

EDITORIAL

Students get all needs met at HCC

WHEN CHRISTINA ROYAL BECAME PRESIDENT of Holyoke Community College in 2017, she was determined to turn talk into action.

Some of the innovative ideas that are now coming to fruition preceded Royal's arrival, but putting words into action has taken an inexhaustible determination by Royal, her faculty and administration. It also required a boost from state officials.

Holyoke Community is emerging now as a leader in responding to student needs that go far beyond the classroom. Most recent is the announcement that beginning in March, an on-campus child watch service will allow students to leave their children with good supervision for temporary needs.

The college is not opening a daycare facility. The program will ensure students will no longer be forced to choose between their education and their parental responsibilities while they attend a class, tutoring session or other obligations.

Royal saw a student population whose needs could not be addressed solely through curriculum. The Itsy Bitsy Child Watch will be the first of its kind in Western Massachusetts and one of very few in the state. Within the next few years, look for it to catch on in widespread fashion.

Colleges and certainly community colleges welcome diverse student populations. The institutions that adapt will succeed in the next generation. Those that stand still will lose students who find personal obstacles too daunting to either pursue their education or finish degree work.

State Sen. John C. Velis, D-Westfield, helped HCC secure a \$100,000 state grant that brought the Itsy Bitsy Child Watch program to reality. This service will allow parents, who might have looked at scheduling conflicts and said "I can't," to educational opportunities, to now say "I can."

The college continues to maintain a pro-active, futuristic approach to virtual learning. Perhaps most of all, these initiatives allow students to know the college is not just offering instruction, but is on their side.

The Itsy Bitsy Child Watch is the latest example of a college that does not expect its student population to conform to a rigid set of policies set forth in different times, but will work with student challenges to make success possible. That is what a college should stand for, as it enrolls a new generation of students bringing new hopes, goals and needs.
