

Joel Frater

February 9, 2024

Roxbury Community College
1234 Columbus Avenue
Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120

Dear Roxbury Community College Presidential Search Committee:

I am pleased to submit this letter of candidacy and curriculum vitae in application for the position of President of Roxbury Community College (RCC). As a first-generation college student, I very much value the doors a college education opens for people of diverse backgrounds and means. My own success was enabled by hard work and graduate fellowships, along with a strong support network. As you might imagine, an opportunity like RCC offers speaks loudly to me, given my professional journey and experience working in a collective bargaining higher education system, where I have served as departmental representative to the union as well as in non-unionized administrative roles. Also, I am applying for the position based on my excitement leading in new, dynamic, and fluid environments where a culture of excellence, access, persistence, success, community engagement and partnerships, and being responsive to workforce development needs are success factors. My review of the institutional profile convinces me that RCC is rooted in cultivating the next generation of innovators, which I believe is essential in the pursuit of an impactful and sustainable agenda in higher education.

In addition to more than 20 years as a faculty member, I bring substantive leadership and managerial experience as a college administrator; currently serving as Dean of Student Services for Rochester Regional Health System's College of Health Careers (RGCOHC). Reporting to the president, I provide leadership for the offices of student counseling, registrar, title IX, ADA, advising, student success and strategic enrollment initiatives. RGCOHC is part of a healthcare system comprising nine hospitals, 19,500 employees and a \$3.5 billion operating budget. I served Monroe Community College (MCC) as Executive Dean of the Downtown Campus from 2015-2020 when my position became one of seventy-five eliminated due to COVID-19. In this capacity, I was a member of the President's Cabinet and the senior administrator for a full-service campus that enrolled over 2,000 students, employed 250 individuals and is home to the Economic and Workforce Development Center. MCC is a multi-campus League for Innovation in the Community College Board member and Guided Pathways institution that operates under a "one college" service model. At the time of my departure, MCC enrolled 11,500 credit and 29,500 credit/non-credit, offered more than one hundred academic programs, employed more than 1,600 and had an operating budget of \$121 million dollars, \$15 million of which was allocated to the Downtown Campus. Also, MCC is home to the Public Safety Training Facility, a joint venture between the College, County, and City of Rochester.

Prior to joining MCC, I served as Assistant Provost for Diversity at State University of New York (SUNY) at Brockport for seven of my 20 years tenure. In this capacity, I participated in all aspects of Academic Affairs, including budget planning and management, academic planning, strategic planning, and assessment. I provided leadership for campus-wide diversity initiatives, and the Institute for Engaged Learning. From 2009-2013, I provided leadership for Middle States Accreditation. I led the development of a strategic plan for diversity, founded the College's Diversity Conference, established the culturally responsive teaching series, completed the first comprehensive campus climate study to assess the living, learning, and working environment and instituted the Diversity Score Card as a method of assessing student achievement.

With my experience at Rochester Regional Health, MCC and Brockport, service as an Executive Mentor in the St. John Fisher College Ed.D. program, being a 2013-14 American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow in the offices of the

Joel L. Frater

President and Provost at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), president of a nonprofit organization, and past Board Chair of the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation, I would bring well-rounded experience as well as a diverse perspective to the role of President. As you review my credentials, I hope you will agree that my experience and accomplishments are a good match for the mission and character of RCC; and are aligned with your desire for a “**dynamic, entrepreneurial, and visionary leader with proven skills, capacity, and passion to serve as your next president.**” The following paragraphs further illustrate how my qualifications and experiences relate to this position.

One of my strengths as a leader is my ability to dissect complex systems and work collaboratively to derive solutions that align with the vision, mission and purpose of the institution. I served as a member of MCC’s Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and the Executive Policy Group (EPG) as we retreated from campus in March 2020 and pivoted to 100% remote instruction. This required **enhancements in our technological infrastructure** to accommodate increased demand, despite MCC being a leader among SUNY Community Colleges in online delivery of instruction. At RGCOHC, we successfully implemented a full return to face-to-face instruction in April 2021. *Mitigating COVID-19 losses with Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding (HEERF) has provided short-term relief and the opportunity to continue to ask: How have student and employee post-pandemic expectations for teaching and learning changed? How are we building capacity to fully engage in alternative instructional delivery methods such as hybrid, remote and online? In light of inflationary pressures triggered by COVID-19, how are we strategizing to enhance employee experience? What employee professional development is necessary to succeed in the new normal?*

Over the years, I have applied my skills as a **Certified Strategic Planner** through the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) to help lead the development and implementation of MCC and the Center for Government Research strategic plans. I facilitated the development of the strategic operational plans for the MCC Downtown Campus and the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC). I have been a champion of **data-informed decision-making** to guide strategic initiatives. I applied this skill in my role as **Middle States Accreditation Liaison Officer** at SUNY Brockport where I ensured that the College complied with Middle States guidelines. I co-chaired the steering committee comprised of personnel from all college units and divisions that brought about the College’s successful (2012) decennial reaffirmation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. I served on the Middle States focus groups that informed the reduction of standard from 14 to seven. I was engaged in leading RGCOHC through Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and Accreditation Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) accreditations. *These skills will be needed as RCC’s new president “provide strategic vision and entrepreneurial leadership.”*

Strategically enhancing programmatic offerings to ensure academic excellence has been an essential element of my leadership portfolio. To yield more efficiency in **Academic Services**, MCC contracted with Gray Associates to provide a market demand analysis. I was a part of a team that worked with Gray to help us grow enrollment through program optimization, analysis of the market demand for existing and new academic programs and make recommendations for course locations and delivery models. This work includes the evaluation of student demand, employment opportunities, and competition. The Economic and Workforce Development Center at MCC has generated a series of quarterly reports of key workforce development indicators in our 9-county region. One such analysis identified the health care sector as having a significant skills gap. After further consultation with healthcare industry partners and an identification of the skill level needed to fulfill the most pressing need, the Office of Executive Dean and Workforce Development Center partnered to launch the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program.

I have a track record of **servicing as a visible ambassador and strengthening my institution’s regional standing**. I am a NY Governor’s appointee as a Genesee Regional Commissioner of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation. As Executive Dean, I served as Chair of the 45-member board of the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC). RDDC engages in advocacy for economic development and market tracking of \$2.5 billion in downtown economic investments underway since 2000. I served as a board trustee of ROC2025; charged with raising \$25 million in private sector funding to catalyze downtown economic initiatives. \$10 million was raised in the first year. I served as a member of the ROC the Riverway Management Entity Workgroup charged with establishing the appropriate management structure for a \$50 million NY State Regional Economic Development Council investment in waterfront development in Rochester. *This level of external engagement has been a conduit for MCC and RGCOHC to build economic and workforce development partnerships and friend-raising, and I am poised to lead an even greater level of engagement as RCC’s President, as the institution seeks to “identify new and strengthen existing partnerships and relationships with multiple constituents”*

Joel L. Frater

I have years of experience **elevating partnerships with K-12 and college/university partners.** SUNY Seamless Transfer laid the foundation for articulation agreements within the system, but it also provided a gateway to other educational partnerships. In recognition of the critical role of the K-12 pipeline, in addition to a dual enrollment program that served over 4,000 students, Monroe participated in a two-year temporary co-location of a Rochester city high school on campus. This partnership generated approximately \$1.3 million in revenue, but more importantly, yielded an 87% graduation rate, up from 74% with **54% of these graduates continuing their college education at MCC.**

I possess the **financial acumen to develop new revenue streams and ensure existing resources are allocated appropriately** as reflected in multiple aspects of my daily work as executive Dean. As a member of the institution's Budget Development Team that set priorities for the \$121 million budget, inclusive of the \$15 million Downtown Campus budget, and the MCC Association Finance Committee, I was keenly aware of the need to be a steward of existing resources and a champion for new revenue streams. We worked diligently to balance the institutional budget and ensured that the fee-based component of the budget was equitably allocated to various auxiliary services managed by the Association. Also, as a board trustee, I serve on the Finance Committee of three organizations.

I am a successful and innovative fundraiser, adept at advocating for the College and working with county and state representatives and the Foundation Board to grow resources. I was co-author of a \$600,000 SUNY grant that funded the Rochester Integrate SUNY Excels (RISE) program. I had a long history of working with the MCC Foundation to raise revenue and identify funding priorities for the institution. The Foundation transferred \$1.5 million to the college to support over eight hundred scholarships. I worked with the foundation to secure funding for an endowed scholarship from a neighboring manufacturing company, a large corporation for the funding of SingleStop, and from a family foundation to add a Multi-cultural Center. Also, as a Board Trustee and Finance Committee member for the Strong National Museum of Play, we recently closed a capital campaign that raised over \$74 Million for the museum expansion project. *Continuing to focus on resource development would go a long way in building capacity to cultivate strategic partnerships and strengthen college programs and services.*

As Executive Dean, I served as **senior administrator for the strategic visioning and daily operations of a branch campus** to include, academic services (degree and certificate programs, pre-collegiate partnerships), student services (Enrollment and Financial Services, Advisement, Counseling, Community Engagement and Development, Campus Life, Wellness Promotion), facilities and finance. I led the Transition Team comprising faculty, staff, students, County construction managers, architects, and engineers, who oversaw the process of **constructing a new \$78 million campus** that adhered to the principles of being "on time, of high quality and on budget", while ensuring compliance with State and County construction, procurement, and financial regulations. I led the negotiations for a lease extension in our then, \$4 million/year leased campus and presided over the grand opening of the new campus.

I have been a leader in **advancing strategies to grow student recruitment, enrollment, and retention.** MCC was one of the thirty charter participants in the **Guided Pathways Project.** Guided Pathways has since been fully integrated campus-wide. MCC was awarded two major grants from the State University of New York (SUNY) to lead the implementation of Guided Pathways throughout its community colleges. In response to declining enrollment and data showing that community college students, including ours, face basic needs insecurities that impact retention and completion, I partnered with internal and external constituents to implement student success initiatives that include drop-in childcare, technology enhanced family friendly lounge, a food pantry, Dreamkeepers (a micro-grant program), Save for Success (an 8:1 matching fund), and SingleStop. A pilot program through which Rochester Transit Service (RTS) universal bus passes were awarded to 60 SingleStop students, grew into a transportation agreement whereby all full and part-time MCC students paid a transportation fee and were eligible to ride any RTS bus with a swipe of their student ID. *The above examples are consistent with RCC's desire for the President to "make the advancement of student support services a top retention priority."*

I possess the skills to fully advance RCC's **commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in every area of the college.** I served as a member of and chaired the student recruitment and retention sub-committee of the SUNY Diversity Taskforce that developed the system-wide diversity policy. In response to a major racial incident on MCC's campus, I chaired the Equity Taskforce that resulted in the appointment of a permanent Chief Diversity Officer, cultural competency training, the addition of the Downtown Campus PRISM Multicultural Center, and the application of new

Joel L. Frater

employee recruitment and retention strategies. One of the greatest opportunities for improvement in the community college sector is **closing the equity gap** in student outcomes. At MCC, we launched the men of excellence program to provide male students of color with the skills necessary to navigate successfully in and outside the classroom through academic, professional, and social support. *This underscores the need to bring to scale the Integrated/ Wrap-Around Service Model that Men of Excellence is built on.*

In the capacities described above, I have drawn on **effective communication and interpersonal skills, high emotional intelligence, active listening with a sense of humor and humility; and being visible, approachable, engaging, compassionate, and empathetic.** I reinforce a sense of community through active listening and collaborative leadership, from my days as department chair working with faculty on their innovations in teaching and scholarship, to my recent roles as Dean and Executive Dean, working laterally with President's cabinet members and hierarchically with Boards of Trustees. I have been able to build on and foster strong intra and inter-group synergies through my caring commitment to human resources and a natural diplomacy. I have been actively involved as a faculty member and an administrator in promoting a culture of shared governance. I look forward to the opportunity to engage in a dialog with you about my qualifications and any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Joel Frater, Ed.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel Frater", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.