(August 27, 2010 Wellesley Hills, MA) — Five years ago, when Carole Berotte Joseph left State University of New York (SUNY) to become the first woman to head Massachusetts Bay Community College and the first Haitian-American to lead an institution of higher education in the country, those who knew her history never doubted that she would transform the institution. A staunch advocate of community colleges, Berotte Joseph had a vision when she took the helm five years ago not only to make MassBay one of the premiere community colleges in the state of Massachusetts, but in the country.

The fact that MassBay is often overshadowed by its bigger, better known neighbors, Babson and Wellesley colleges, never deterred Berotte Joseph from her vision of positioning MassBay as an international leader.

“Community colleges and the critical role they play in our global economy are not fully appreciated or recognized,” says Berotte Joseph, who is one of only 49 African-American women serving as college and university presidents in the United States. “Today community colleges account for nearly 45 percent of the country’s college enrollment.
They are the foundation of a cost-effective, quality educational track to baccalaureate and advanced degrees, and the source of a highly skilled, technologically sophisticated American workforce.”

Jon Bower, the chairman of the college’s board of trustees, says Berotte Joseph has done a terrific job of positioning MassBay as a premiere community college. He credits her as an executive, calling her “an excellent fiscal manager,” and with building a strong management team as well as boosting the college Foundation’s annual giving from a nominal amount to more than $300,000 in the 2008-2009 academic year.

“She’s an important symbol to our students,” said Bower. “Many of our students are immigrants, minorities and women,” he said, explaining that she raises students’ aspirations by providing them with a vibrant, personal example.

Berotte Joseph, who holds a Ph.D in bilingual education and sociolinguistics from New York University, re-organized MassBay’s academic divisions into five areas to parallel the key economic drivers in Massachusetts and with a focus on student support and student success—health sciences; humanities; social sciences and professional services; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and transportation and energy.

Berotte Joseph, along with co-editor Arthur Spears, recently published “The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education.” The book represents a rich global take on language practice in Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora, especially in North America with contributors from established International and well-known Haitian scholars.