

## ► In The News

# HCC professor awarded national fellowship

HOLYOKE – Laurel Carpenter, Holyoke Community College associate professor of environmental science, has been awarded a national fellowship focusing on STEM education at community colleges.

The fellowship, from the Community College Presidents' Initiative in STEM, is intended for community college faculty and administrators pursuing graduate degrees and conducting research related to STEM education and workforce development. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math.

Carpenter is part of a cohort of just seven CCPI-STEM fellows for 2024-2025 and the only one from a college in the Northeast.

Fellows are selected from a national pool of applicants, who are evaluated based on their education, STEM experience, leadership potential, community engagement, and research.

"I'm very happy for Laurel," said Elizabeth Breton, interim dean of HCC's B-STEM division. "She is a gifted instructor and engages the students in community projects. I think she will use this opportunity to benefit not only herself but the college as well."

A 2012 graduate of HCC, Carpenter is a wildlife biologist, chair of the HCC Environmental Studies Dept., co-coordinator of the HCC STEM Scholars program, and a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she is pursuing a doctorate in education.

"My research, very broadly, is looking at the retention of students in STEM programs at community colleges, and studying models of retention, because most of the retention models are based



Laurel Carpenter

on four-year college students and their needs and experiences as opposed to students at community colleges," said Carpenter, who lives in South Hadley.

CCPI-STEM fellows receive a \$5,000 honorarium each year for two years to support their graduate studies. They also participate in professional development activities and are paired with a profes-

sional mentor.

"I think what's most exciting is that this will allow me to network with other educators who are researching similar topics related to community colleges," Carpenter said.

Carpenter started taking classes at HCC in 2002 as a junior at South Hadley High School, but then transferred to Smith College for her bachelor's degree. From there, she went to UMass, where

she earned a master's in wildlife conservation before returning to Smith for a master's degree in secondary science education.

For more than 10 years, Carpenter worked as a wildlife technician, wildlife biologist, lead educator and environmental interpreter for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. While she was working, Carpenter returned to HCC to complete her associate degree in environmental science.

"I started in 2002 and finished in 2012," she said. "It's always kind of funny. How do I put that on my resume? I came back and finished my HCC degree after I had my master's degree. There were just some classes that I really wanted to take, like Spanish, site assessment, and aquatic ecology. Before I knew it, I only needed one more class, so I finished."

CCPI-STEM is based at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Maryland.