

EDUCATION

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HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HCC Part of Team Selected to Train Area Workers for Cannabis Jobs

HOLYOKE, MA – Holyoke Community College is part of a team selected to develop workforce-training programs for area residents who want to work in the burgeoning cannabis industry.

On Thursday, Oct. 18, a consortium consisting of HCC, the city of Holyoke and the Somerville-based Cannabis Community Care and Research Network (C3RN) was picked by the state’s Cannabis Control Commission as a Cannabis Social Equity Training Vendor. The consortium will design training and competency-based internship/apprenticeship pilot programs for four, entry-to mid-level occupations to meet expected workforce demands of the cannabis industry in Holyoke and the surrounding region.

The four jobs are cannabis cultivation assistant, dispensary patient advocate (“bud tender”), extraction technician assistant, and cannabis pantry cook/cannabis culinary assistant.

The Cannabis Control Commission is funding the effort through its Social Equity Program, which seeks to assist communities and populations disproportionately affected by drug enforcement laws before the decriminalization of medicinal and recreational/adult-use marijuana in Massachusetts. After students receive core competency training they will be paired with one of more than 50 cannabis companies, academics, ancillary businesses, consultants, experts, and other stakeholders who have signed on to be members of the C3RN/HCC training, internship, and apprenticeship network.

“The goal of this one-year pilot program will be to train and link students to employment opportunities in Holyoke and greater western Massachusetts,” said Jeff Hayden, HCC vice president of Business and Community Services. “The purpose of this two-pronged training is to help individuals get placed in a job and to find long-term career pathways.”

Hayden added that there will be no cannabis or cannabis products on the HCC campus or on any of its off-campus sites where training might take place.

“We will be training students in customer service, dosing and extraction methods and techniques, but when it is time for students to work with actual product, that will take place offsite through our partner C3RN,” he said. “As the education partner, we want to ensure that local residents and students have access to opportunities – including those in emerging industries such as cannabis – that lead to jobs.” ■