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Dear Legislators and Municipal Leaders:

Many thanks to those of you who were able to attend the Joint Legislative Forum hosted by Middlesex Community College, Manchester Community College, and leaders from the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System. It was a pleasure to see you, if only virtually!

At Middlesex, our motto is “Working Together as One Team.”

**Each one of you is an important member of our team.**

Your role on our team is to ensure that public funds continue to support public community colleges like Middlesex. About 63 percent of our budget comes from State appropriations. This lets us keep tuition as low as possible – and frozen for the third year in a row next year.

Your role is also to be chief advocates and cheerleaders for our team. We’re a small college, but we have a large impact. I am extremely proud to report that our team has done remarkable things to support student success throughout the COVID pandemic:

- Almost overnight, we became a fully online college during the darkest days of the pandemic last March. All of our classes and student services moved to virtual formats for four months. Interestingly, this had the side effect of making our classes and services *more accessible* to students with job and family obligations... a great “lesson learned” for the future.
- We held the college’s first-ever “virtual Commencement” in June, and a virtual “telethon” version of our Red Moon Gala fundraiser in October which still raised about \$40,000.
- We began to reopen in July 2020 – slowly, and in accordance with public health guidelines. We anticipate about half of our classes being “on-ground” in Fall 2021, and more in Spring 2022.
- We raised over \$25,000 for our Magic Food Bus (food pantry) and Student Micro-Grants. We added Stop & Shop as a new corporate sponsor, who donated \$5,000 in grocery gift cards which we mailed to students with the greatest financial need.
- We launched a Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to address campus culture and align the work we are doing with other community stakeholders such as the local school districts, Wesleyan University, and major employers.

Since 1966, more than 80,000 students have attended MxCC. Tens of thousands have earned associate degrees and certificates. Many continued their education to a bachelor's degree and beyond. Most have led successful careers and paid it forward by mentoring and hiring students from their alma mater.

We recently honored one such alum with the Distinguished Alumni Award to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his graduation from Middlesex Community College. Now-retired State Representative Joseph Serra, Class of 1970, came to us as a "returning adult student." He already had a family and a career, but he sought advancement that could only be unlocked through higher education. Joe said:

*As you well know, I have been a big fan of Middlesex Community College. When I was a student, I could leave City Hall at the end of the workday and head right over to the College to take classes. I always tell people you have to get into "mental shape" to go back to school. I had to re-learn how to learn. I did it. I persevered. I juggled everything – marriage, school, my job, four kids – but I wouldn't trade that experience for anything. Middlesex Community College gave me an opportunity I thought I'd never have.*

Joe's story resonates across time to the students we see today. We are a compassionate college that believes in the common good. Our Magic Food Bus pantry helps students in need and their families. We award millions of dollars in financial aid and scholarships. Our Courageous Conversations series fosters open, honest, peaceful dialogue. We're a Military Friendly® school where veterans are honored and supported. Opticianry students conduct community eyecare clinics at home and abroad.

The college is also defined by our community—that's also you. We work together with businesses, schools, and nonprofits to provide a relevant, rigorous curriculum that leads to employment and further education. Over 100 employers host MxCC students in clinical placements and internships. Dozens serve on program advisory boards.

Middlesex Community College has this kind of impact *despite years of budget cuts* from the state, which is in "a period of permanent fiscal crisis." We want our commitment to you — and your commitment to us — to be as strong as ever.

MxCC has over 3,000 students but just 109 full-time employees; 200 part-time faculty, tutors, and enrollment staff; and only *six full-time* managers. We are a lean organization whose "one-team" culture says that each of us is dedicated to working together to ensure student success and educational excellence. Employees have spent countless hours devoted to task forces, committees, and outreach activities — often with no extra time or pay — to make this college the best it can possibly be.

"Students are the center of Middlesex Community College." Not only are these words a nice phrase found in our mission statement, they are a promise to fulfill our vision to be *your* college, helping to create *your* future.

Sincerely yours,



Steven Minkler, Ed.D.

Chief Executive Officer

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