

# EDUCATION

## LOCAL COLLEGES IN THE NEWS

### State Officials Announce Nursing Scholarship Program During HCC Visit

*\$18M allocation will pay 100 percent of costs for community college students*

**HOLYOKE** – Like so many of her Holyoke Community College classmates, Katelynn Richards struggled for many years as she tried to balance the demands of parenthood and a college education. As a stay-at-home mom of three special needs children, she had long deferred her dream of becoming a nurse. Affordability was a principal factor.

Now a second-year student in HCC's associate of science in nursing program, Richard is one of the beneficiaries of an \$18 million state-funded scholarship initiative that will pay 100 percent of the costs of her nursing education – and the education costs for all community college nursing students in Massachusetts.

"The effects of receiving the scholarship funding impact my entire life," said Richard, who lives in Ludlow. "It will allow me to have a healthier work and school family balance. It will cover all my expenses so I can focus on my education and pursue my dream degree in nursing."

Richard was present Tuesday, Oct. 17, as local legislators and representatives from the Healey-Driscoll administration visited HCC's Center for Health Education & Simulation to announce the funding initiative.

"The new scholarship program was designed to attract, incentivize and encourage a pipeline of skilled nurses," said Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, "and I'm truly so thrilled to be able to announce this ... that every single one of our currently enrolled community college nursing students will be able to attend this year for free."



*HCC nursing student Katelynn Richard of Ludlow, center, practices under the supervision of instructor Dorothy Shannon MSN, RN, as Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, left, state Sen. Jo Comerford, and HCC President George Timmons look on.*

Statewide, there are about 3,000 students enrolled in community college nursing programs in Massachusetts, Tutwiler said.

State Sen. Jo Comerford called the \$18 million funding allocation a "historic investment," noting a report from the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association that shows western Massachusetts has the second highest number of people currently housed in hospitals awaiting nursing home beds.

"That's second only to the Metro Boston area," she said. "And that's all connected to a workforce shortage. As the labor market blueprint for the Connecticut River Valley shows, a supply gap of well over 1,000 nurses are needed to meet demand."

Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones, Commissioner of Public Health Robbie Goldstein, state Sen. Adam Gomez, state Rep. Pat Duffy, and Holyoke Mayor

Joshua Garcia were also present at Tuesday's event, which was scheduled as part of statewide STEM Week activities.

"STEM Week has always been about encouraging students to see themselves in STEM," Tutwiler said. "But this year, we're taking it a step further. This year, the theme is 'Your STEM Future.' For me, 'Your STEM Future' encapsulates so well the notion that our current students are the next generation of scientists, engineers, and inventors whose future innovations and insights and discoveries will serve to tackle the challenges we face in this society and to illuminate the possibilities we don't yet know exist. I know that rings true for our future health care leaders as well, and at a time when we clearly need more of them."

STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – was on full display at the center as HCC staff members led a tour of HCC's state-of-

the-art health education facility, which is home to the college's nursing and radiologic technology programs. Opened in 2015, the 11,000 square-foot facility includes flexible classrooms, student study areas, a radiology suite, a large radiology image library, and an image critique room, four private patient simulation rooms, two semi-private patient simulation rooms, three control rooms, two debriefing rooms, prep storage, prep spaces and two larger multi-bed lab spaces that can be transformed into acute care or community environments.

"Here, our nursing students learn the skills that prepare them to become capable, compassionate healthcare leaders," said HCC President George Timmons. Combined with MassReconnect, another new state program that provides free community college to students 25 and older, "there has never been a better time to earn your college degree," he said. ■