

Greg Plotkin

EDITORIAL

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Investing in future at HCC campus

WHEN WE INVEST IN OUR PUBLIC COLLEGES, we invest in the makeup of our local communities. Our regional colleges operate under a model that understands the pulse of the business community and tailors course offerings that best fit the classroom and business pipeline. Regional public colleges not only partner with area business to understand their needs, they partner with each other, sharing resources to best serve students and the business community. Our community and state colleges strive to speak the language of our region. And offer collaboration and innovation for students to develop skills to compete in a competitive and ever-changing business environment.

As Gov. Charlie Baker recently toured the new campus center at Holyoke Community College he said, "This is breathtaking. The amount of light and open space it has now that it didn't have before and the areas for collaborative thinking and engaging it didn't have before is astonishing. It speaks to the way this campus can serve its students as well as its faculty and administrators."

The \$43.5 million campus center rehab at HCC was borne out of legislation that provided state colleges and universities with \$950 million for capital projects over five years. The expanded campus center follows other projects including the new HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute in the Cubit building, which opened on 2018, and its Center of Health Education, which opened in 2015.

When students and faculty gather and collaborate and in these bright, updated facilities it generates a positive work ethic and drives a sense of accomplishment.

"When we address building issues and make advancements and efficiencies, we are creating a physical environment that helps students feel proud. One that gets them excited to learn. And that keeps them coming back," said HCC college trustee Evan Plotkin.

First opened in 1978, the campus center has suffered from water leaks for decades. The project added about 9,000 square feet, enclosed an external walkway to expand the dining area and added an atrium entrance off the courtyard.

Capital improvements such as this show our legislators and government leaders understand and take pride in the mission and the people that make up our public colleges and universities. And the payback a solid regional-based education system can offer for generations to come.