

2019 CANDIDATE PROFILE
JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT-LARGE

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Campaign Treasurer: Tom Kessler

Occupation / Place of Employment (25 words): Healthcare Information Technology
Professional, Business Owner

Most Recent Political/Community Experience (25 words):

Girl Scouts Troop Leader, Interfaith Community leader, Co-leader for Greater KC-area food drive. Advisory Board member to youth groups

1. Why are you uniquely qualified to serve on the JCCC Board of Trustees and why are you seeking this office?

As an entrepreneur, woman in STEM I have extensive exposure and experience in the private sector, with over 22 years in Healthcare IT. Being an employee and employer I have gained unique insight into the needs of the private sector for well prepared employees. Along with business, financial and management acumen I bring values of compassion, dedication, inclusion, equity and a balance to the table. Clearly JCCC Board is not representative of the diversity in our community. As the only woman in STEM, I am equipped to lead and mentor young women who want to follow in my footsteps

2. If elected, what would be your top three agenda items as a Trustee that you would work towards for the betterment of the College and the education it provides?

I would start with the following: 1. Create a pipeline to bridge the gap between academics and industry to better meet the workforce needs of Johnson County. 2. Strive to provide a competitive edge to JCCC students(through research opportunities, improved college credit transfer processes, apprenticeship and internship programs) 3. Bring back Brown and Gold - a program to serve and connect with our valued senior citizens. Although the average age of JCCC students is from 20 to 24, we should not neglect the senior citizens who contributed to the prosperity of JCCC for the past 50 years.

3. With respect to paying for the cost of educating the College's students, where do you stand regarding tuition increases vs. mill levy increases and what is the appropriate way to balance those?

JCCC is an economic driver that more than pays for its costs to the community. It is a low cost alternative to KU and K state. College debt crisis is a conversation that is in the spotlight in

Kansas and it is very important to keep colleges affordable. Lower tuition costs would encourage students to set down deeper roots in Johnson County. When we lose our best students to out of state colleges, we are damaging that foundation. Our investment in students will lead to a well prepared workforce that will form the foundation of our future prosperity.

4. Kansas is experiencing all-time low unemployment rates and employers are struggling to find qualified workers, especially in technical and skilled trades. What role should Johnson County Community College play with regard to workforce readiness, locally and statewide?

This is a very important concern that was brought to my attention by several business owners that I worked with. Some of them who were depending on JCCC for their workforce planning needs are now looking into other options as their resource needs are not met by JCCC. I would mitigate that through: 1. Apprenticeship/Internship programs to help students with job placements and businesses with workforce planning 2. Research opportunities to put our students on cutting edge of their field 3. Ensure our curriculum is on par with the industry standards and trends through collaborative processes with the private sector

5. What do you see as the key aspects of the JCCC's relationship with our Universities? With the other Kansas community colleges?

Many KU and K-State students take classes at JCCC and many Blue Valley School District high school students also dual enroll and get credits through JCCC. Some complete their junior education at JCCC and then choose to complete their degrees at KU or K State or out of state schools. A Competitive curriculum that is on par with industry trends and a seamless credit transfer process with in-state and out-of-state schools will attract more students and help address the decline in student enrollment at JCCC even when our economy is doing well.

6. What is your vision for the college ten years from now?

JCCC has been the economic driver of prosperity for Johnson County for the past 50 years. I would like to add to its legacy while preserving its culture, mission and objectives. I would like to make its offerings competitive with the state schools. When I spoke with a promising student who chose scholarships at K-State over his local option, I felt we missed an opportunity to retain talent. As every business owner knows, it is ten times more expensive to recruit than retain. Lets create a JCCC that retains more of our best and brightest.