MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Presidential Search Committee, Westchester Community College

From: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor

Date: April 16, 2014

Subject: Message to the Presidential Search Committee

It is my pleasure to work with you to identify the next president of Westchester Community College.

Westchester Community College opened its doors in 1946 to educate the greater Westchester community. A great deal of credit for Westchester’s impressive history can be given to former President Joseph N. Hankin, who led the college from 1971 until late 2013. His 40-year-plus tenure made him the nation’s longest-serving community college president. Throughout President Hankin’s time as the head of WCC, the College saw tremendous growth and success. I want to personally thank him for his remarkable leadership and his total dedication to quality, accessibility, affordability, and expansion.

Among SUNY’s 30 community colleges, Westchester Community College is the fourth largest, with a FTE in 2012-2013 of more than 13,000 students. Today with 58 percent of the College’s student population being of a diverse background and with the most affordable tuition in Westchester County, the college has stayed true to its mission of providing high quality, affordable education to meet the needs of this diverse community. It is extremely impressive that each year more than $1 million is distributed to students through the Westchester Community College Foundation Scholarships.

Westchester’s esteemed faculty has received many accolades, but perhaps most notably, 224 have received the SUNY Chancellor’s Award. Several have also been acknowledged for their published research, textbook authorship, and exhibited major art gallery shows, among other areas. Several have risen to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Professor status. These faculty members make Westchester a thriving academic community that pushes students to succeed and to graduate with the knowledge necessary to excel throughout life.

Westchester is home to the county’s largest educational unit for those learning English. The college’s English Language Institute serves more than 4,000 individuals who take English as a Second Language classes. Also housed at Westchester is the SUNY system’s largest Continuing Education unit. The College offers free job and high school equivalency training and education through the Educational Opportunity Center in Yonkers.
The College has an evident strong commitment to fundraising, which allows the institution to continue on its fantastic path of sustained growth. The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) ranked Westchester fourth in the nation for overall fundraising among community colleges in 2012/2013, and CASE recognized the Foundation with a Sustained Excellence in Educational Fundraising Award.

Westchester students are active on campus, engaged in more than 70 student clubs, sports teams, and national honor societies. In 2013, the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) Northeast Conference named the Westchester Events Board (WEB) the recipient of the 2013 Excellence in Programming Award for having the best student-run programming board and student events in the Northeast region of the United States.

As chancellor, the selection of campus presidents is of utmost importance to me. I greatly rely on their leadership and counsel, and their support helps strengthen the effectiveness of my role as system head. Over the past few years, SUNY has experienced milestone accomplishments. We are committed to expanding on our "systemness" to ensure that we move the University forward as a national leader and a major driver of economic revitalization in New York State. I increasingly look to our campus presidents to work collaboratively with other SUNY colleges, administrators, faculty and staff, and surrounding communities to lower cost, enhance productivity, and elevate the importance of degree completion at each of our institutions.

SUNY’s incredible network of research universities and comprehensive, technology, and community colleges includes 64 campuses, nearly a half-million students, close to 90,000 faculty and staff, and more than 7,500 degree and certificate programs and is represented in every county of the state. Our strategic plan, The Power of SUNY, leverages our assets and resources to maximize our educational and economic impact for New York.

Westchester Community College’s partnership with the greater community is more important than ever as it provides opportunities for residents and businesses to build a vibrant culture and economy. The Gateway Center—the first county-owned LEED-certified green building—is serving as a fantastic educational venue that is having a positive impact on Westchester County’s community and businesses. The activities housed in this building will continue to help promote and expand the workforce-development opportunities.

In pursuit of SUNY’s expansive vision, the Search Committee should recruit a highly diverse group of candidates with the utmost personal and professional qualifications to fill this position. The successful candidate will be appointed by the Westchester Community College Board of Trustees with the approval of the chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees. All terms and conditions of employment will be determined by the Westchester Community College Board of Trustees and the president.

As chief administrative officer of Westchester Community College, the president will be responsible for the development and effectiveness of the campus. The president’s broad areas of responsibility must include working with the WCC Board of Trustees; academic affairs, which encompasses development and ensuring sufficient support of the curriculum; oversight and maintenance of
facilities; fundraising and communicating the image of the college; community engagement; financial management of the institution; and resolving issues of student life. This list is by no means exhaustive and includes additional responsibilities detailed in a job description to be developed by the WCC Board of Trustees and Search Committee.

I extend a special thank you to David Swope for his dedicated leadership as the chair of the Board of Trustees. In his capable hands, I have every confidence in this presidential search process and stand ready to assist in any way I can.

This is an exciting and challenging time for Westchester Community College, The State University of New York, and New York State as a whole. I look forward to working with all of you to recruit a top-notch candidate and ensure a smooth transition for the next leader of this wonderful institution.