

Kelsey Bright

December 14, 2023

Margaret Semmer, Ed.D.
Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs
Monroe Community College
1000 East Henrietta Road
Rochester, NY 14623

Dear Dr. Semmer,

I am writing to apply for the Associate Vice President (AVP), Academic Affairs position at Monroe Community College (MCC). As further detailed below and in my attached resume, my current work as the Interim AVP, Academic Affairs and Assistant to the Provost at MCC, as well as my prior higher education leadership and Congressional research experiences, have provided me the requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies to excel in this role—and have fully prepared me to help achieve the College's Academic Affairs objectives on the position start date.

After receiving my master's degree in policy analysis, I worked for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in Washington, D.C. in positions of increasing responsibility. GAO, the "congressional watchdog," is an independent, non-partisan federal congressional research agency. At GAO, I led studies of higher education programs resulting in published reports containing recommendations for improvements in the areas of accreditation of distance learning programs, women in STEM, and college completion efforts. These experiences both sharpened my management and leadership skills and gave me a broader understanding of key higher education policies, practices, and programs at the national level.

More recently, I have been employed directly in higher education administration, mainly as the Assistant to the Provost at both Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC) and MCC. In those roles, and as the Interim AVP, Academic Affairs at MCC, I worked/work closely with members of the President's Cabinet, college deans, department chairpersons, and faculty, as well as with leaders in Administrative Affairs and Finance, Enrollment Management, Admissions, Registration and Records, Advising, Financial Aid, and Campus Events. These collaborative efforts reflect many of the required qualifications described in the AVP, Academic Affairs position description, and include the following:

Shared Governance, Contract Negotiations, and Labor Management: At MCC, I serve as the Provost's representative for/liaison to the Faculty Senate and serve as a member of the Faculty Senate standing committee on Academic Policies. In this role, I work to ensure the administration's positions are heard while encouraging open communication and building trust between the administration and faculty. At both FLCC and MCC, I actively worked/work on contract negotiations and labor management teams. At MCC, I was a member of the negotiation team whose work with the Faculty Association resulted in a five-year contract.

Exceptional Communication Skills Across Various Audiences: At MCC, I draft most reports and correspondence for the Provost; author policies, procedures, and protocols; and was the communication lead for the Academic Services Division during the pandemic. Also at MCC, I lead committees with memberships from across the College, which I do with a deep commitment to collaboration while

effectively conveying information and ideas to move projects forward. At GAO, in addition to leading multiple research teams, I provided almost daily updates to congressional staff members on the status of our reviews, and I twice participated as a witness at congressional hearings.

Interpersonal Skills and Fostering Relationships: One of my greatest strengths, and a critical requirement for success across all components of the AVP position, is my ability to build relationships and work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students. This has enabled me to achieve a long track record of favorable outcomes, including management of difficult or potentially conflictual situations, throughout my career. I have broad experience fostering effective relationships with leaders from both federal and state agencies—and with cross-divisional partnerships at FLCC and MCC. At both FLCC and MCC, I served/serve as the Provost’s representative on many committees and teams, including the pandemic return-to-campus plan committees (2020 and 2021), the Aspen Unlocking Opportunity team, and the Academic Policies Committee. My ability to collaborate makes me a sought-after team member for many of MCC’s key efforts. By embracing diverse perspectives, I foster collaborative environments that encourage innovative solutions, active engagement, and a collective sense of ownership toward our shared goals.

Data, Research, and Analysis: I have substantial analytic expertise gained during years of analyzing and interpreting federal laws, regulations, and agency data. I have extensive programmatic research experience using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. At GAO, accuracy was highly valued, and using data appropriately to support our findings and recommendations was crucial. At both GAO and the community colleges, I developed recommendations for program and management improvement. For example, at MCC, I work with an array of stakeholders to help prepare an efficient, data-informed schedule to ensure student needs are met and public funds are protected.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging: Working with urban community college students has been a privilege and widened my involvement in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. For example, at FLCC, I was on the charter DEI Council where I worked with others to define the College’s non-discrimination statement, create a DEI strategic plan to address issues related to the recruitment of faculty and staff, and embed DEI in the curriculum and instructional practices.

I have a unique background and skill set for the AVP, Academic Affairs position. Having worked directly with congressional committee staff members on high-profile, tight-timeframe projects, I am accustomed to multitasking to accommodate shifting priorities and changing deadlines. I have completed many national-level and institutional-level research projects. Additionally, I have nearly ten years’ experience working directly in higher education leadership at two State University of New York Community Colleges. This broad range of experiences makes me an ideal candidate for this position.

After relocating to Rochester, I was out of the workforce focusing on family responsibilities. Most significantly, this included caring for both a seriously ill child and a child who was differently abled. Both children are thriving due, in part, to my commitment to their needs. I am involved in many projects at MCC, and I am eager to continue my work to improve student success and outcomes. Please let me know if you need any additional information for my candidacy.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Bright