

October 25, 2017

To: UMBC Staff Awards Committee

From: Jack Suess
Vice President of IT and CIO
UMBC Division of Information Technology

Re: Nomination of Joe Kirby for Presidential Distinguished Staff Award

Dear Committee Members,

I am pleased and proud to nominate Joe Kirby, Assistant Vice President for Business Systems, for the 2017-18 Presidential Distinguished Staff Award for Exempt Staff. Last year, we celebrated Joe's 30th year at UMBC (<http://doit.umbc.edu/news/?id=64442>). Over Joe's career, he has made many significant contributions to UMBC and DoIT. I will briefly describe just a few of the contributions that Joe has made over the last 20 years when I have been his supervisor.

The first major effort that Joe led was the effort he led that made our locally developed student information system (SIS) year 2000 compliant. In the summer of 1998, after a review of our legacy SIS, Joe led a major effort to rewrite our legacy SIS to be year 2000 compliant. This required thousands of hours of work across his team members. In Joe's quiet way he gave all the credit to his team members but Joe was the key person in identifying how this should be done and training his staff on the mitigation techniques. When the year 2000 event occurred, UMBC experienced no major issues within our SIS.

The second major effort that Joe led was the remediation of our use of SSN as a primary identifier in 2004. Up till 2004, the primary identifier for everyone in our legacy SIS was the SSN. As privacy and security concerns rose over the potential for identity theft, we undertook an effort to remove the SSN as the primary identifier. Joe developed the algorithm to come up with a new identifier that served as a replacement for the SSN and led the efforts to implement this. In just over a year, UMBC was able to implement a new system for our legacy SIS that did not rely upon the SSN for the primary key. This change laid the groundwork for improving our business processes and setting the stage to provide robust reporting solutions. Without this change, every report we generated would have the name and SSN (primary identifier) in the listing and we would not have been able to do something like REX.

Last but not least, Joe has been instrumental in improving the way UMBC delivers services through his work on Request Tracker (RT). When Joe started working on the RT project in 2009, the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) had decided to forego using a commercial product, Remedy, that we were paying \$25,000 a year for annual licenses. With Remedy, every additional license that allowed someone to resolve a ticket, added \$1000 a year to our annual license cost. In leading the conversion to RT, Joe helped UMBC save \$25,000 a year in license

costs. While those cost savings were significant, the push to use RT was made so that we could easily expand RT's use to other departments.

In 2009, DoIT was handing approximately 25,000 user requests a year. At the same time, UMBC implemented the PeopleSoft Student Administration system. PeopleSoft was an integrated online system for student services. When we initially launched, the functional units believed they could continue providing service to constituents as they had in the past – mostly a hodgepodge of email addresses and phone numbers. My vision was to create an integrated and comprehensive solution that would work across functional areas and provide faculty, staff, and students with a consistent user experience.

In 2010, I challenged Joe to work with other UMBC departments and develop a comprehensive solution. What Joe has done over the last seven years is incredible, and the results he has achieved are unique in higher education.¹ Reviewing FY17, there were approximately 125,000 tickets in the RT system, with 100,000 tickets occurring outside of DoIT. At this point in time RT is used to support all student services – admissions, financial aid, advising, registrar, bursar, residential life, and student life.

To achieve these results, it took the patience and perseverance of Joe to work closely with dozens of end users to define their needs and figure out how to make RT support their work. Joe creatively worked with functional offices to develop web-based front ends or other add-ons that would make RT support their needs. Today, seven years later, we have approximately 750 staff members who use RT to provide support to the campus. If we were using Remedy, or a new entrant, ServiceNow, the annual cost would be approximately \$500,000/year.

Through Joe's efforts, UMBC is among the leaders in higher education providing a comprehensive service solution to students and faculty. We do this at an annual cost of approximately \$25,000 in staff time.

For his leadership with RT as well as many other campus-wide business system solutions, I am happy to nominate Joe for the 2017-18 Presidential Distinguished Staff Award.

¹ Kirby, Joseph, and Laura Lefavor. (2013). "Beyond the IT Help Desk." *EDUCAUSE Review Online*, August 5, 2013. <http://er.educause.edu/articles/2013/8/beyond-the-it-help-desk>.