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The language of success: Carole M. Berotte Joseph

Boston Business Journal - by [Mary Pratt](#) Special to the Journal

Massachusetts Bay Community College is often overshadowed by its bigger Wellesley neighbors — Babson and **Wellesley colleges**.

But that hasn't deterred Mass Bay President Carole M. Berotte Joseph from her goal of making the school a major player in education. "I definitely want Mass Bay to be positioned as an international leader," she said.

Berotte Joseph brought that ambition to the Wellesley college when she arrived in March 2005. And after five years at the helm, fans can point to a number of initiatives that have brought new energy and prestige to Mass Bay.

"She defined her goal for Mass Bay to be a premier community college, and she has done a very good job doing that," said Jon Bower, chairman of the college's board of trustees.

Berotte Joseph, 60, has had an interest in education since her own college experience. She has a bachelor's in Spanish and education from the York College of the City University of New York (CUNY) and a master's in bilingual education from **Fordham University**. She earned a Ph.D. in bilingual education and sociolinguistics from **New York University**.

She started her work in higher education as an adjunct lecturer in the bilingual education program at the City College of New York. She soon became a full-time faculty member.

She later became vice president of academic affairs at **Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College**. She was chief academic officer and dean of academic affairs at **Dutchess Community College**, part of the State University of New York system, just prior to joining Mass Bay.

Berotte Joseph said she sees parallels between being a teacher and an administrator. She said in both positions she's charged with making decisions, organizing and teaching others. She said in both jobs she has to lead and motivate.

"You have to get people to do what you want them to do. You have to facilitate and provide the kind of environment that people can accomplish in," she said. "Those are skills found in both teachers and leaders."

In fact, she said she was drawn to the Mass Bay presidency partly for the opportunity to put those skills to work. She said she had researched the school before pursuing the position and found that "it was a school that needed some rethinking about what its mission was and what its focus was."

Mass Bay has been able to refocus under Berotte Joseph's leadership.

The college underwent a reorganization of its divisions, so that there are now five: academic; humanities; social sciences and professional studies; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and transportation and energy.

The college has also expanded its biotechnology and nursing programs and is working to expand its automotive technician training program, already one of the region's strongest. And it recently won a \$70,000 grant to pilot a green jobs program.

Berotte Joseph also strengthened the college's foundation, boosting the board to 16 members from three and annual giving to \$300,000 in the 2008-2009 academic year from what had been nominal amounts.

Bower said Berotte Joseph has brought a "tremendous level of energy" to the job. He said she's "very positive, very upbeat and committed to her students."

He credited her as an executive, saying she built a strong team to support her and calling her "an excellent fiscal manager."

Bower also said Berotte Joseph learned to steer the college through changes, persevering through sometimes negative responses to her initiatives to build momentum for her programs.

In keeping with her international ambitions, Berotte Joseph brought a study-abroad component to Mass Bay. These overseas programs, which are a few weeks long and for credit, have taken students to Costa Rica and Romania and will bring them to China.

Berotte Joseph said she believes Mass Bay students need to have a global perspective if they want to compete in the global economy, which is why she created these overseas opportunities for her college. She said she also expects faculty to factor diversity into their



Carole M. Berotte Joseph

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classrooms so that all students are learning to operate with a more global perspective.

It's not surprising Berotte Joseph brings an international bent to her position. A native of Haiti, she speaks French, Spanish and Creole in addition to English. She's the first Haitian-American to head a U.S. college and the first female president at Mass Bay. She's also one of the 49 African-American women serving as college and university presidents in the United States.

Bower, who served on the selection committee that brought Berotte Joseph to Mass Bay, said her history is part of what makes her successful as Mass Bay's president.

"She's an important symbol to our students. Many of our students are immigrants, minorities and women," he said, explaining that she raises students' aspirations by providing them with an example.

"More than any president I've seen in action, she meets with the students and provides leadership to the students. She becomes a role model for the students," he said. "That's valuable on our campus."

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