

# HCC president presents national award to Neal

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal, D-Springfield, received the 2022 National Education Service Award this month at the Community College National Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C.

Holyoke Community College President Christina Royal introduced Neal and presented the award to him on behalf of the Association of Community College Trustees and the American Association of Community Colleges, organizers of the Feb. 8 summit.

This annual award honors a national leader who has made extraordinary contributions to national public policies and resources that support education, training, and post-secondary learning.

"As chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Neal has worked tirelessly to fix the tax code in a way that would benefit community college students and support workforce training programs," Royal said.

She noted that Neal is a key proponent of the Tax-Free Pell Grant Act, which would exempt students from being taxed on the portion of their Pell award that exceeds tuition costs. He was also instrumental in securing \$1.2 billion in funding for a potential successor to the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training Grants in proposed legislation.

"The community college system in America plays a critical role in preparing individuals for the workforce," said Neal, an HCC alum from 1970 who now rep-

resents the 1st Congressional District of Massachusetts, which includes all of Greater Westfield. "I have been a longtime supporter of our community colleges because they are successful. They provide technical career training, serve as a stepping stone, and welcome individuals looking to retrain or refresh their skillset."

"Western and central Massachusetts is lucky to have many of these types of educational options right outside their doors and at their fingertips," he said. "I am thankful for this recognition, and I am committed to continuing to provide for the community college system so that all students have a path to higher education."

Royal previously served on the AACCT's Commission on College Readiness.

"It was an honor to present Congressman Neal with this award," Royal said after the reception at D.C.'s Marriott Marquis Hotel, where she attended the weeklong summit. "He has long been an advocate for progressive programs and federal funding for community colleges and our students, particularly in the area of workforce training. He recognizes that investments in our community colleges support regional growth, job creation, and economic mobility for individuals and families. I know this was a proud moment for him as it also was for me and should be for all the communities in Massachusetts that he represents."

Previous winners of the National Education Service Award include President Barack Obama in 2010.



*U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, second from left, receives the National Education Service Award from American Association of Community Colleges officers, from left, Richard Rhodes of Austin Community College in Texas; Christina Royal of Holyoke Community College; James Cooksey of Moberly Area Community College in Missouri; and Jee Hang Lee, the association's president and CEO. (SUBMITTED / AACCT)*