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February 11, 2023

Holyoke Community College
President Search Committee
303 Homestead Ave, Holyoke, MA 01040

Dear Search Committee,

The search for a new president is an exciting transition for any college. For Holyoke Community College (HCC), it is the opportunity to find a leader who embodies the experience, values, and leadership style needed to advance HCC's mission. It is an honor to submit my application to be the next President of Holyoke Community College. I am drawn to this position because of HCC's bold commitment to providing exceptional education to its students, especially historically underrepresented students. I believe my background, educational, and professional experiences align perfectly with the qualities you seek in the next president.

All my educational and professional experiences have been shaped by my upbringing. I am the oldest of two children and was raised by my grandmother because my parents could not afford to care for two children. My grandmother instilled in me the value of education. She taught me about the concept of deferred gratification, putting in the time required to achieve my goals. She constantly talk to me about the importance of my choices and how they can impact my life. My grandmother would say to me if getting a degree was easy everybody would have one. She was a disciplinarian and made sure I stay on the right track. From these experiences, I learned responsibility and accountability. My grandmother was more than just words. She led by example by attending a community college in Hartford, CT, which eventually paved the way for her to become a state social worker for mor than 30 years. I went to college because of my grandmother, and the leader I am today is because of her. I know firsthand what it is like to face academic and economic challenges in college. I also know the significant impact education can have on the quality of life for students and their families.

These experiences shape my strong desire to pursue education to change my circumstances. As President of Holyoke Community College, I want to increase the student success of marginalized and underserved populations. More importantly, I want to achieve success for all students, faculty, and staff equitably, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or orientation. My experiences as an American Council of Education Fellow, Aspen Rising Presidents Fellow, and a demonstrated 25-year track record of community engagement, building partnerships, excellence in promoting student success, and fostering a diverse, inclusive environment in addition to having a vast knowledge of the accreditation process uniquely positions me to be the next President of HCC. Through my executive leadership experiences, I have been at the forefront of academic excellence and program development; innovative enrollment management; shared governance and transparency; strategic planning; financial oversight; accreditation;

institutional effectiveness; and diversity, equity, and inclusion implementation. I currently serve as Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs at Columbia-Greene Community College (C-GCC). Prior to this, I worked for three exceptional institutions: Old Dominion University, North Carolina Wesleyan, and Excelsior College. In each of my roles, I worked closely with college leadership, faculty, and staff to create a culture of inclusion, collaboration, academic quality, and workforce alignment. Leading this work, is my calling. I believe education transforms lives, and institutions like Holyoke Community College provide innovative learning experiences for all students. I am confident that as the next President of HCC, I will lead HCC into its next chapter that continues to advance its mission to “Educate. Inspire. Connect.”

Collaborative and Transparent Leadership

Collaborative and transparent leadership is critical in fostering a culture of excellence. As a contemporary leader in higher education, I have a broad and comprehensive leadership style grounded in transformational, collaborative, and servant leadership principles; encouraging, inspiring, motivating, listening, building community, and leveraging mutual respect are vital to an institution’s success. For example, my leadership perspective has allowed me to successfully negotiate our recent faculty contract and create a strategic partnership with our local hospital to establish a \$50,000 scholarship fund for employees and students. This approach, coupled with my scholarship, teaching, and administrative experience, enables me to develop and maintain a strong and positive rapport with key internal and external stakeholders.

My collaborative style and strategic approach to governance bring together faculty, administrators, and staff to identify and achieve a collective sense of common goals. For example, working in close collaboration with the Columbia-Greene community was critical for the College to successfully pivot from face-to-face to online and remote learning at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. To keep the college community informed on the delivery of instruction, student services, and COVID-19, I frequently met and interacted with faculty, staff, and students and provided regular updates on instructional modalities, supportive services, COVID-19, and subsequent variants.

In addition, responding to the unique needs of adult learners, the College launched micro-credentials in Workplace Professionalism, Entrepreneurship, Cannabis Retail, and Sales this past fall. I worked collaboratively with faculty to develop an institutional approval process for micro-credentials, a new approach to learning that accelerates the completion of certificates and enhances students’ potential to secure a job that will increase their financial stability and ultimately improve the local economy. These collective actions have helped to ensure the College is strategically positioned to maintain a results-oriented educational environment amid this continuously changing landscape.

As the next President of HCC, I will work closely with the leadership team to ensure the College community is financially stable and equipped with the tools and resources to support and maintain high-quality instruction, comprehensive supportive services, innovative programming, and ongoing assessment. This inclusive philosophy will motivate and encourage stakeholders to work as a team to further advance HCC to its next level of distinction.

Sophisticated Enrollment Management Strategy and Innovative Programming

My experience in higher education has shown that increasing enrollment and enhancing the student experience are best achieved with an institutional commitment at every level.

As the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, I work collaboratively with the admission team to develop and implement recruitment plans that expand outreach and interaction across the region. More specifically, C-GCC incorporates financial aid, career planning, and academic advising at the beginning of the College application process to ensure potential students have a comprehensive plan at the start of their experience. This process leads to improved retention, persistence, and graduation rates, thus helping students achieve their desired academic and career goals. I worked closely with the academic and student affairs team and the College President to prepare a competitive proposal to secure an Achieving the Dream grant totaling \$258,000. The ATD grant focuses on recruiting and training students for high-demand careers that pay competitive and sustainable family wages in a digital economy. In addition, the College President and I have worked closely to identify and recruit new business and industry partners and investors to support the College's future growth and development.

Throughout my career and my tenure at CGCC, I have worked closely with faculty and staff and invested significant resources and time to create an entrepreneurial vision and to establish innovative degrees programs and concentrations that enhance student enrollment and position students for seamless transfer to a 4-year college or university of their choice or other opportunities that support their professional aspirations in the 21st century. I continue to work with key stakeholders to develop new concentrations in Allied Health and Communications. Moreover, under my leadership, the College continues to demonstrate a commitment to implementing an innovative curriculum that aligns with the workforce demands of the 21st century. For example, C-GCC secured approval to offer an A.O.S degree in individual studies. The degree provides students with career and vocational interests the opportunity to pursue a custom-designed associate degree that incorporates technical concentrations, micro-credentials, and a variety of liberal arts courses into an occupational-oriented degree. Further, this degree also allows for the expansion of current certificate programs into a two-year degree path. As a result of the implementation of multiple new programs such as the A.O.S degree, microcredentials, and the Police Basic Training Program, we have seen an 11% increase in FTE year-over-year.

As President, I will uphold the College's mission and vision. I will bring an unwavering commitment to student success that will create a culture that engages learners to be active participants in their learning and overall development.

Promoting Student Success

HCC's commitment to student success is evident, The Homestead Market that offers fresh produce, food pantry essentials, and other household items for students in need, exemplifies this commitment. I share this passion to help learners succeed, as well as provide students with a positive experience beginning with the recruitment process and continuing through graduation. As part of my current responsibilities, I spearheaded reorganizing the College to expand its focus on delivering a comprehensive student experience. I worked collaboratively with the College leadership team to expand the role of the Chief Diversity Officer and advocated for additional resources to create a more welcoming environment for faculty, staff, and students. I revised the duties and changed the title of the position, Dean of Student Services to Dean of Student Development. The new position has an expanded focus on the holistic development of students using high-impact practices.

Lastly, I worked collaboratively with the executive leadership team to assess support services and redirected resources to offer support for innovative student services such as Talk Space, a digital mental

health platform that connects students to licensed mental health professionals. In addition, the College allocated resources to support CircleIn, an all-in-one study space that enables students to collaborate, chat and brainstorm together via a mobile application. I am keenly aware of the holistic development of students as the foundation for student success.

Finances and Strategic Fundraising

By any measure, the global pandemic has exacerbated decreasing resources for colleges and universities. Many institutions are being forced to explore revenue diversification strategies because of increased competition; moreover, the need for exceptional financial stewardship is at an all-time high as college leaders navigate this extraordinary time in our history. As the President of HCC, I will work closely with the leadership team, the Board of Trustees and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the Board of Higher Education to advocate for additional resources to support instruction, supportive services, technology, and capital.

Currently, as Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Students Affairs, I manage \$16 million of the College's \$19 million operational budget, which includes Academic and Student Affairs operation budgets, salaries, and benefits of faculty, staff, and administrators within academic and student affairs. Additionally, I served on the Excelsior College Strategic Planning and the Growth and Diversification Committees. As a member of this committee, I learned the value of vertical markets and gained an awareness of micro-credentials to give students employable skills and credits toward earning academic credentials.

With respect to fundraising, I assist the Columbia-Greene Community College President in meeting desired fundraising outcomes for scholarship support, programs, and equipment. Working with the President this past calendar year, the College's Foundation raised \$1 million for two consecutive years. During my American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship, I worked closely with the Union College President to connect and interact with prominent leaders, foundation leaders, corporations, and business and industry leaders to establish new college friends and partners to invest in Union College.

Additionally, I actively engaged in several fundraising activities focused on annual giving, planned giving, and a capital campaign. As a member of the Development Committee for the Corporate Board for the Capital District YMCA, I worked closely with the Development Committee to plan and execute various activities to raise \$1.8 million in the Annual Campaign. One of many strategies to fundraising is aligning the institution's priorities with the philanthropic interests and passions of potential donors. I will use my myriad experiences to work closely with the Foundation, College leaders, and the Board of Trustees to identify new sources of revenue and expand fundraising activities to support HCC's competitive advantage in the traditional and post-traditional student market.

Fostering a Diverse and Multicultural Community

As America deals with the social reckoning over systemic racism and social justice, the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at institutions of higher education has never been more essential. Throughout my tenure at Columbia-Greene, I have engaged the College community to openly discuss and aggressively address diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As noted previously, one of the first actions involved redefining the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), as well as the realigning of the (CDO) to report directly to the College President.

In addition, I worked with the President to establish and launch an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee that promotes an institutional climate that welcomes, acknowledges, respects, and celebrates all identities, backgrounds, perspectives, and expressions of ideas.

In the Fall of 2021, the College’s leadership expanded C-GCC’s commitment to diversity and inclusion by facilitating conversations and discussions that led to the development of a college-wide Preferred Name Policy. This policy ensures all members of the community feel welcome and respected. As a member of a minority group, I know first-hand the importance of being sensitive to and understanding the academic, socioeconomic, cultural, differently-abled, and ethnic backgrounds of an institution’s employees and students. I am committed to social justice and leading new opportunities to expand and celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition to the moral imperative DEI, there is economic advantage to being a diverse, inclusive and equity community. Local and national news remind us of ongoing labor shortages. Employers depend on community colleges to graduate as many students as we can, and to do so we need to be more flexible and inclusive than ever. The labor challenges can also include community colleges. It is noted that organizations that have implemented DEI best practices are not only more productive but also better positioned to attract and retain excellent employees.

Building Partnerships and External Relationships

Guided by a vision of inclusion, I have been instrumental in planning innovative strategies to position Columbia-Greene to achieve its desired institutional goals and expand its presence in higher education. As the President of HCC, I will work closely with faculty, staff, administrators, the Board of Trustees, and other key stakeholders to identify strategic partners with academic institutions, corporations, trade and industry associations, government agencies, and Veterans’ organizations to expand opportunities for new and continuing students to enroll in traditional, online, remote, and hybrid programs.

Further, I will collaborate closely with the College team to identify industry verticals with the most significant potential to help HCC develop pathways that drive long-term relationships with students and key community partners. HCC’s mission and vision statements are great hallmarks to expanding its brand and footprint in the local community, the region, the state – and beyond. In my current leadership position, I have negotiated a number of partnerships, including with SUNY Delhi, a four-year institution. This partnership is especially relevant to Columbia-Greene’s nursing graduates, starting with the class of 2017, who are required to earn a Bachelor of Science in nursing within ten years.

With its rich and diverse history, HCC fosters its vision “to be a college of academic excellence known for helping students overcome barriers to success” As a committed, hardworking, open-minded, and visionary leader, I will create a results-oriented environment focused on changing lives, improving social conditions, and, in short, championing the college to local, regional, and national communities.

My proven track record as a trustworthy, strong, decisive, participatory transformational leader who inspires others to succeed can propel HCC to its next level of distinction. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my candidacy in more detail.

Professionally yours,



George Timmons, Ph.D.