

Presidential Search Committee  
Berkshire Community College  
1350 West Main Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Dear Presidential Search Committee Members,

I enthusiastically write today, to officially express my candidacy for your consideration to become the next president of Berkshire Community College. With over 21 years of progressive senior level leadership experience in the community college sector, spanning three states, including single college, multi-campus, and system level experience, I believe I am uniquely qualified to be the ideal fit for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lead Berkshire Community College into its next chapter.

With deep family roots in Massachusetts and having spent most of my professional life serving secondary and post-secondary public education sectors in Massachusetts, this role is of particular interest to my family and I, as it provides an opportunity to be a rural community college president and an opportunity to return “home” to Massachusetts. Berkshire Community College’s need for an experienced strategic leader who understands the current higher education landscape and inflection points, the unique challenges and opportunities of a rural community college, can create buy-in with the development of a new strategic plan, position the college for its 2029 New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) self-study report, and position the college for growth and fiscal sustainability during these complex times, align well with my proven skillset.

Having spent three successful years as the campus chief executive officer (equivalent to a college president during the years the college was a singly accredited institution) for Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC), now Connecticut State Community College- Quinebaug Valley (CT State-QV), I understand firsthand the responsibility, opportunities, nuances, and skillset needed to lead a rural community college through the next decade and beyond. During my years at Quinebaug Valley, I partnered with our faculty, staff, administrators, and college community to stabilize our culture, build trust, with an equity-mindedness focus and led and positioned our college through the inevitable merger with Connecticut State Community College.

Among the accomplishments during my tenure at QVCC, we reopened our historical satellite site in Willimantic, Connecticut, through an acquired philanthropic gift of the first donated building to the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) in twenty-five years, allowing us to have a permanent home in Willimantic and expand academic programming to practical nursing while providing continued access for our multilingual students to have access to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coursework and on ramps to additional pathways at our college. We also strengthened our dual enrollment

presence with our on campus Middle College partner and increased the matriculation rate of their students to our college when they graduated by fifty percent.

Listed below are a few of the significant accomplishments tied to my background experience that align with the Leadership Agenda for the next President of Berkshire Community College.

- Strategic Planning and Vision:
  - Led and facilitated the strategic planning processes for Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) in 2022, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) in 2013, and Leominster High School in 2004.
  - Led the creation of North Shore Community College's (NSCC) first Master Academic Plan in 2019.
  - Led the vision for dual and concurrent enrollment expansion at Connecticut State Community College (CT State), NSCC Early College programs and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU, now known as Minn State) strategic growth in early college.
- Academic and Student-Centered Leadership:
  - Well versed in institutional and programmatic accreditation. Successfully led QVCC's NECHE reaccreditation in 2022, led NSCC's reaccreditation in 2020, and am leading CT State's first NECHE self-study for 2027. CT State has thirty-two externally accredited programs, NSCC has twelve externally accredited programs. QVCC had three externally accredited programs.
  - Strong history with strengthening curriculum portfolios collaborating with college faculty and industry leaders at three institutions to develop new and revise programs, in both the credit and non-credit realms. Examples of new programs include practical nursing, optical fabrication technology, public health, funeral services, and special education paraprofessional.
  - Expertise in assessment and return in investment. Demonstrated experience partnering with faculty and assessment staff to design the framework and implementation for multi-campus program review and led negotiation agreement with collective bargaining units at CT State on this matter. Collaborated with faculty taskforce to design and develop the program review process at NSCC.
  - Strong background of improving efficiencies with the college schedule by partnering with faculty and staff to strengthen the scheduling of course offerings including expanding learning modalities and parts of term. At CT State, this led to 39% of students taking courses across our campuses

resulting in 69% retention rates and 24% graduation rate with a 5% increase since 2023.

- Shepherded dual and concurrent enrollment strategy at the college and system level in three states leading to updated academic and student affairs policy at the college, system, and legislative level in multi states.
- Expanded capacity and resources for student support services, with a focus on mental health and wellness counseling, disability and accessibility services, career service, and with food pantries.
- Community Engagement and Fundraising:
  - Proven track record with college foundations and securing philanthropic donations by cultivating the donation of the Willimantic Center Building to offer practical nursing and initial scholarships, ESOL bridging funds through the QVCC Foundation.
  - Developed the proposal and pitch for the Bertolon Simulation Health Care Center of Excellence 2+ million award in collaboration with the NSCC Foundation.
  - Board membership experience with Ready CT, Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), and Lynn Community Health Center.
- Advocacy and Government Relations:
  - Strong governmental relations experience at CT State, QVCC, and at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities at federal, state, and local levels.
  - Active participation in the crafting of current dual and enrollment legislation in Connecticut, testimony related to Workforce Pell and SNAP, and active engagement with area legislators and chairs of House and Senate Higher Education Committees 2023- 2025.
  - Active engagement in the crafting of legislation for adult basic education and dual and concurrent enrollment in Minnesota 2012- 2014.
  - Advocated for Workforce Pell 2024 at the federal level through ACCT with CT federal legislators.
- Internal Culture and Governance:
  - Fostered continuous improvement in college wide shared decision-making to stand up CT State's Curriculum Governance and redesigned it to streamline efficiencies with the curriculum discipline groups and curriculum discipline councils.
  - Partnered with the college community to strengthen developing a campus governance structure to include a staff option at QVCC.

- Strengthened equity minded culture and culture of data informed decision making through establishing a partnership with Race, Equity and Justice Institute, and fostered QVCC's first equity audit to identify areas for continuous improvement and investment.
- Experienced with leading implementation of collective bargaining contracts. Served on two different state contract negotiations teams for management (Connecticut and Massachusetts).
- Financial Acumen and Resource Management:
  - Well versed in performance-based community college funding streams in Massachusetts and proven track record of strong budget management and resource allocation.
  - Oversight of CT State Provost Office budget, QVCC budget of twenty million, NSCC Academic Affairs budget of thirty-two million.
  - Familiar with how to leverage resources with Federal Grants including Title III, Title V, Perkins, WIOA, TRiO, and SNAP.
  - Demonstrated the ability to build revenue through expansion of Workforce programs, facilities lease agreements, program fees, and grants aligned with the college's mission.
  - Experience with facilities deferred maintenance and capital bonding projects and implementation.

In May of 2024, when the inaugural Provost of Connecticut State Community College resigned, I was appointed by the then president, now interim Chancellor of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) into my current role, serving as the Acting Provost, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Workforce Innovation for Connecticut State Community College (CT State), the fourth largest community college granting associate degrees in the country. My role involves being the chief architect of our academic portfolio, adapting our workforce educational programs to be aligned with our labor market and new Workforce Pell requirements, building student affairs and wrap-around services, and strengthening strategic partnerships with state entities and state and regional employers. Though I enjoy this policy and senior administrative role immensely, I do long for the vibrancy of physically being on and leading a community college.

The last twenty plus years of professional experience has given me a well-rounded career to date and deepened my understanding of the evolving financial and political landscape of the community college sector, changing demographics in our region, adaptations of policy and legislation in higher education, the emergence and impact of the promise of free community college programs , the launch of Workforce Pell, the growth of artificial intelligence, and the research based best practice with wrap around student supports needed to ensure students have a strong sense of belonging resulting in improved success

rates related retention, graduation, transfer rates and wage progression across all student demographic groups.

I have seen first-hand the impact open access institutions like Berkshire Community College have on their students, their families, and their communities. Our sector's program and wrap around student services outcomes yield a higher quality of life for our students, by providing access to family sustaining wage careers, economically changing the trajectory of families financially for generations to come. With the investment in MassEducate, MassReconnect, and the Massachusetts Community College Success Fund, Berkshire Community College is poised grow and strengthen its impact and return on investment on the county. This impact fuels my passion and interest in this role. If you believe my experience and leadership style aligns with what Berkshire Community College is looking for with its next leader, I look forward to hearing from you and learning the next steps in this process.

Best,

*Karen Hynick*

Karen Hynick, Ed.D.