



December 15, 2021

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services  
c/o Dr. Angel M. Royal  
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Colleagues:

It is my sincere pleasure to provide a strong letter of support for my friend and colleague, Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, who is a candidate for the 2022 AACC Board of Directors. I am certain that I speak for many of my counterparts when I say that Dr. Lowery-Hart would be an outstanding addition to the Board. For the remainder of this letter, I will refer to him as "Russell" for reasons that will become clear.

I met Russell at the beginning of the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence in 2017. The staff at Aspen had asked him to speak to us, the fellows of cohort two, about the first cohort's experience. His framing remarks provided continuity and context for our entire group, many of whom (including myself) have gone on to become community college presidents. Since that time, I have stayed in touch with Russell for the kind of confidential friendship and mentoring that is so crucial for college presidents. He is an astoundingly empathetic and thoughtful friend: an excellent listener, a critical responder, and just an all-around warm human being. The Russell Lowery-Hart one sees in a workshop or presentation is exactly who he is on an individual basis.

Russell's advocacy for community college students is well known. Through his many presentations on the Amarillo College story, he has promoted a shift in mindset in our sector on the importance of love and a culture of care. While I am certain he would reject my assertion as hyperbole, I view Russell's impact on community colleges in the same vein as the contributions of Shinichi Suzuki to the teaching of music, or Parker Palmer to the scholarship of teaching as a whole. In fact, Suzuki's words "Where love is deep, much can be accomplished" come to mind when I reflect on Russell's work and his advocacy for students like Maria. His work implores--even demands--that we see our students as individuals and love them to success. This is not a slogan, but a personal mission for Russell.

President's Office

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Along with the rest of the country, I watched with great interest as Russell led his community college through the wildly-disruptive onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of his great strengths is leading through vulnerability, and Russell exposed himself literally by moving his workstation to the greeting area, or "circle desk," on his college campus. He and I have discussed this journey at length. Often against the advice of his team, he moved his presidential leadership to the literal "front line" of his college's pandemic response. He broadcast all of this activity on social media, and his Twitter posts served as discussion points and case studies for what many of us were dealing with as we led our institutions through the pandemic. During our personal discussions, he was open and honest; there are many aspects of this work that he would do differently. Like any truly exceptional leader, Russell is not afraid to look inward, engage in self-criticism, and explore ways to improve.

In closing, it is difficult for me to imagine a leader more suited to serve on the Board than Russell Lowery-Hart. I know and admire several of the presidents who currently serve on the Board or have served in the past. Again, I think I speak for nearly all of my counterparts who know him when I say that Russell will be an exceptional Board member who challenges us all to place our students at the center of all we do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Robinson".

Steve Robinson, Ph.D.  
President



December 1, 2021

Members of the AACC Board of Directors Nomination Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support on behalf of Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart. I have worked with Dr. Lowery-Hart as a colleague in various roles during his tenure at Amarillo College. I have known Dr. Lowery-Hart for over ten years and I feel confident discussing his abilities.

I believe that Dr. Lowery-Hart possesses numerous qualities that qualify your consideration of him as a member of the AACC Board of Directors. To begin, Dr. Lowery-Hart is highly knowledgeable in our field. He has been an outspoken advocate in the field of community college leadership for decades. In fact, his leadership has shaped the core principles of Amarillo College's student success agenda and was instrumental to their designation as one of the Top 5 community colleges nationally and Aspen's Rising Star Award. Through his leadership, he created an evidence-based culture radically shifting the college to embrace the practice of "loving students to success."

Throughout all of our partnerships, Dr. Lowery-Hart is exceedingly strong in his understanding of the powerful use of storytelling to show the deep connections that we know our students, faculty, staff, and by extension our colleges, have with our communities. Dr. Lowery-Hart is especially skillful in two important ways. First, he is a true equity minded leader whose personal mission is to serve all students regardless of their backgrounds. Second, he is one of the most adept individuals I know at capturing and ensuring that the student voice is always central to our work.

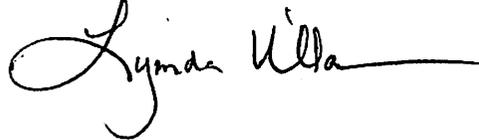
Dr. Lowery-Hart has a clear understanding of the big picture issues facing community colleges today and has a superior ability to implement organizational change. He understands the need for the development of integrated, evidence-based, coherent pathways and has spent his professional career implementing systemic change to support student success. His years of experience leading Amarillo College underscore this understanding. He has contributed to the development of one of the strongest integrated student success agendas in the country and understands the urgency with which community college reform is needed.

While Dr. Lowery-Hart's expertise in his field has been instrumental in helping Amarillo College become a leader in the student success completion movement, it is his *emotional* support as a colleague that has added value above and beyond his subject matter expertise. Dr. Lowery-Hart has worked closely with me, devoting countless hours to aid in my own professional development. While many colleagues are knowledgeable in their content area and provide others with *informational* support, Dr. Lowery-Hart has established a level of engagement with me that conveys consideration of my own contributions as well as concern for my overall well-being.

While Dr. Lowery-Hart may be aware of how his work has shaped the policies and decisions that affect so many college students around the nation, I am certain that he is unaware of just how much his support has affected my own life. I am truly grateful to have worked with such a student-focused professional and will forever be grateful for the time and commitment he has invested in me and my own career.

I hope this information has conveyed my sincere support for Dr. Lowery-Hart. He is most deserving of this opportunity and will continue to make outstanding contributions to the field of higher education. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lynda Villa", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lynda Villanueva, Ph.D.



## Lorain County Community College

Office of the President

December 20, 2021

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services  
C/O Dr. Angel M. Royal  
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services,

I am delighted to write to you in support of Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, President of Amarillo College, and nominee for the 2022 AACC Board of Directors in the Institutional Member category. As members of the inaugural cohort for the prestigious Aspen Institute Rising President Fellowship in 2016 and collaborating on the Strategic Horizons Network (SHN), I have had the distinct opportunity to witness Dr. Lowery-Hart's compassionate and visionary leadership as a community college president blossom over the last eight years leading to transformational student success outcomes that most recently earned Amarillo College recognition as an Aspen Prize Top 5 and Rising Star institution in 2021, and by Achieving the Dream Inc. as the Leah Meyer Austin award recipient in 2019.

Under his leadership, Amarillo College developed its Culture of Caring that centers equity and student success as its top strategic priorities at the institution. His innovative work to support students through wraparound services and removing barriers is nationally recognized – even serving as a model and inspiration for Lorain County Community College's own Student Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC). Amarillo has invested over \$50 million in resources directly to under-served students. Through this support and wraparound services, Amarillo College has made significant strides in closing achievement gaps and increasing success in gateway courses and developmental education, as well as completion rates. Dr. Lowery-Hart's equity and student success work is prominently recognized in recent features in *The Atlantic* (June 2018) by Marcella Bombardieri and in the documentary on AmazonPrime, *The Antidote*, from Oscar Nominated and Emmy Award winning directors Kahane Cooperman and John Hoffman. Amarillo College's Culture of Caring truly epitomizes his personal commitment to advancing student success and equity, not only in the community he serves, but at the state and national levels as well.

Maintaining a transformational vision to lead innovative initiatives that promote student success and institutional excellence, Dr. Lowery-Hart demonstrates critical urgency, creative problem-solving and strategic leadership crucial to advancing the community college movement, advocacy, and educational reform nationally. His other notable achievements and innovations as president include launching career accelerator skill boot camps in in-demand industries such as information technology and cybersecurity, as well as launching global online degrees in VFX/Gaming with future expansion to other technology-specific fields which are transforming the economy of the Texas Panhandle. Dr. Lowery-Hart launched Amarillo College Foundation's first comprehensive campaign with increases from \$28 million to \$77 million, and continues to advocate for students and the institution.



## Lorain County Community College

Office of the President

Dr. Lowery-Hart's experience facilitating collaboration among AACC institutions is evident through his leadership on the Strategic Horizons Network, a unique, collaborative learning community with an agenda focused on organizational learning. The impact of the Strategic Horizons Network has been transformational examining trends impacting the future of work, innovation, and strategies for transformation that lead to extraordinary performance and growth in community colleges.

Dr. Lowery-Hart has invested himself and his career in education, having served previously as a faculty member and in numerous administrator positions at both universities and community colleges. His priority and passion is equity and student success. Outside of Dr. Lowery-Hart's role as a transformational leader, he is an active member of her community, and currently serves on the boards for the National Resource Center for First Year Experience and Students Transition Advisory Board, Jobs for the Future (JFF) Policy Trust, Texas Association of Community Colleges Legislative Committee, Texas Tech National Communication Advisory Board, Texas Student Success Council, Panhandle P16 Council, Northwest Hospital Board, Amarillo Opera Board, Amarillo Museum of Art, and Leadership Amarillo/Canyon.

Without hesitation, I am thrilled to fully support Dr. Lowery-Hart as a nominee for the 2022 AACC Board of Directors in the Institutional Member category. Dr. Lowery-Hart without a doubt would make an extraordinary addition to the AACC Board of Directors advancing AACC's mission building a nation of learners by advancing America's community college through caring advocacy, collaboration, community-building, and critical area expertise to expand critical student success work across our nation's community colleges. Should I be able to answer any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcia Ballinger".

Marcia J. Ballinger, Ph.D.  
President



Dr. Michael A. Baston, President

**December 22, 2021**

Dr. Angel M. Royal  
Secretary to the AACC Board of Directors and Chief of Staff  
1 Dupont Circle, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Royal:

I write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart for membership on the AACC Board of Directors with great pleasure. Russell has served with distinction as President of Amarillo College since 2014. In addition, Amarillo College was named a 2021 Top Five Institution and Rising Star for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence due to Russell's leadership, which focuses on improving student success through systemic and cultural change centered on one word: LOVE.

Russell and I became friends and brothers as members of the inaugural class of Aspen Institute's Community College Excellence Presidential Fellowship Program. As a current board member, I know of the qualities and characteristics that board candidates must have to serve our association effectively. Russell is a man deeply committed to providing access and support for students to advance social justice in our nation. In addition, Russell and I presently serve together on the Jobs for the Future's Policy Leadership Trust. As Trust Co-Chair, I have first-hand knowledge of Russell's policy work which will add incredible value as we advance the work of AACC. Moreover, Russell's character, commitment to loving leadership, understanding of the challenges and promise of community college, and the respect he earned among his peers convince me that he can make lasting and meaningful contributions to AACC. I feel blessed to call Russell my friend and honored to recommend him for board service.

Should you have any questions regarding the substance of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. A. Baston", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Michael A. Baston  
President