 36 percent of the student body in '17 was self-declared minority status. Now, some of you are probably thinking in your mind, yes but with a bigger student body. 28 percent of a larger number is still more students than actual numbers. That's true, but percentage-wise, we have a higher percentage now than we did. The six-year graduation rate is the most startling number. So, remember, it was 35 percent in 2008. We're trending to get to 50 percent. That's a big, big change.

I put that out there because it's something we've been actively working towards. Remember that 20 percent of new freshmen received financial aid in 2008. In the fall of 2017, 83 percent of new freshmen received financial aid, and the difference in total dollars awarded by the college, 7.5 million in 2008 versus 35.8 million dollars in 2017. That's also a very significant change. Now, here is the data point, which I know is going

to sound at least for some of you, very, very puzzling. We'd had a lot of conversation over the years about class size at Columbia College Chicago.

The concern that a school that is inherently rooted in the pedagogical model of intense interaction between faculty and student, whether it's in a studio or in a maker space or in a lab, was being changed into a school that was going to increasingly rely on large lectures—and we have instituted some large lectures at the freshmen year. We started as an experiment, we're maintaining it because it's popular. But in higher ed, the measure is average class size. You take all the various offerings and you average them out against the head count. When you look at that, it's very interesting. In 2008, the average class size was 17 and a half students.

Remember that's an average, it doesn't mean there weren't lots of classes smaller and lots of classes bigger. In 2017, the average class size was 17.9, not even a half-percent difference. Now, for those of you who've experienced the difference, that may be meaningless but again, we're tracking against other institutions of higher education, that's a common measure. The student to FTE faculty ratio, which you can look at any website, any catalog of any institution in the country and they always put that number out there, is not any different today than it was in 2008. It's 12-to-one at Columbia.

Again, that's the difference between institutional averages and personal experience, which I recognize sometimes can be quite large of a gap. I looked at those numbers and I thought, alright, so that's not really leading to a conclusion, a definitive conclusion that things were perhaps better and that we should think about this, so then I examined this whole idea, which is also I think an important narrative for us to consider at Columbia, that moving away from the college's earlier practice of open enrollment, in some very important way, was a move away from the college's true mission. I want us to think about this together, just a little bit.

By the way, the reason why I'm talking about these historical issues is because right now, I don't know if any of you agree with me, I am acutely aware of being a citizen of a country where leadership seems to have become increasingly ahistorical in its understanding of reality and issues. It troubles me no end, the ability to ignore what has happened and just create new versions of reality with no reference to history. That's part of the reason I thought it might be interesting for us together, just briefly look at some of this. All right.

If you think about the founding history, the modern founding history of this college, which dates ... I'm not talking about the origins, I'm not talking about the modern version, we're talking about the 70s. The 70s in American higher education was a period in which a great premium was placed on providing historically underserved populations with access to higher education. This was a primary driver of a lot institutions. It was a very, very important issue of social justice. It's related actually directly to social justice movements. It was very important and Columbia was very much a part of that movement.

There's no question in my mind that the push to be an open enrollment institution came from a place of deeply held principle, and we have to honor that. That's a part of our heritage as an institution. During the period of about ... let's say, the 10 years prior to 2008, where a period of explosive enrollment growth in this country. Simply put, the baby boomers had a lot of kids. Enrollments were shooting up across the country, including here, which is what got us to that peak in 2008. What I want us to understand however, is that while the principles that led to open enrollment may have been very noble. The actual practice translated to this: We were churning students through this school because there was such a huge supply of students who wanted a college degree in that decade.

We could bring in students regardless of their ability to pay or succeed, and when they inevitably failed there was always a new student to take their place. I want us to think ... Again, that is not intended as a blame statement. That is actually not even intended as a criticism, but it is true. I would question all of us, starting with myself: Is that a model that we would want to be proud of or that we would want to return to?

Knowing this college, the way I do, I'm willing to say: no chance. No chance would we want to stake our claim as an institution on what is essentially a practice, which is questionable from an ethical and moral perspective. No, we should not be returning to open enrollment. No, the move away, which by the way happened in 2013, was not an abandoning. Now, let me lead us up to 2013 so I can get us a little bit closer to the present day. 2008 was not only the moment of peak enrollment for this institution, it was also the beginning of a fundamental series of changes that have affected American higher education to this day.

First of all, we're talking about the giant massive catastrophic financial crash of 2007/2008. In that financial crash, the average American household lost a huge percent of its financial assets, and essentially overnight, the ability of many American middle-class families to pay for higher education changed. By 2008, 40 million dollars of tuition that was coming to the college was being paid to us by students taking out private loans. It's 40 million dollars from the private loan industry. In 2008, with the crash that took place in the financial markets, that private loan industry collapsed. So, 40 million dollars of funding that was available to our students and their families suddenly went away.

In the period of time between 2008 and today, if you look at the trend lines for the average increase in middle class family income, it's a fairly moving line, as opposed to the increase of cost of higher education. In that same period of time, federal funding for higher education has been cut. State and local funding has been cut. Subsidies that are available to students at best have been capped. The reason I'm saying all this, and some of you are thinking, I've never heard him use so many numbers before, is because there's a fundamental change in the world around us about higher education.

When I went to college, when many of you went to college and university, the prevailing idea out there was one of two things. One, it was a pathway into the middle class, so a pathway to a certain kind of stability and success. But also, there was the very deeply and widely held belief that higher education was inherently of value. To be an educated person meant something, it had value, it gave us access to understanding the civic principles that define this country. Trust me, that thinking has become in short supply. We have moved, because of all of these things that have happened, into a period of time when increasingly the attitude about higher education is ... Answer this question, what is the return on my investment?

It is the ROI conversation. For some of us who would like to think of ourselves as idealists or idealistic educators, those words can hurt a little bit at first until you realize we have to respond to people's reality. A couple other things about the open enrollment period that's important, because these affect what we're dealing with today. One of our legacies as an institution is during all those years of rapid growth. One of our primary student constituencies was characterized by two facts: a very low ability to pay and very low preparation, academic preparation. Very low preparation for success in college.

That was, again, not to be disrespectful to any person, but that was this college's bread and butter. When the crash happened in '08, which population do you think went away the quickest? The core population that this college have been relying on to grow its enrollment suddenly couldn't afford to come here anymore. The other thing that happened during that period of time was, you know, there's ... One of the interesting phenomena about our institution is that many things about us make us seem like a public institution. First of all, this very strong commitment to access is more typically what you would find in the public higher education sector.

The business model of this college also looks in some ways much more like a public institution than a private, except we get no subsidy from anyone. Let me explain that. During the period from 2008 to today, the private institutions have been on a steady path of a model that I would call high sticker, high discount. What that means is you publish a very high tuition rate and you give a huge amount of it back in the form of discounting. Now, on the face of it, you think, but then that makes no sense. Why wouldn't you just charge what cost of instruction is?

It has to do with the increasing consumer market mentality. What happens now is families increasingly are looking at competing admissions offers and comparing the size of the scholarship offer and there is ... and I think all of us may have some of this tendency too. There's a natural tendency for us in this very consumer-oriented society to equate quality with price. Most of us do it, sometimes very unaware of it and this is what's been going on in the private higher education sector. Columbia has not been doing that. I'm not suggesting our college is not expensive.

If you compare our sticker price tuition to every other, somewhat similar private institution, meaning institutions that are private that focus primarily on creative

disciplines, we're at the very bottom nationally, by at least \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year. Similarly, in terms of how much we discount, our average discount at the institutional level is about 27 percent. The national average is now at 50 percent. The point I'm trying to make with these numbers is not to question whether our decision was good or bad. It means that we're playing by ourselves in a very, very small sandbox and everybody else is playing in a different one.

Remember, regardless of whether we like the language of marketplace and consumer and business, this is a competitive industry and we are competing for the same students that everybody else is competing for. Here's another interesting statistic: If you take all the college-going students in this country, college and university-going students, the private institutions of which we are one, we only have 20 percent of that market. That market continues to shrink. From 2011 to today, the total number of college and university-bound students in this country has shrunk by 2.6 million students.

I really want to paint a picture for you of shrinking marketplace, increasing competition, and a business model which is very idealistic but may not really work for us very well in that increasingly competitive marketplace. There's one more reality that's important for us to think about. Another way the world has changed is that there was a period of time, maybe this was true in 2008 where our exclusive focus on creative practice really helped us to stand out as a destination. If you think about it, just think about Chicago, think about how many institutions have built up similar program, they haven't taken the route of just creative disciplines.

I'll give you one example: In 2008, DePaul University had a tiny film program. They have invested very heavily in their film program, including major investments in cinespace where they now rent two big production spaces. I don't think this is a coincidence, if you track enrollment numbers in our film program and DePaul's film program from 2008 to today, every student that we have lost has gone to DePaul's ... I'm not saying they're the same student but if we've lost 400-plus students, DePaul has gained 400-plus students. There's a lot of that going on in our programs. Increased competition, skepticism about value, questionable business model in terms our ability to truly compete, these are all things that we're trying to deal with.

All right, so in 2013, the institution made the move that I suggested, moving away from open enrollment. I think that was ... Here's one other really important thing. In 2013, the Department of Education in the Obama administration published for the first time, something called the higher education scorecard. This is a document available to anyone in the world, in the country, which ranks institutions based on a small number of outcome measures, retention, graduation rates, post-graduation employment rates and averages of salaries post-graduation.

For the very first time in the history of American higher education, the federal government proposed in a very explicit way that these are the basis on which we are determining value and quality of institution. Think about that shift. You go all the way

from a focus on access, which is about how many people who have historically not been served. You are bringing in to a very rigid definition of how many students graduate over a period of time, and the more students who graduate the better the institution was. Now, I don't disagree, by the way, with some of those outcomes. But it was a sea change.

It has become the first place that many families go to when they are looking at potential colleges and universities. They go to the scorecard. We filled a lot of inquiries from families who are interested but who look at our numbers and say, "You know, you're not as good as I thought you were." Nothing about content, nothing about our faculty, nothing about ... just retention, graduation rates, success post-graduation. In 2013, the college said, "We've got to move to a model which honors the mission but takes into account all of these environmental changes." We abandon open enrollment, we move to what the college in 2013 ... because I remember it called generous enrollment.

Just to give you a sense: In 2013, the college admitted 88 percent of the students who applied. Any accusation that the college suddenly became a highly selective institution, is at best a rhetorical argument. It is not a factual argument. I arrived here in 2013, so what I saw was a college that had an opportunity because of that one decision to realign itself on a very exciting trajectory of excellence and innovation, much more explicitly stated. What I also saw was a college that had no plan to get there, which is why I was so focused on the creation of a strategic plan, which in my mind is nothing more than a road map for helping the college achieve its fullest potential in a number of key areas.

Finally, after all of these numbers and all these words, I've brought us a little bit closer to I think many of our current experiences. Because many of you, if not all of you, are working with or at or in some component of the strategic plan. All right, so what I'd like to do then is to bring you up to date on some things which I believe represent real progress on the part of the college. One other piece, one other demographic piece by the way that's important to know, the trend lines for enrollment in this country are not positive. There is the current demographic projection show steady decrease in all student groups for at least the next 15 to 20 years with the exception of college-bound Hispanic youth, is the one demographic population that is projected to grow.

That's a very interesting statistic because it begs a lot of interesting questions, which I'm not going to necessarily talk about this morning. What does that mean for institutions that are trying to attract a student body that historically maybe has not been a priority? That ties a little bit into the diversity conversation, which I am going to talk about. All right so, I just want to briefly go through the six-piece primary focus areas of the plan, just to call out some of the things which I think represent noteworthy progress since this started and keep this ... Remember, two and a half years ago, it's only two and a half years ago that we started implementation of our plan.

Let's start with Student Success. The provost right now is working with both data and with the faculty to begin to craft a profile of the characteristics that we believe both

historically, and through the direct experience of our faculty, represent the student likely to succeed at Columbia. This is something that we needed for a long time because unless we declare ... or unless we're very intentional about which students we are trying to recruit and why, we're not going to change the enrollment situation. Truth be told, our practice has tended to be somewhat scattershot.

It doesn't work for a place that is as distinctive and specific as we are. That's one very important piece, something more tangible than that right now was the creation last year of the Career Center, which is all about pre-professional opportunities for students, opportunities for students to engage directly with industry as students and then assistance in helping students navigate the gap between graduation and employment. Again, it's too early to really assess the overall success because it's so new but this is a very important development, and the key there was we built on existing success at the department level, and some departments were doing spectacular jobs at this work.

The challenge with the pre-Career Center model was, as a student, your ability to have access to all of that wonderful work was completely contingent about which major you happen to pick. We had to move this to the model where the same level of expertise and access was available to all of our students. Then, finally the big one, which is still in the future is, of course, the building of the Student Center, which I feel is an institutional recognition that the quality of the student experience—their opportunities for the kind of accidental discovery and collaboration which the current physical setup of this campus does not promote—is an essential part of what we need to define as student success, briefly student success.

Curriculum. All of you who are faculty know that you have been spending a great deal of time and effort and thought on revising curricula. I'm going to come back to this. I think it's remarkable how much work has been done, all the way from rethinking majors to developing new minors, new major/minor combinations, a completely new theoretical framework for the core curriculum. But what I'm going to do, I'm going to defer this ... So first, I'll thank you for that work because I'm going to tell you a story about curriculum development.

When I was a new dean at Arizona State, I remember going to my first national conference as a dean. It was called ICFAD, The International Council of Fine Arts Deans. Isn't that a horrible ... ICFAD? Anyway, and I was just full of enthusiasm. I thought, I'm surrounded by all these deans, and we're going to be talking about curriculum and this is going to be so exciting. There was a session where the new deans were asked to stand up and introduce themselves and indicate what they hoped to get out of the conference. I remember, I stood up, and I said, "What I'm most excited about is the opportunity to talk to every single one of you about innovation in curriculum." Do you know those deans avoided me for the next two or three days?

I mean they'd see me coming, and they turned ... because the reality is everybody in higher ed says, "We have to deal with curriculum and revised curriculum and update

curriculum," and nobody wants to do it. It is the single hardest work to do in higher ed. One of the things I'm most proud of in this institution is that we have a faculty that has taken on this phenomenal challenge. As I said, in terms of the content, more coming in a bit. Budgeting and planning may seem like a very unglamorous piece of the operations of an institution.

What I want you to know after a couple false starts, I now have, we now have as a college the expertise to do the kind of serious multi-year scenario planning, multi-year budgeting that you would expect in an institution like this which has never been true before. And actually, that's not a dig against Columbia because it's very common in higher ed, which sort of lives year by year. It's the whole nonprofit mentality where essentially the world begins anew each year. That's not good enough for us, right? That's not going to help us get anywhere, other than where we currently are.

We are doing a lot, and the board has gotten very engaged in this idea of based on certain kinds of modeling assumptions: What does the college look like in five years. How much does changing this one piece affect the outcome? It's finally beginning to happen. We're still in what I would call draft stage so there's nothing yet to show, but the one outcome I can share with everyone this morning is we've come to a very clear conclusion, which I hope is a relief to everyone, that any idea of intentionally shrinking the college doesn't work. We modeled it out, we said, "Well let's see what happens if Columbia ... What happens if we decide Columbia College Chicago should have 5,000 students?"

We realized it doesn't work ... and again I'm saying from a purely financial model. The other thing about a 5,000 student Columbia or a 2,000 student Columbia is we would have to jump into a world of selectivity that is very much at odds with who we say we are and want to be. On the upside, all we know from this very preliminary modeling is, we are still committed to a growth model, we just don't have a number for you right yet but that's one of the advantages of having the ability to model. All right, we've made a lot of progress with improving facilities.

Some of you who are members of our business and entrepreneurship faculty know that we made a significant commitment in this building to improving space for faculty and students. The Getz Theater is almost done, we're at the punch list stage now. What we were able to accomplish with the Getz Theater ... because of the theater faculty's willingness to be very creative and to rethink their original desire of having a very large new theater, we are now able in the Getz to have a theater performance space, which also has very extensive facilities for technical theater, which is one of the areas that many of our students are very interested in, which before was a big problem for our students.

We're also able to bring the set building facilities that were much further down on South Wabash into the Getz, to make it a much more comprehensive theater learning and practice facility. That will be officially opening this fall. And then, of course, just to say it

again, the Student Center. Communications, many who have heard me lament the fact that a school, not a school, our school. A school that is about narrative and storytelling has done consistently over time such a weak job of telling our own story to the world. We've tried a lot of things since I've been here. Some things have worked better than others but here's where we are today, and I feel really good about this.

We've gone back to a very basic principle of, share our success stories with the world and with each other. Stop being so analytical about which story is most important to tell, to which audience. Just flood the world for a while, with all the good news, which we know characterizes this place, whether it's faculty success, alumni success, student success—and it's working. I mean, it's early stage because we've made some shifts only in the last six months, but it's beginning to work. The other thing we're doing, in a way that we really have not done: We're being very aggressive about placing stories about Columbia in the media.

That also seems obvious, but for some reason, it just was not the college's approach. So, stay tuned, but we're finding ... The media has always been ... since I've been here, that's all I can say, the media has always been interested in our college, but it's always tended to look for what's going on, what's going on at Columbia. Well, we're just keeping the same frame. We're just filling it with more positive stories. I also want you to know, we have really been activating the work with our alumni and this has been very exciting. Lots more engagement activity around the country, but also lots more engagement of our alums as potential recruiters or assistants in the recruiting process.

As living, breathing exemplars of what success after Columbia looks like. As mentors to our students. There's a lot of activity going on and sort of one of the outcomes is, finally I can begin reporting to you about some significant success in development. Just in the last nine months we have the next, the newest highest gift from an alumnus. A million-dollar gift. We just received another million-dollar gift for the Museum of Contemporary Photography, and we're in the final stages of a gift which has been committed, a half-million-dollar gift for fashion design. A year ago, I was not able to say anything like that to you.

There's some new leadership in place, but the people who are stepping forward have commented that they're beginning to hear things about the college that are portraying the college in a much more exciting light. Again, just want you to know that. Before I come to the topic of enrollment, I want to put out there for all of you to think about, two new ... not new, let me say it again, two ideas, which don't figure strongly in the strategic plan, which I think represent two spheres of opportunity for the college, and I ask for your best thinking about this. One, this whole idea of creatives and social justice.

Let's think about this, and I'm coming back to the diversity piece in this context. Columbia has a long history of being a school for creatives, that's at least as focused on the question of what is the role of the creator in the world as it is, what is the role of the created object in the world. The very traditional conservatory model is it's not about the

creator, it's about what they do, it's what they produce. We have a long history of this. I actually think ... I've been thinking about this a great deal, I've been thinking a lot because of four and a half years living in Chicago, being increasingly troubled by the divides that characterize our city.

I've been asking myself this question. The prevailing narrative of Chicago seems to be— and by the way, for those of who don't know this, I was born here, I grew up here. It's always the conversation that I hear about the crime, the violence, the lack of access to opportunity, emanating from very specific locations in Chicago so that's always the starting premise of how we think about our city, when we are concerned about it. And then everything seems to be focused on helping those parts of the city get better. There's nothing wrong with that, but I do question if inadvertently, that frame and that thinking is not actually embedding the narrative even deeper into the reality of the city.

It's such a negative frame to start with. Just the other day, I was meeting with all the Chicago presidents, university, and college presidents and I challenged them on this one. I said, "You know, what if once in a while we look at the city in a different way? What if we substitute the lens of deficit and put in instead the lens of asking the question, "Where are the cultural assets of this city? Where is the historical significance of this city?" And suddenly, a place like the Gold Coast becomes revealed as a desert. I've been thinking about this a lot in terms of Columbia and opportunity.

Yes, we need political advocates. Yes, we need people who are committed to providing greater financial opportunity, economic development. That's not what we're best at, at Columbia. That's not what we specialize in. We're creatives. We live in the space of thinking about the human condition, and the realities that define what it means to be human and who is actually talking in those neighborhoods about that reality of life, because here's the thing about economic development and political advocacy for those who live in disadvantaged communities: As things get better, they leave, because the fundamental fabric of their lives has never been addressed.

It seems to me we, as an institution, our students, our faculty, that this is a really powerful area that we can and must explore. It's really related to the community engagement piece. It's certainly related to our exploration of diversity and inclusion. Let me take a pause and mention something about what we call DEI here. The approach to examining diversity, equity, and inclusion at Columbia right now is an educational model. What we are proposing is that we are trying to build a critical mass of individual members of our community, who are versed in a certain way of thinking about the reality of racism in America so that we, as a community, can begin speaking to one another instead of speaking past one another about this fundamental topic.

Our approach is not agreed to by everyone at the college. No question. There are some who feel it's not helpful, not the right approach, but here's one thing I can say for sure: We have foregrounded this conversation at Columbia in a way that has not been foregrounded, as far as I know, in the past. The conversation about why racism, why not

something else, for me is relatively easy to explain. Racism is baked in to the reality and history of our country. It is the fundamental model of oppression, which characterizes the foundation and development of the United States of America.

If you understand that, if you understand the history, if you understand the systemic nature of the issue, you have the ability to see all the other things that we worry about. Anyway, the other thing about our DEI conversation is that we're beginning to be seen as setting the standard for an institution that says they take this seriously, and I remind all of us, the end goal in this conversation is to make sure that our awareness of our individual and collective complicit-ness in racism filters into how we think about curriculum, what is in curriculum, how and who ... how its taught and who's teaching it.

All right so, social justice, diversity, huge for us and very much a part of the DNA of this institution. Here's the other part: I know of no faculty member that I've spoken to in four and half years, that hasn't expressed the desire to pursue more interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation, to the act of creation, to teaching and discovery. The reality is, in spite of all of that interests and goodwill, the models in which we operate continue to be highly traditional academic models. Everything is about silos that are named for a discipline and for better or for worse, that model builds in a level of separateness that denies the primacy of interdisciplinarity, which is in direct opposition to the reality in the world around us.

The world stopped operating with these tiny categories a long time ago. Now, I don't want to diminish the work that is being done to address this, but here's my proposal: We're not going to get there this way. We're not going to get there by making incremental change to the existing structure that we have so we need something new. I'm using the word "school" because I don't have a better word, but actually school is not right, because school is yet another traditional model. Basically, what we need is a playground for faculty from any part of the institution to get together and play around this idea of hybridity, interdisciplinarity, new forms, emerging forms.

This is the place where we really should be imagining what is, what is the work of the future and how do we prepare a student when we don't even know what that actually is? It cannot be governed by the traditional rules. We love rules in the academy, right? This is about excellence, it's about innovation, it's about true entrepreneurship, which by the way, moves fast as opposed to how we like to move, which is very deliberately. It's got to be a space where at least as many mistakes are made as success is developed. Again, I'm not proposing anything specific, I want ... but I want some collective thinking about this because this is a huge opportunity.

By the way, this is also the space where we can finally have a real conversation about technology as content creation partner, which is not active at this institution, much to my dismay. What we have done with IT, which I want to acknowledge is in the last four years, I hope you all feel it to a certain degree. I know we're not all the way there yet but we've made a lot of improvements to basic infrastructure. The place is just a lot more

solid than it used to be. I still remember when I used to come to my office every day, my first thought was, "I wonder if email is going to work today?"

That thought doesn't come in my mind on as a regular basis. I know we've made some progress, but I'm not talking about infrastructure with this. I'm really talking about content—and by the way, in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, what I hear over and over again, whether I'm in HBO, or I'm in Fox or at Warner Brothers, people keep saying to me, "When is someone going to step forward with a school of content?" Again, it's just a piece of this conversation. All right, let's talk about enrollment, which affects all of us. What I'd like to do today is to propose the following idea.

Enrollment is not our problem. Enrollment is a symptom of a fundamental problem. I want you to think back to the words I used to describe the overall context and the change in attitudes about education in our country. We are not clearly positioned in the world around a statement of value. People are not sure what is the true value of a Columbia College Chicago education. We don't state it clearly, we don't position it clearly in the world. And because of those two things, we also don't guarantee it. All the work that all of you are doing is in fact geared towards getting the clarity about that value proposition.

I know that, and I appreciate that, but today what I want to say too is, we have to rethink this together because we're not moving quickly enough and that's again, not a criticism, it's just a statement of our reality, though the model of change that we are currently trying to implement has too many strands, too many pieces that don't feel connected, to bound by the way we think of ourselves as an institution of higher education. As a result, we're not keeping pace. We're actually falling behind, which is doubly frustrating, knowing how much work everyone is putting into all of this.

What I'm proposing today is the idea that, it's in the plan, so it's not a new idea. It's something we all believe in, that we focus on one thing together: completion and success post-graduation. Now, I want us to think about this because, you know I ... I'm going to stand because I don't need my notes for this. You all know ... Well no, you don't know though. I should never say that. Some of you know that philosophically, I have always struggled with never wanting to take something which is rich and complex and reduce it to something which doesn't characterize it fully enough.

For example, I've always fought against the idea that what we do from my world, in arts-based education, which is not ... doesn't encompass all of Columbia, is just vocational education. In my philosophical world, the expression "vocational institution" is a mild insult because I think we all know, as educators, that there's much more to education than that. Having said that, what the world needs to believe about this institution is that we get, we get how expensive this education is for our typical families. We get how much skepticism there is in the world, that if a young person comes here to study something in the world of creative discipline, that there's any reasonable future for them at all other than waiting on tables.

I think we really have to meet the world right now where it is. While we continue to do all these other exciting things, and focus on how well are we doing with achieving ... helping our students graduate, which by the way I'm really encouraged at the uptick in that data point. What and how well are we doing to help our students, if you don't want to say get a job be employed. Be employed is probably better for a lot of our students because a job sounds more limiting than what our students usually end up doing post-graduation. Now, let's think about the implications of that focus because actually it engages almost everything that everyone in the college is doing.

First of all, it becomes a directional value. It helps individuals to determine what should I be ... where should I be placing my energy, or it helps an individual assess: Is what I do effective? Is it helping anything that's important at this institution? My belief about us is that we're all here because we believe in our students and want our students to succeed. It's fundamental to who we are. It will allow for a much clearer understanding of how we reallocate or allocate resources, because we all know tough choices have to be made, but they have to be made for a reason that makes sense. They can't be arbitrary.

It will help our provost and academic leadership make decisions about priority, in terms of programs, in terms of hiring plans. It's basically a call for accountability to what we say we do. Now, let me tell you something, when I went to visit the Savannah College of Art and Design, almost in the first paragraph of greeting, the person meeting me just rattled through all the statistics about within six months after graduation 96 percent of our students have jobs. I mean just boom, boom, boom, boom, and you know what, everyone does that except us. The reason we don't do it, we have never collected that information.

Trust me, we're beginning to build the systems that allow us, but we're way behind on this. I have no concern about our ability to show the world that we're successful, but we have to focus on it. It means that when new ideas are presented, they have to be backed up by research about true need in the world, not just by research about how interesting the idea is, which is again—as someone from the academy, myself—I understand that. We're all interested in interesting ideas. We should be. This is about alignment with the world or with the world that's going to be. Which is cool too.

I think this alignment impacts everything we do all the way back to the conversation about prospective students. It begs conversations about who we admit, which is related to a conversation about selectivity that we're still very vague about at Columbia. It actually begs some very interesting questions about our business model. This pricing thing that I was explaining to you, that puts us out of sync with other similar institutions. It will allow us to make decisions about capital investment, about the type of faculty members that we need moving forward.

It also I think, will require that we be much more enthusiastic and bold about engaging with the professional world, and the creative world at the level of content creation and

curricular re-imagining. That's a hard one for us to swallow because our tradition in higher ed is we're the experts. No one is taking that away. This is a model of co-creation for the benefit of our students. I've asked, as a result of my thinking, both our CFO and our provost to really make sure that as they now move forward with all the various kinds of assessment that they are tasked with, that this become central.

Now, I want to mention this for some of you who are here this morning. You may be thinking, "My work doesn't really put me in direct connection with what you just said, with students graduating, with their successful graduation." I want you to think about this: We are far from being—as much as we care about our students, which I never questioned—we are far from being a student-centric institution. By that, what I mean is the way we do business very often does not take into account the experience of the student engaged in that process. We may be thinking that we're doing something in a highly effective way, but it may be a process which is effectively making it impossible for our students to figure out.

Everyone I think has the opportunity to innovate along that axis. What can I do in my area to make sure that the work is more student-facing and student-centric? Then, if there are others of you, who feel like even that call excludes me, then I would say just in general, what we need is for everyone to think about knowing who we are, knowing what we're trying to achieve and where we're going. What can I do to make this place more effective? That's really the conclusion that I have for you today about our fundamental challenge. We have got ... and I hate this expression, but we have to move the needle farther and faster.

We have to get ourselves out in the world. We have to make sure more people, more quickly understand the quality, the vision, the purpose that characterizes this college. And trust me, the world needs this college to succeed because we're one of a tiny, tiny few that starts with this basic belief in the role of the creative in the world. I have probably talked a lot longer than you expected, or I expected, but what I'm really hoping is that this is the seed of an ongoing conversation. I do want you to know that I understand that the definition ... that to define student success in an overly limited way is narrow, and I get that.

What I'm saying to everyone this morning and will continue to say for a while is that we're in a phase where that's the only way I can think of to move effectively and that over time, we will broaden back out in a way that perhaps sits more comfortably with some of our community. Let me say one last thing at the end and this ... Again, it's never my intention to insult or hurt anyone, but I do feel like I have to say this as the president of the college. If we're going to get this right, we have to be careful not to confuse two things. There is a powerful culture at Columbia of honoring the individual and this is a very ... and culturally, this is a place that believes very strongly in community and in a true community model, we're a community of different equals.

Student success begs a very different lens. In order to achieve what we have to do, we have to be scrupulously honest about qualifications, about credentials. We have to acknowledge that the creative disciplines are not democracies, that there are differences. There's nothing wrong with talking about someone being better than, more skilled than, more experienced than, more effective than. You always have to give the reasoning why, it can't be arbitrary. If we're not bold about this, if we're not courageous about this, we're going to hold ourselves back. We cannot pretend. It's part of rising to the level of excellence that we're capable of.

What that means is a more rigorous process of both celebrating the excellence of our faculty but also an ongoing and rigorous process of examining the basis for determining excellence. That's very, very important. It's part of moving forward in this trajectory, of achieving the success that we need. Again, to me what's important is to never confuse a culture of community inclusion, and the inevitability of exclusion when you start talking about what we're talking about. They're two separate things, and they can coexist. All right, now I'm done. We have ... what time is it, somebody. I really blab a lot. Okay, sorry about that, but I haven't had a chance to do this. Questions.

**Speaker 1:** First of all, thank you for all that context. That was really helpful. From the student perspective, there is basically one thing, one critical thing that I think the college needs and a lot of my peers I think needs, and that is control at the department level rather than at dean's level. This seems like a lot of things will come from that, that will help bolster all the things you talked about. One of the most exciting ideas that I think you had was the playground, that a lot of the different faculty members can come together, spread ideas, make mistakes. But as a student, the things I care the most about right now are the curriculum and the resources that are available to me.

It's a selfish thing but you know anyone probably, I can't say. The way I see it, the people who know what I need the best are in my department and there are a few different, I think, strategies that the strategic plan is going toward that I think might be counterproductive to that. For instance, I think the intention of the plan is good. It sounds like you have my best interests at heart, Dr. Kim, but I think centralizing the decisions may be hurting more than it's helping. To me, it seems like the Career Center, like the kind of focus on college-wide resources rather than department resources, is sort of creating a culture of an administrative stranglehold. That's what it feels like to me.

I find myself ... and so do many of my peers, we find ourselves kind of going on wild goose chases, whenever we're looking for information. When we're saying, "How come this course isn't offered? How come we don't get this in our department?" People say, "Okay you have to go to this person to find that out," and then I go to that person and they say, "You have to go to this person to find that out." I think in our department specifically, we haven't really experienced a lot of the big enrollment cutbacks. We seem to have been weathered the difficulties pretty well but I feel like we're bearing a

disproportionate amount of the financial impositions and curricular changes that I don't think these are necessary.

I think we can do a whole lot better if the departments themselves were given a lot more freedom. I know that things were kind of moved away from this model a few years ago, right about the time that I started here at Columbia, like four years ago, that it used to be a lot more like that and maybe this ... when you said I agree that people shouldn't simply cite historical precedents and without context, without seeing the numbers and knowing what the national situation is. At the same time, and from what it sounded like, there used to be a level of freedom at the department level that is absent now and some consequences have been felt.

Now, I submit that the solution airs completely taking away these things and putting them at the dean level, at higher levels, may not be the end-all, be-all solution and I am not proposing we take it all the way back to exactly what it was before, but I think this needs to be the conversation that we start engaging in.

**Dr. Kim:** May I? I agree. In fact, it's interesting you brought this up because I had an executive committee meeting of the board yesterday. This was one of the topics. The topic of just questioning, have we set the balance in the right place in terms of autonomy ... not just autonomy but also, and we've talked about this too, are we ... Have we moved too far away from constant consultation with the people whose decisions are impacting directly. I agree with you. I mean, we haven't come to a determination of what that adjustment means but you're right, there was the recent history of the college, again, this is before I got here, but was what probably is fair to call an extreme decentralized model.

It did swing all the way in the other direction. I think we are exactly at the moment where we have to rethink. One of the things that I felt when I started was that there wasn't enough clarity about certain ... a number of basic processes in the college and as a result, there were many, many, many workarounds, which didn't add up to anything coherent. We probably did move to a period of time where we're trying to stabilize and straighten out and I'm very much in agreement that this is the moment to examine what can we relax to be even more effective. I appreciate your perspective. Thank you. In the back.

**Eric:** Good morning.

**Dr. Kim:** Is that Eric?

**Eric:** Yeah. It's me.

**Dr. Kim:** Eric.

**Eric:** I've been here about 35 years as a faculty member and you're the third president to speak passionately about the need for interdisciplinary and I'm talking about

resources to just remember that one of the most important resources for ... and I'm very encouraged about this idea of a playground. One of the most important resources is time because if faculty don't have the time to work with each other and over the years, like I said, you know, Warrick Carter talked about this, John Duff talked about it. But every time the faculty asks, "Can we have the time to meet with each other during the school year to try to work out some of these interdisciplinary plans?"

We're told, "No, we can't give you release time. No can't do it, can't do it, can't do it." I understand that we're not going to get to where we need to be in an interdisciplinary way, if the college will not give us a time to do, that's probably in some ways, the most important commodity.

**Dr. Kim:** Thank you, Eric.

**Eric:** Second thing, is in thinking about, what do we want a Columbia student to be, I think we need to start thinking about what do we want Columbia students to be proficient in. When you look at something like LinkedIn, which is basically trying to be a communication between everybody looking for a job and everybody trying to hire one, that's one of the things ... I think we have to start asking what our students or our grads are already proficient in and what do we want them to be proficient in, like someone with a radio degree. I think we can safely say they're proficient in oral communications, for instance and that's one of the ways that we have to start ... start thinking about it.

Again, but all of these things are going to need time and you and the provost have to understand that if you don't give the faculty and students time to have these discussions, you can build nicest playground that you want. I don't know if it's going to be ... much playing that's going to go on it.

**Dr. Kim:** Thank you, Eric. That's very well put and understood and I'd like to make a comment about the proficiencies piece because another thing I thought about as I was pulling my thoughts together for this morning. I ask myself this question: Will the liberal arts faculty at the college feel like I'm suggesting that we diminish in any way the importance of the study of the liberal arts here. If any of you feel that way, let me respond to the unasked question: Just the opposite. Eric, I would describe your statement as having something to do with this idea of transferable skills. As a philosophy major myself, when people asked me what did I learn, what did I learn as a philosophy major?

My answer is always the same. I learned how to think and I feel like I can demonstrate that. To me, the point of the liberal arts here, which is in fact the living breathing core of this institution, is we have to elevate the conversation so that we can actually demonstrate the efficacy of how we approach the liberal arts in terms of helping our students achieve certain sets of proficiencies that, by the way, we don't just make up on our own but devise in partnership with the world outside of us. The time thing I totally get. I totally get and when I say playground, my current thinking without any structure is

actually ... the way it works is that the people who are playing and it sounds funny but are assigned to play.

I don't mean handpicked but I mean, so that it becomes a part of what they do at the college.

**Sebastian:** Good morning, Dr. Kim. Thank you very much for taking the time today. I would like to first to follow up, as all of our students said. I feel there is a lack of consultation at lower echelons, specifically at the department level. For instance, last Saturday, we had a Preview Day that was sort of hardly put on to us and I have to say the organization could use some improvement. We had very few people for ... hanging around a long time. Now we have a lot of admitting student days where all of a sudden, we're expected to bring student life, student experiences, whereas we know that it's far more effective to have students actually come in on a weekday maybe in much smaller groups and sit in on actual classes rather than a dog and pony show.

It's those kinds of conversations that we'd like to have ... carry on more than, you know, having all of a sudden, a new edict coming out from whether to come for admissions or your office or the Provost office. It's not that we don't agree with those decisions, we would like to be ... have a little bit input in it and you know today, it's not just because of the weather, I'm also a bit ornery. Here comes my usual spiel. I think our website, in spite the many improvements and in spite of, I have to recognize the really, really excellent work of many people with Mark, doing with us.

It's still far beyond effective and since you brought up the issue that we are far from a student-centered institution, I'd say, no, we're a system-oriented institution because one of the reasons that is given why we cannot have our faculty prominently—and I'm talking about all faculty, not just full-time faculty but also our part-time faculty—that they cannot be prominently featured is because of the system that we use, Faculty 180. Yes, that maybe perfectly true but let's look at the competition, look at any website of a music department or a theater department and they prominently feature all the faculty with videos et cetera, et cetera. Yes, we have our ways around it. We have found a way to work with the system but that is really a hindrance.

**Dr. Kim:** Thank You, Sebastian. The new improved website is in the works. We're all aware that the current design, which I believe it was an improvement over the previous design, had a very limited focus and wasn't ... in some parts were effective but clearly, I mean, one of the things it didn't do, and Diana and I have talked about this too, is to sort of help a prospective student understand who our faculty actually are. That's very much noted and in the works and I also agree with you about this idea of an obsession with systems. I wonder if ... I haven't been here long enough to know if that's a long-standing thing.

I think if it isn't, it perhaps is a historical piece of development. I'll give you a very specific example that's not about Faculty 180. We have a very inadequate student

information system, which is a problem in terms of the work that enrollment management is trying to do because the systems don't talk very well. We've been cobbling together some solutions, which are not really working very well. It's an example of, we know what we need to do but we're letting the fact that this inadequate system gets in the way. Now, I will also tell you that when we explored this three years ago, it would have cost eight million dollars to change.

For us, the reason we didn't do it, in hindsight maybe it was the wrong decision but it was a financial decision. I'm in complete agreement with both statements that we have to find a way to activate more participation, Sebastian, your expression with lower echelons. I would just say more from the people who are on the front—and that's by the way, not just faculty, the staff as well. I've had this conversation with the leadership of the Staff Union as well. It's somehow figuring out how we go back to building a culture of consultation. Yes, yes, I mean you should know that I ... This is an observation I hear basically every time.

I have an opportunity to be in a conversation. I don't currently have in my thinking, just to be very honest, a good way to make it happen because actually I talk about it a lot. I would welcome some input over time in terms of thinking about if in fact the goal is to create a culture or evolve a culture where it's more than the baseline, the norm to be looking for that sort of feedback. What are the current limits, what are the structural limits that preclude that, and what could we do to modify that so that the limits stop blocking that? Thank you.

**Speaker 1:** I like to think that my suggestion was pretty concrete.

**Dr. Kim:** Yeah, but you know it takes more than one suggestion, right, so absolutely.

**Speaker 1:** I kind of picked the most important thing. I feel that is done, which you know, which it doesn't take like an enormous amount of work, that all the good stuff will kind of flow from there.

**Dr. Kim:** Noted. Thank you. Anything else? Mark?

**Mark:** Dr. Kim, I would love to see us have a greater conversation about the curriculum and helping students leave here with life skills. We worry about having a career skill but quite often our students leave here still looking in a mirror, not liking who they are, not understanding themselves, not having the esteem and confidence. And I think that's something that is important in education to begin with which is lacking in grammar school and high school. I'd like to at least, yes, make an attempt to correct that and so when we talk about playground, how can we institute some of the psychology and some of the personal building, the personal growth into the curriculum itself?

**Dr. Kim:** One of the things that I've noticed ... thank you, is that there's been an evolution in the work of our student affairs staff. When I started here, I think the staff felt a pressure to really kind of promote the idea that all of our students were great and

happy and wonderful. I think we've evolved to a much more subtle and more real model, which acknowledges the broad spectrum of our student experiences and the fact that we do have students who are struggling and who need help and who need assistance. It's helped is to understand that because if you think that everything is fine, you don't worry about building new resources.

Yes, I think ... I will also tell you that, what surprised me when I came here in 2013 was how violently some parts of the community reacted when I asked a question about who's worrying about the spiritual health of our students. I remember a member of my then cabinet saying, "You don't seem to understand that we're a secular institution." I said, "I'm not proposing religious education but it seems to me that an institution full of creatives must have a large number of young people who are exploring spiritual issues as well as everything else that they're exploring." I think that's related to your life skills question. Maybe one more, yes.

**Speaker 2:** Listening to your speech, it sounds like ... I'm sorry. It sounds like the playground also needs people other than just faculty, like Student Financial Services, ResLife. There's a lot of other resources that are at Columbia but the students sometimes are afraid to come to these offices and ask questions because they might not know what to ask. Thinking about curriculum, it might not be a bad idea to maybe incorporate some of the resources that Columbia really offers with the curriculum. I do financial literacy, through SFS.

We just started maybe two years ago so maybe incorporating some life skills in that nature, how to manage your budget, how do you talk about money, things of that nature, talking about food security. These are a lot of questions that we see in the office all the time. "I'm paying my bill today but I don't know how I'm going to eat," like those conversations. We might also need students in the playground as well.

**Dr. Kim:** Okay. That's great.

**Speaker 2:** Because we don't know what the issues are unless we talk to them.

**Dr. Kim:** It's directly related to this idea of success, right? I mean one of the things, which I'm very clear on, which is not part of my personal experience as a college undergrad, because I went to a very different kind of institution, but all undergraduate institutions talk about the role of an education in preparing a young person to achieve a meaningful life. That's sort of a fundamental belief in the role of education. What I'd like to say is, it's really hard to build a meaningful life if you can't get a job. I think that's the level of realism and practicality that we cannot ignore at Columbia because that's what our students need from us. Do we have time for one more or should I be ... One more then, I think we have to move ... we've got a little coffee reception outside so one more. Yes, in the back.

**Speaker 3:** Yeah, so I think many of us ... Well, thank you so much for everything. I think many of us welcome this conversation in moving the needle forward really quickly in both the faculty and staff way. What is the process set out for starting to do that?

**Dr. Kim:** It's a very important question, it's a very important ... The early stage that I imagine in terms of implementation is how this focus realigns the budgetary process so it becomes a budgeting principle, right, because we don't really ... We haven't gotten all the way to a point where the budget model and process has a set of principles that guide it, other than funding what we do, which is a principle by the way. There's that piece. This is now from the administration side and there's the piece of the academic leadership looking at decisions that have to be made.

In terms of what you're asking, which is how do you participate in this, that's sort of the next generative process that has to occur but it probably has to do with finding mechanisms to gather ideas. It's gathering ideas and then making sure that there's an interrogation of those ideas against practical reality. What I just said is a little vague. I mean ... and since this has been ... you're hearing me say this for the first time, my current suggestion is start to imagine what that could be. What it is that you could ... you can imagine yourself doing to help the college achieve this clear direction.

This has to be a process of continuous engagement and conversation. I have to think about that too. That's as much as I've thought through. We'll think this through together. Let's move and have some coffee. As you can see I'm losing my voice. Thank you very much.