

Kirk D. Young, Ph.D.
March 2023

Re: Application for President of Snow College

Dear Search Committee,

Please accept this letter as an expression of my desire to serve as the next President of Snow College. In this cover letter, I will address my interest in, and qualifications for this position. I have carefully reviewed the presidential leadership profile, and my responses to the items outlined are contained herein. My intent in this letter is to demonstrate that through an extensive background in higher education, I have developed the capacity to lead in a collaborative and innovative manner. Additionally, throughout a nearly two-decade career at multiple institutions of higher education, I have gained extensive hands-on experience in nearly every functional area of the higher education landscape.

I began my experience with higher education as a first-generation college student at Snow College studying in the Building Construction program. The knowledge and skills I acquired at Snow have benefitted me ever since. In fact, I worked full-time in the construction industry while completing my bachelor's degree as a part-time student, and I earned a master's degree by working part-time in the construction trades.

I began my full-time employment in higher education working with first-generation college students at a multi-site institution. I began by working at a branch campus for Utah Valley University in the rural communities within Wasatch and Summit Counties. Over the years, as my responsibilities at large and small institutions within distinct statewide systems have increased, I have cultivated the traits necessary to lead an integrated team of experts in the process of planning, aligning resources, and accomplishing strategic goals. I am eager to put this extensive experience to work in advancing the mission of Snow College and would welcome the opportunity to elaborate on this and much more experience in an interview with you.

Understanding of Snow College and Its Mission

I began my career in higher education as a counselor in the Utah Statewide GEAR UP Education Program. That role helped establish a foundation that I have built upon ever since. In my role at Jamestown Community College (JCC), I am given the chance to serve the students of a two-year institution with the unique opportunities and challenges they present.

The Snow College mission statement as found on the website states that "Snow College continues a tradition of excellence, encourages a culture of innovation, and cultivates an atmosphere of engagement to advance students in the achievement of their educational goals." Excellence, innovation, and engagement focused toward facilitating the achievement of students' goals have long been a part of my experience in higher education.

Evidence of this can be found in the fact that I was selected several years ago to serve as a fellow for the SUNY Strategic Innovative and Academic Leadership (SAIL) Institute. In this capacity, I serve as a resource throughout SUNY providing guidance for institutions on the very themes mentioned in the Snow College mission.

Long-Term Commitment to Snow College

As a former student at Snow College, I have followed news of the institution for many years. I am quite familiar with the history of presidential leadership at the college for the last several decades. Having experienced presidential transitions at both UVU and JCC, I know how much effort is required to welcome a new president and to adjust to their leadership style, while adopting a new vision and direction. I am very sensitive to the fact that Snow College and the surrounding communities have had to make these adjustments several times in the recent past. It is my full intent to make a long-term commitment to Snow College. The fact that I have been at both UVU and JCC for eight and nine years respectively, demonstrates that I am not simply interested in climbing the ladder, or that I am looking for the next great opportunity. I have invested significant time at both institutions to work to make a lasting impact. I know that it takes time to do so. There have been several opportunities presented to me over the years to “climb the ladder”, but I have had my eyes on Snow College ever since I studied there. I have been focused on preparing myself for the right opportunity at the right time at Snow College. I have been very intentional in my preparation. Of the 17 years that I’ve worked full-time in higher education, 13 of them have been directly focused on rural education at multi-site institutions. Additionally, I intentionally took the job at a community college in a rural setting within the SUNY System nine years ago because I felt it would be the best way to prepare for an opportunity to lead at Snow College when the time was right. I have focused on serving students who are in the same situation and circumstances I was in when I entered college. This is the position I’ve been preparing for over many years, and I look forward to it. In short, I began my higher education experience at Snow College, and I would welcome the opportunity to end my higher education experience there as well.

Demonstrated Leadership and Higher Education Experience

Throughout my career, as I have advanced through progressively responsible positions, I have made it a priority to exercise authentic leadership built on the hallmarks of collaboration and transparency. I have found that any effort at establishing authenticity in leadership is not sufficient without integrity and respect. The record of accomplishment throughout my career attests to the skills I possess in establishing collaborative working relationships in the process of developing an energetic and engaging culture. Additionally, I have also found that clear and consistent communication is imperative to leading in an authentic way. I would eagerly embrace the opportunity to continue to shape the culture at Snow College, while at the same time seeking ways to integrate the college’s legacy within an atmosphere of innovation and growth in new and engaging directions. Not only do I possess the ability to listen and develop a clear understanding, but I also possess the knowledge and experience in strategic development that will enable the shaping of the culture within the context of the current challenges facing higher education.

I seek to be intentional in the way I lead and interact with my team. I take seriously the development and growth of those I lead. In order to ensure the greatest possible impact, I employ a coaching leadership style where team members are challenged to achieve aspirational goals in a supportive and growth-minded environment. I am confident in my ability to provide vision and direction at the college, and community level. I have developed a reputation as a leader with a vision for the future of higher education. For the last five years, I have served as the co-chair of the Planning Advisory Council at JCC, an integral arm of the shared governance framework at the college. In this role, we have overseen and directed the strategic planning process for the college, including the development of a new vision and mission statement, as well as a comprehensive strategic plan.

In the area of strategic initiatives, specific examples of projects I have led include a strategic partnership with a SUNY University titled *Destination to a Dream*. This program gives minority students from New York City access to higher education opportunities they would not otherwise have. Additional efforts include, the development of the L.E.A.D.S. Program, a comprehensive student leadership program that integrates the development of our students with students from each of the high schools in our service region, as well as members of the surrounding community. Each of these initiatives required the collective effort of many people. In each case, I brought together a team of talented individuals who have worked with passion and energy to the end of achieving measurable results.

A Commitment to, and Understanding of Both Academic and Technical Education

My higher education pathway began by entering through the doorway of technical education and transitioning to an academic program pathway and ultimately ending with a Ph.D. that built upon each element of my collegiate experience. As an employee at both UVU and JCC, I have been involved in the development and promotion of many technical programs. One example of my experience can be illustrated through our involvement in the Western New York Works initiative. As the lead administrator on this project at JCC, I worked with administrators at both Genesee Community College and Alfred State College. Our three institutions represent the technical education providers for rural Western New York. The purpose of this project was to bring a regional focus to understanding the demand and aligning efforts to meet that demand for a trained workforce in the areas of CTE. As the leaders of this project, we acquired the funds, developed the plan, and launched an awareness campaign that can be found at www.wnyworks.org.

Both JCC and UVU have a robust offering of academic programs; however, when I arrived at JCC nine years ago, we did not have a strong showing in technical education. Over the last several years, I have been a member of the senior leadership team that has, under the direction of the college president, developed and implemented a strategic plan that has resulted in significant growth and regional support for technical programming. These efforts have focused on understanding the regional workforce needs and developing programs that meet those needs.

While JCC has been focused on developing a strong technical education component, the academic transfer programs continue to be the route that most of our students pursue. As the chief student affairs officer at JCC, concern for the success and well-being of all students is at the center of everything I do. From a strategic enrollment plan centered on student success, to campus activities focused on student health and well-being, to the development of clubs and organizations directed at student development and career preparation, the success of students permeates all aspects of my role. As a member of the Guided Pathways steering committee, I played an integral part in revising and enhancing all services and academic offerings with student success as the central focus. Specific examples include aligning the college's advising practices, streamlining new-student orientation, enhancing mental health services, and guiding the integration of a student-programming initiative in our residence life function.

Delivery of Education in a Rural Setting

While working at UVU's Wasatch Campus, I oversaw several initiatives focused on rural education. I was also a key member of the team that worked to acquire housing at the campus. Jamestown Community College is one of the many community colleges in the SUNY System that is in a rural setting. As a senior executive at JCC, I have been instrumental in understanding and meeting the needs of the region. I understand the challenges and opportunities that exist in a rural location. I am eager for the opportunity to apply these skills and knowledge at Snow College. The JCC service region is extensive, and as the cabinet member responsible for outreach, marketing, and community relations, I have been intimately involved in designing initiatives and campaigns that will meet the needs of our communities for access to full academic opportunities. We have met these needs in a variety of ways that include strategically increasing our concurrent enrollment offerings, increasing our online learning presence, overhauling our credit for prior learning process, and developing a series of micro-credentials for in-demand technical and academic programs.

Build Relationships with Students, Faculty, Staff, Donors, Local and State Elected Officials, and Industry and K-16 Education Partners

Throughout my career, I have focused on being accessible to and building relationships with students. I have extensive experience working very closely with students of all backgrounds and circumstances. This not only includes students at the college, but also prospective students at the high school or adult-learner level.

I have a successful track record of building strong and rewarding relationships with faculty and staff. I am a member of several shared governance committees, most notably the student affairs committee, the assessment committee, and the HRPST (rank, tenure, and promotion) committee.

In a number of leadership positions, I have proven I possess the ability to leverage external alliances and to develop strategic opportunities and partnerships. Whether the goals of these partnerships have been increasing enrollment, securing financial support, enhancing

the student experience, cultivating increased collaboration across divisions, developing in-demand academic and technical programming, serving as an ambassador for the college, communicating with media, or fully integrating the institution into its role as a community partner, I have learned the value that authentic and mutually beneficial partnerships can have. My participation in these initiatives includes the following:

- Appointment by the Chautauqua County Executive (Commissioner) to chair the countywide Hispanic Coalition.
- Appointment by the Mayor of the City of Dunkirk, NY to serve as chair of the city's Hispanic Coalition.
- President of the Board of Directors for the Chautauqua County Suicide Prevention Alliance.
- Vice President of the Board of Directors for the Infinity Center for the Performing Arts.
- Vice President of the Board of Directors for the Jamestown Rotary Club.
- The United Way Advocacy Committee focused on enhancing community-wide efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Implementation of a student-mentoring program in partnership with community leaders greatly enhancing student recruitment, retention, and placement.
- Establishing entrepreneurial agreements with regional four-year institutions with significant enrollment benefits to us and our four-year partners.

My efforts in this area also reach into business, industry, health care, and other sectors as well. As the Executive Director of the JCC Foundation, it was my responsibility to establish strong relationships with partners throughout the community. Over the years, I have learned it is imperative for leaders to be visible, accessible, and engaged in the community and on campus in order to establish these mutually beneficial partnerships.

For several years at JCC, I was tasked by the college president to coordinate our government relations efforts. I was expected to guide our efforts to build strong and rewarding relationships with local and state elected officials. In this capacity, I was deeply involved in the coordinated efforts of the SUNY System to lobby on behalf of higher education in Albany.

Finally, at UVU and JCC, I have been a part of the college and university's K-16 Education Alliance and other K-16 coordinated efforts. In these roles, as well as in the role of Chief Enrollment Officer, I have been the person responsible for establishing rich and fruitful relationships with superintendents, administrators, counselors, and teachers throughout our public and private school partners. In this capacity, I have been a key member of the team that has worked to establish strong academic and CTE pathways into the college.

Prioritization of Student Success While Working with Faculty and Staff through Shared Governance to Further the College's Mission

Each institution at which I have worked has had a strong culture of shared governance. In every role I have held, I have demonstrated a collegial and collaborative management style

focused on enhancing student success. I am keenly aware of the complexity of being productive in a large system like a college or a university, and I have learned that the most effective way to be productive is through building strong collaborative relationships throughout the institution. These productive relationships are the hallmark of the shared governance model.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for all Snow College Students, Faculty, and Staff

Throughout my career, a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion has been a characteristic of my leadership and work experience. I have always been a champion for the underserved. Working with both Chautauqua County, NY and the City of Dunkirk, NY, in my role as the chair of the Hispanic Coalitions for each entity, we worked to develop a strategic inclusion plan with specific goals and objectives. I am confident that my record of inclusive leadership will greatly enhance the work Snow College is pursuing in this regard. Additionally, in an effort to build upon these community efforts, I acquired a grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission to establish the first Hispanic Success Center at JCC. These experiences, as well as my record of accomplishment for diversity, equity, and inclusion led to me being selected as one of three community members to serve on the Advocacy Committee for the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County. In addition, I spent several years working with, and overseeing the implementation of several TRiO grants with the objective of enhancing student enrollment and success. We found that these grant programs magnified our ability to serve all students in the most equitable manner possible.

Student Recruitment, Success, and Completion

At JCC, we recognized that the practices of SEM (strategic enrollment management), while important and effective, were not enough on their own to provide the kind of enrollment success we were seeking. Therefore, several years ago, JCC was one of the first SUNY institutions to adopt the Guided Pathways (GP) framework to enhance student learning and success through recruitment, retention, and completion. For several years, I have been a member of the executive steering committee with responsibility for implementation of GP at the college. Additionally, I was selected as one of a few SUNY members to go through the SUNY Coaching Academy. In that capacity, I serve as a student success initiative coach, certified to assist institutions with identifying creative solutions to critical student success barriers often utilizing the Guided Pathways model as a framework for addressing those challenges. This training was provided by SUNY in association with *Jobs for the Future*, a national organization dedicated to helping community colleges implement large-scale reforms. This experience with GP is just one example of the many initiatives I have been a part of to achieve student success and learning on the way to achieving overall enrollment goals.

Fundraising

Throughout my career, I have had varying levels of experience in stewarding financial resources and fundraising. Both at UVU and at JCC, I had roles that required the procurement of substantial funds through fundraising and grants. As the Executive Director of the JCC Foundation, I oversaw the development and achievement of significant annual fundraising goals. The success of these efforts depended heavily on our ability to work with the regional donor base including business and industry, as well as the development of a strong alumni giving strategy. I have extensive experience generating funds through multiple philanthropic initiatives along with establishing corporate and business partnerships.

A Vision for the Institution and Its Mission Moving Forward

As the co-chair of the Planning Advisory Council at JCC, we had the responsibility to develop a new vision for the institution. The process of developing a vision for any higher education institution is one that takes time and requires input from many constituent groups. The process we undertook at JCC took more than six months and included listening sessions with students, faculty, staff, and community groups. Without having spent similar time and effort, I would hesitate to articulate a specific vision for Snow College at this time; however, I am confident that my experience will enable me to lead the development of a vision that would serve the students, faculty, staff, and community well for many years.

That being said, there are a number of things that an effective vision would need to take into consideration that I am determined to provide. Therefore, the successful President of Snow College will be one who can build upon the tradition of a successful and enduring institution that will provide technical and academic programming, and inspire the faculty, staff, and students with a clear sense of the institution's potential. Doing so, while building a culture of innovation and inclusion that accommodates strategic growth throughout the college's service region while strategically expanding the college's national and international outreach, will be a key aspect of leadership in the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education. Additional pillars upon which a comprehensive vision must rest will need to include, student success, academic excellence, economic development and upward mobility, transferability, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is my firm belief that my years of experience at different institutions within distinct statewide systems will provide the leadership, energy, and innovation you are looking for.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as a higher education executive, I have established the reputation of being a change agent with the ability to build consensus and to achieve results by bringing together various constituencies throughout the institution, the local community, and the state system of higher education. By focusing on, and promoting shared governance, I have achieved significant success in student recruitment, retention, strategic planning, fundraising, and program development. In my role as a member of the president's cabinet at Jamestown Community College over the past nine years, I have acquired the knowledge of current and emerging issues, trends, and strategies in two-year colleges and higher

education. I have proven myself as a leader in higher education who is passionate about innovation. I have pursued ongoing education in an effort to acquire the knowledge and ability to lead teams in producing innovative approaches to the challenges we face.

Throughout my professional experience, I have developed a passion for, and commitment to, the mission of higher education. Three oft-mentioned aspects of higher education that I have focused on are *access*, *responsiveness to student need*, and *equity*. Being a first-generation college student myself, I am an example of the impact higher education can have. It was a desire to do for others that which had been done for me, that led me to a career in higher education in the first place. Additionally, much of my career has been at institutions where many of my roles focused on increasing access and equity. From a beginning as a counselor in the GEAR UP program to my present-day position, I have helped to expand the horizons and open the doors of possibility for students that they never had considered.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my candidacy further. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kirk D. Young". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kirk D. Young, PhD
Vice President of Student Affairs
Jamestown Community College