

In The News

HCC awarded \$1.27M to expand adult education services

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College has been awarded \$1.273 million in state funds to expand its adult education programs in Holyoke and other communities in Hampden County.

The money, from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is part of a five-year, \$250 million allocation to 74 institutions announced last month by the outgoing Baker administration.

“This historic level of funding to adult education service providers across the Commonwealth will open up additional seats for adult learners to gain knowledge and career skills,” said former Gov. Charlie Baker. “These grants will benefit not only residents, but employers and communities across the Commonwealth.”

HCC’s \$1.273 million allocation represents a nearly 20 percent boost for its English for Speakers of Other Languages programs over funding levels for fiscal 2023, which ends June 30. This was the open and competitive grant cycle for HCC’s DESE-funded adult education offerings, and will cover FY ‘24-28, which begins July 1.

The funds support direct programming at HCC’s Adult Learning Center in Holyoke and HCC’s Ludlow Area Adult Learning Center, as well as classes offered through the college’s partners in the Juntos Collaborative: The Care Center, the Community Education Project, the Holyoke Public Schools Opportunity Academy, and MassHire Holyoke.

“Juntos means ‘together’ in Spanish. Overall, the HCC/Juntos Collaborative received a 14 percent increase in funding



Instructor Bryan Barsolou, left, works with adult education students Jhovan Serrano, 26, of Springfield, and Melodie Rossy, 43, of Holyoke, during an English Language Arts class offered by the Holyoke Public Schools Opportunity Academy at the HCC Picknelly Adult and Family Education Center on Maple Street in Holyoke. The HPS Opportunity Academy is one of HCC’s partners in the Juntos Collaborative, which will benefit from a \$1.27 million state grant.

Submitted photo

over current levels, and will serve 8 percent more students,” said Pasha Black, director of HCC’s English for Speakers of Other Languages programs, which is part of the college’s department of Adult Education and Workforce Development. “The expansion is primarily in ESOL services, and is based on strong past performance as well as community need. Immigrants, refugees, and other multilingual learners are a tremendous asset to our region, and we’re excited to provide increased access to services to help these communities achieve their education, career, and civic engagement goals.”

HCC will be adding ESOL seats in West Springfield, in partnership with

the West Springfield Public Library, and Holyoke, in addition to continuing remote and in-person classes in Ludlow, in partnership with Hubbard Memorial Library.

In addition to ESOL, grant funds will serve students earning their high school equivalency through adult basic education services.

“In adult basic education, we are focused on getting the word out about our existing free services, and building on the unique strengths of each partner to accelerate students’ attainment of high school equivalency and take the next steps toward their college and career goals,” said Black.

The goal behind the \$48.2 million in state funding is to expand adult education services to new programs and provide 5,000 total seats for adult basic education students and more than 16,000 for adult English learners.

In the first year of funding, fiscal year 2024, approximately \$48.2 million in competitive grants will go to adult education service providers and an additional \$2 million to adult education programs in state correctional institutions. Adult basic education is funded through a combination of state and federal funds, including the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II.

“Supporting adult students with essential foundational education and language skills provides an onramp to college and career options that will prepare adults for innovative jobs growing in the Commonwealth,” said former Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.

The Office of Adult and Community Learning Services within the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education administers the state’s no-cost public adult education system through community adult learning centers and correctional institutions across 16 local workforce development areas in the Commonwealth.

“The goal is to foster collaborations within communities that enhance student success in higher education and employment,” said former Education Secretary James Peyser. “We are very pleased to award this historic level of funding that ensures there are significant resources available to many more adult students across the Commonwealth for years to come.”