

HCC Culinary Arts program ranked among best in U.S.

HOLYOKE – The Culinary Arts program at Holyoke Community College has been ranked among the best in the United States, according to Best Choice Schools, an online college resource guide.

HCC placed 50th among the Best Culinary Schools in America for 2021, a list that also includes such esteemed institutions as the Culinary Institute of America, which has branches in New York, California, and Texas.

HCC's culinary program ranked third in New England after Johnson & Wales in Providence, R.I., and Southern Maine Community College in Portland.

"We looked at culinary schools across the United States to develop a list of what we believe to be the best culinary schools or programs in the nation,"

says the introduction to the Best Culinary Schools in America list. "From our initial list, we looked for schools that offer hands-on experience, internship/externship opportunities, student-operated restaurants, modern facilities, and a solid reputation in the industry."

In particular, HCC was cited for the quality of its one-year certificate and two-year associate of arts in science degree programs in culinary arts, as well as its 20,000 square-foot state-of-the-art facility, which opened in downtown Holyoke in 2018. The program summary notes that the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute is equipped with four modern kitchens, a bakery, hotel lab, and student-run dining room.

Since it opened, the HCC MGM

Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street has become a favorite host site for college, community, and regional events.

According to Chef Warren Leigh, HCC professor and coordinator of the Culinary Arts program, the facility draws students who might have previously gone elsewhere for their culinary training.

"What's not to love?" said Leigh. "Being ranked among such elite schools confirms what we've believed about ourselves for a long time. Since we opened this facility three years ago the level of excitement about our program from students, faculty and the community is beyond what we imagined, and that's reflected in the continuing support and investment we receive from the college administration and the state. We're

always trying to improve our curriculum to better serve our students and the industry."

Best Choice Schools also notes that HCC is the only public college or university in Massachusetts with a culinary arts program accredited by the American Culinary Federation.

"The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the demand for chefs and head cooks at restaurants and other establishments will grow six percent through 2029, faster than many other industries in the country," says the Best Choice Schools website. "With the popularity of cooking shows and competitions, more and more people are discovering the field of culinary arts and what it takes to be successful in the industry."