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HCC signs workforce training pact

HOLYOKE – Representatives from Holyoke Community College and the Springfield-based nonprofit I Found the Light Against All Odds Foundation met today, Tuesday, April 30, to sign a memorandum of understanding to work together to increase educational and workforce training opportunities for young women at risk for homelessness.

The signing ceremony will begin at 2 p.m. in the third floor lobby of the Frost Building at Holyoke Community College. HCC President George Timmons and Stefan B. Davis, CEO, president, and founder of the I Found the Light Against All Odds Foundation will sign the agreement and offer brief remarks.

I Found the Light Against All Odds Foundation provides support services

for young women to help address social and economic issues that can lead to poverty and homelessness. Specifically, by signing this MOU, HCC and the foundation will agree to work together to develop support services for area women, age 18-20, to attain safe housing and career opportunities through education and training.

According to the MOU, Hampden County demonstrates a poverty rate of 16.9 percent, which is higher than the national average of 11.5 percent. Meanwhile, the poverty rates in Springfield and Holyoke are even higher at 25.5 percent and 26 percent, respectively.

“At the same time, research shows that many community college students in Massachusetts experience hunger

and/or homelessness, as well as other types of basic needs insecurity that can serve as barriers to degree completion and thereby limit economic sustainability and mobility,” the MOU states.

“From HCC, the foundation is looking to connect with our existing support services on the academic side,” said Jeff Hayden, HCC vice president of Business and Community Services. “So, admissions, financial aid counseling, career advising, and guidance on transferring from HCC to a four-year institution and just learning what kind of education and training is required for specific career pathways. It’s a real natural fit between an agency that works to support young women and a college, HCC, which is known for its wrap-around support model.”