

HCC opens Center for Life Sciences

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College marked the official opening of its new Center for Life Sciences recently with a ribbon-cutting celebration featuring lab demonstrations and tours of the 13,000-square-foot, \$4.55 million state-of-the-art facility.

“This is an amazing space,” said HCC president Christina Royal, standing in the crowded lobby of the center on the first floor of the Marieb Building. “This building has not been renovated since 1972. With this facility, we’ve just brought the education level of our biotechnology and life science programs into the 21st century.”

The Center for Life Sciences, which opened for classes in September for the start of the fall semester, fea-

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tures a suite of new science labs and classrooms, and the only ISO-certified cleanroom at any community college in Massachusetts.

"Today we all celebrate another great achievement for Holyoke Community College," said Congressman Richard Neal of Springfield, who noted the importance of community colleges for providing opportunities to aspiring students.

"As we've watched what's happened to the cost of higher education, we are all reminded that it is more important than ever to have a flourishing community college system," said Neal, '70, an HCC alumnus.

Jim Peyser, state secretary of Education, said the ribbon-cutting celebration was an important part of the state's first annual STEM Week. "What we're trying to do is shine a spotlight on all the great things that are going on around the Commonwealth in STEM education," he said. "In Massachusetts, there is something on the order of 600,000 jobs in STEM fields. There are 270,000 or so postings for STEM jobs in the state. This is not just a big part of our economy, but the fastest growing part."

"The fact that this new lab facility is open is a reflection of the forward thinking of this institution and this community to find out where the future is leading and to move in that direction," he said. "This is a really exciting moment."

Among the other officials and dignitaries on hand for the celebration were Holyoke mayor Alex Morse, state representatives Aaron Vega of Holyoke, an HCC alumnus, and Angelo Puppolo of Springfield, who along with the many visitors and guests toured the new science labs and talked to biotechnology and microbiology students as they conducted experiments dressed in white lab coats.

"These are our future doctors, future



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HCC president Christina Royal and state Secretary of Education Jim Peyser cut the ceremonial ribbon officially opening the Center for Life Sciences at Holyoke Community College. Also pictured from left to right are State Representative Angelo Puppolo of Springfield, State Representative Aaron Vega of Holyoke, Martha Waldron, vice president of Marketing and Communications for the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center; U.S. Representative Richard Neal of Springfield; Holyoke mayor Alex Morse, and several HCC students.

scientists and future researchers," Royal said. "These are the types of aspirations that they have as they start here at HCC and look to move on into the workforce or toward opportunities to transfer and continue their educations. It's wonderful to watch."

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center provided the majority of funding for the project in the form of a \$3.8 million grant, with the balance of the total cost coming from the HCC Foundation.

"We are committed to providing the innovative infrastructure, alongside dynamic educational and experiential opportunities, and other necessary resources to develop the next generation of great scientists, engineers, and life science entrepreneurs," Travis McCready, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, said in a statement before the event. "HCC is providing its students with state-of-the-art equipment, facilities, and instruction to gain the skills necessary to further fuel our world-class talent pipeline."



HCC biology professor James Knapp gives a microbiology demonstration to students and visitors during the grand opening celebration of the \$4.55 million Center for Life Sciences at Holyoke Community College.