

Anne M. Kress, Ph.D.
President



December 13, 2011

An Open Letter on MCC's Proposed Downtown Campus at Kodak

Monroe Community College has been located at its "temporary" Sibley Building location for two decades, and it has been seeking a permanent downtown home for its students since its move to Sibley in 1992. This past Saturday, MCC's Board of Trustees recommended to the Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks that the college's downtown campus be located at property currently owned by Kodak. Since Saturday, political rhetoric around this decision has been running at a fever pitch. While I appreciate the passion with which some in our community are advocating for their favored site, the truth is that it obscures the framework and the facts that drove the Board's decision. Please allow me to share these with you:

Moving to the Kodak site is a fiscally responsible decision. Independent engineering cost analysis on both sites shows a *\$10 million difference between Kodak and Sibley*. Using the Winn Companies' own presentation regarding costs at Sibley, there is still a \$10 million difference—even factoring in the tax credits. Further, *at the Kodak site, MCC gets "more bang for its buck" with a project that we believe will come in at or under the \$72 million budget and offers twice the space*. In addition, even with the benefit of additional space, the operational cost of the Kodak site is less than that at Sibley, meaning *lower costs for the entire life of this campus*. The Board weighed this information heavily given the obligation and responsibility MCC has to Monroe County and New York State taxpayers.

The Kodak location offers MCC a campus it owns and controls—now. Much has been made about the historic tax credits that could accrue to the Winn Companies at the Sibley site. These credits can be obtained only if MCC leases for an additional 5 years after all renovations to the building have been completed. In reality, this means an extension of our *lease for at least 8 years*. At that point, MCC would need to begin the entire process of gaining support for a campus all over again—since today's county legislature cannot obligate a future legislature to a purchase eight years from now. To put it plainly, *the Sibley Building option is not an ownership option, it is a lease*.

The Kodak campus is a safer environment for our students. MCC understands the complexities of running a college campus within an urban setting. *We have been downtown for 20 years*, long after others have fled, and our commitment to serving downtown Rochester has never wavered. However, *we have a true obligation as a college to offer a safe learning environment for our students, faculty, and staff*. The reality is that independent reports of police calls for service within 1000 ft of both locations shows 6 times as many calls at Sibley than at Kodak, and every day the current campus at Sibley fields calls and complaints about issues surrounding the campus that impact our mission to serve students. Many of these complaints come from our female students, who comprise the majority of downtown enrollment. *In the words of one current downtown student, "The environment is okay for me right now. I wouldn't send my kids here. I want them to have a safer choice."* The Board could not agree more.

Moving to the Kodak site allows MCC to focus on its true economic development role: educating local citizens and training the region's workforce. MCC understands that its real value in the economic revitalization of our entire region comes in its academic and workforce development mission.

Our graduates add value through their accomplishments, their employment, and—to be frank—through their contributions to the region's and state's income and tax base. However, none of that value can be created if our campuses do not offer the flexibility and space needed for programs critical to our students' advancement and to the economic development and quality of life in our region. Similarly, we cannot create this value if our students and our community do not see the downtown campus as a place they want to be and where they want to learn. The Kodak site allows MCC to move the economic futures of our students, our city, our county, and our entire region forward.

Reaching this decision took the hard work of many people over the course of many years, and the Board and the college engaged in years of due diligence. During that time, we reviewed dozens of potential sites and proposals, and we're pleased that the right one emerged at the right time. MCC stands ready to respond to any questions or concerns about this decision, and we look forward to continuing this discussion. We also would welcome your support in our pursuit of a brighter and more prosperous future for our students and our community.

Thank you for your time and best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne M. Kress".

Anne M. Kress
President