

Berkshire Community College
1350 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in serving as the next President of Berkshire Community College. Berkshire's equity-centered, student-focused mission and role as a vital anchor institution for the Berkshires, strongly align with the initiatives I have led as a community college CEO, educator, and unwavering advocate for public higher education.

For more than thirteen years, I have served Manchester Community College—now CT State Community College—Manchester—in a variety of roles, including the last five years as the college Chief Executive Officer. My tenure as CEO began at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, amid declining enrollment, a structural deficit, and a looming system-wide consolidation that created understandable concern across our community. Together, we moved the institution from a 4.2-million-dollar deficit to a 2-million-dollar surplus in a single year, stabilized enrollment post-pandemic, and continued to keep students at the center of every decision. During my leadership, the college was recognized as the number one community college in Connecticut and ranked among the top ten community colleges in the nation, honors that reflected the strength, resilience, and excellence of our college community.

Berkshire's 2022–2027 strategic plan calls for an equity approach that closes achievement gaps, deepens belonging, and ensures that student success is not predicted by race, income, or zip code. My leadership has consistently focused on equity in both policy and practice—using data to identify gaps in outcomes, mobilizing teams to address them, and driving system-wide policy changes to combat discriminatory practices and require executive equity training. At the national level, I serve as a Board Member for the American Association for Women in Community Colleges and served as chair of the National Equity Taskforce, where I helped create initiatives such as the national “Lead Like a Woman” series to build leadership capacity and advance equity across community colleges.

Much like BCC, Manchester also serves a diverse mix of traditional, adult, first-generation, and underrepresented students who often face barriers to college completion. In response to these challenges, I expanded scholarship support to record-setting levels, grew the college foundation assets to over 20 million dollars, and invested in wraparound services, including the development of a Wellness Center to address mental health and basic needs. I also launched the first AAWCC chapter in Connecticut, hosted frequent CEO open forums and virtual “coffee hours” to ensure I was accessible, and created multiple opportunities for students,

faculty, and staff to share their perspectives. These intentional initiatives strengthened trust, transparency, and fostered respect for shared governance during a period of extraordinary change. These examples align closely with BCC's desire for a president who is visible, approachable, and genuinely committed to collaborative leadership and authentic engagement.

Berkshire's profile also describes a desire for president who can connect mission, workforce, and regional vitality—someone who understands that a rural community college is both an educational institution and a critical economic engine. Throughout my career, I have consistently cultivated strong partnerships with legislators, business and industry leaders, K-12 districts, and community organizations to strengthen workforce pathways. I have also expanded internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and I am responsive to local and regional workforce needs. My prior leadership experience at Springfield Technical Community College, coupled with my long-standing roots and service in Western Massachusetts, give me a deep appreciation for how a community college can transform lives and communities in our region.

Your strategic plan also calls for aligning facilities, technology, and infrastructure with teaching, learning, and student support. As a Community College CEO, I have overseen a 55-million-dollar operating budget and more than 550,000 square feet of facilities, leading significant capital and technology projects that included a new dental lab, a new occupational therapy lab, a library maker space, a student Wellness Center, Hyflex classrooms, and the replacement of more than 840 campus computers. Each of these initiatives was guided by my mission to ensure every investment helped students learn, feel welcomed, and succeed. If I have the opportunity to serve as your next president, I would use this same lens to guide my approach to campus planning and resource allocation.

The BCC community has articulated a desire for a president who leads with integrity, empathy, courage, and a strong moral compass. Additionally, a president who understands the importance of transparency and the power of a good example. My own proven track record, and philosophy on leadership, emphasizes courage, ethical decision-making, and the obligation to dissent when needed. I have extensive experience leading through conflict, standing up for equity, and making difficult decisions that prioritize long-term institutional health over short-term convenience. I believe effective presidents must be willing to listen deeply, invite diverse voices to the table, and create a culture where faculty, staff, and students feel safe sharing their perspectives, even when those perspectives challenge the status quo.

I also want to speak directly about my current status as CEO. As I shared in my open letter to the campus community in April 2025, CT State's most recent restructuring created another regional "Campus President" role to oversee multiple locations, requiring current CEOs to apply for their desired region through a national search. After considerable reflection, I made the intentional decision not to apply for that reconfigured role, but to remain on contract through the transition as CEO until June 30th 2026. This decision was not made lightly and rooted in my belief that my experience, leadership philosophy, and commitment to comprehensive institutional

stewardship are best aligned with a presidency like the one at Berkshire Community College. I will leave my CEO role with strong institutional performance, positive legislative and board relationships, growing enrollment post-pandemic, reaccreditation secured, record-breaking fundraising, and a community that has navigated significant challenges with courage and integrity—accomplishments of which I am deeply proud.

At this point in my career, I am seeking another opportunity where I can bring the full breadth of my experience to serve one community with focus, authenticity, and compassion. Berkshire Community College's mission, strategic priorities, and regional role reflect exactly the kind of institution I feel called to serve.

I would be honored to discuss how my experience and commitment to courageous, and student-centered leadership align with the goals of the Berkshire community.

Kindly,

Dr. Nicole C. Esposito