
HCC planning to end mask mandate next month

HOLYOKE — Holyoke Community College will lift its mask mandate Friday, May 20, after the end of the spring 2022 semester.

After that, students, faculty, staff, and visitors will no longer be required to wear masks inside campus buildings.

Summer session classes at HCC begin on May 24. Registration for both summer and fall classes is now open.

In a March 30 message to the HCC community, college President Christina Royal cited the low number of new COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts as well as current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and state Department of Public Health as reasons for making masks optional.

“This transition aligns with similar decisions being made at all Massachusetts community colleges this spring,” Royal said.

In her statement, Royal acknowledged that people may have different levels of comfort with the decision.

“For many of you, this news may come as a relief,” she said. “For others, you may still not feel safe without your mask. Both are understandable. I ask that as a community, we practice our values of kindness, inclusion, and trust. I ask that we make those who continue to mask feel comfortable, respected, and welcome as part of our community. The health and safety of our community remains of utmost importance.”

Royal said that the college will continue to remain flexible in its mask policy if future conditions should warrant revision.

“We will continue to follow the guidance of the medical community as it relates to the pandemic, remaining attentive to the unique needs of communities we serve,” she said. “I appreciate having the opportunity to engage in conversation with many of you on this topic during recent town halls and in other forums. Like every decision, there are a variety of perspectives. I share this news now in order for our community to have maximum time for transition.”

On March 17, HCC announced that it would return to in-person graduation for the first time since 2019. HCC’s 75th Anniversary Commencement will be Saturday, June 4, at the MassMutual Center in Springfield.

