

HCC, WSU hire joint director of emergency management

HOLYOKE – In a first for both institutions, Holyoke Community College and Westfield State University have jointly hired a dedicated, full-time director to oversee emergency management and operations planning on each campus.

As director of emergency preparedness and response, Thomas Kettle, of Foster, Rhode Island, will split his time 60-40 between Westfield State and HCC while maintaining offices on both campuses.

An emergency management specialist, Kettle comes to the new position after serving since 2013 as the fire safety specialist at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where his job included support and training in emergency planning and operations. He started his new position Monday, Dec. 10.

With more than 20 years of experience as an emergency management responder and practitioner, Kettle said he was seeking an emergency management opportunity at an institution of higher education.

“What drew me to this position was



Tom Kettle

the opportunity to fill a newly created position and to be the bridge for collaboration between Westfield State and HCC,” said Kettle. “This is a new approach to emergency management, providing both institutions a way to share resources throughout the planning and response phases should an emergency event occur.”

Kettle is a former infantryman and section sergeant in the U.S. Army. He holds a bachelor’s degree in fire science from Providence College and, earlier this year, completed his master’s degree in emergency management from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Kettle will report to the vice presidents for administration and finance at each institution. Among his duties, he will be responsible for updating and expanding existing emergency operation plans at both schools.

Combining resources will prove pivotal for each institution, said officials, noting that Westfield State and HCC have a solid history of partnerships and their close proximity laid the

groundwork for this shared position.

“We’ve been impressed with Mr. Kettle’s knowledge and ideas,” said William Fogarty, HCC vice president of administration and finance. “The fundamentals of emergency response are the same for both institutions, and we hope that many of his activities will have collective benefits. We’re looking forward to our campuses achieving a higher level of emergency response capability and safety with Mr. Kettle’s hire.”

“Both campuses were pursuing support in this area and it made sense to explore a partnership given our proximity and having similar needs as state college and university colleagues,” said Stephen Taksar, vice president of Administration and Finance at Westfield State. “It also reduces the overall cost of funding for a full-time position.”

At Westfield State, the coordinator of the university’s emergency response team was an additional responsibility of another staff member.

At HCC, the director of public safety had led an interdepartmental emergency planning committee responsible for the development and expansion of the college’s emergency operations plan.