Dear Sages over 70 Selection Committee Members,

I am pleased to offer my letter of recommendation supporting DMACC President Rob Denson’s nomination as a Sage over 70 .

I have been involved with DMACC in a variety of capacities including fundraising for the Iowa Culinary Institute to  bringing two French chefs to DMACC each January for the last 35 years for instructing and providing the top eight culinary students with an all-expense paid trip to France for an internship in French restaurants each May, plus serving on the search committee for the Executive Director of the DMACC Foundation, personally donating to help build the addition to the culinary school and providing annual student scholarships.

Through my work, I have personally seen the quality of the product that DMACC administrators and faculty deliver daily. I have seen the tremendous growth at DMACC in program offerings and in student enrollment.  Rob and his team have been instrumental in developing Career Academies in Ames, Newton, Southridge Mall and Perry—all utilizing donated properties offering instruction in Health Sciences, Auto Mechanics, Building Trades, Welding, Culinary and Criminal Justice to introduce high school students to high demand careers.

Offerings for two-year degree programs have also been expanded with DMACC credit enrolment growing nearly 70 percent in the last fourteen years ending its last fiscal year with over 36,000 students including continuing ed, high school equivalency and English as a Second Language.  DMACC was recognized by Community College Week as the 15th fastest growing two-year college in the nation and ranked by Value Colleges as #10 of 1,717 two-year institutions based on value. This quality is accomplished while keeping tuition and fees the lowest of any college or university in Iowa.

President Denson believes in collaboration with local business and industry to identify curriculum and course offerings to prepare students for successful careers in expanding industries.  He is involved in the national STEM Higher Education Council which he co-chairs with former U.S. Education Under Secretary Dr. Martha Kanter and serves as Leadership Council Chair for Opportunity Nation.  Locally, he works with agencies and alliances including the Greater Des Moines Partnership  and the Iowa Innovation Council on important education and employment initiatives to further economic expansion.  DMACC has been the preferred go-to partner when industry needs specialized education for its workers as evidenced by the following partnerships:

TSA - Homeland Security Course

Microsoft-Data Center Academy

Goldman Sachs Foundation-10,000 Small Businesses Program

Facebook-Digital Marketing Certificate

President Denson has promoted enhanced student life through activities at DMACC’s Trail Point Aquatics Wellness and Student Center, affordable student housing at Carroll and Boone campuses, free DART bus service and the recently announced Student Life and STEM Center on the Urban campus.

Rob Denson is an approachable and collaborative leader—well- regarded in both educational, legislative and business circles and very deserving of the Business Record’s Sages over 70 honor.

Respectfully submitted,  Joyce Chapman