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# The Republican. PLUS

MASS LIVE

HOLYOKE

## 22 milestones, graduations

HCC grad earns high school diploma and associate degree

**S**age Pasquale took her first class at Holyoke Community College when she was only 14 years old. That was “Dinosaurs of New England: A Geologic History of the Pioneer Valley,” a four-credit environmental science laboratory course taught by professor Steven Winters.

Sage wound up tagging along with her older sister, River, who was already enrolled and thought she might enjoy it. River was correct. “I loved that class,” says the younger Pasquale. “That was a nice introduction to HCC.”

For Pasquale, a home-schooled student from Holyoke, “Dinosaurs of New England” also served as her introduction to a traditional classroom, a place she found she fit right in. The following semester, she signed up for two more HCC courses, the next

semester three, until she was finally a full-time, dual-enrolled high school student.

“I kind of eased into it,” she says. “I had never taken an actual test before coming to HCC, so that was certainly

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Sage Pasquale, of Holyoke, a math major and dual-enrolled student, earned both her high school diploma and her associate degree from Holyoke Community College this spring.

## Graduate

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a big change." One that didn't seem to bother her at all.

This spring, HCC honored 199 graduating seniors from 31 different high schools who all took classes at the college through its dual enrollment program. Dual enrollment allows high school students to earn transferable college credits while they work toward their high school diplomas.

According to HCC's admission's office, these seniors combined for 2,100 college credits, but only one of them earned both a high school diploma and her associate degree at the same time.

That would be Sage Pasquale. Now 18, Pasquale says she didn't realize she would have enough credits to get a degree until December.

"I was really just taking classes because I was interested in them," she said earlier this month. "I kind of had a dream that I would graduate

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Sage Pasquale

from high school with an associate's degree, but it was never really my plan."

Along the way, she made the dean's list in each of her final four semesters. "I never really paid much attention to that," she said. "I was just at HCC to take the classes, learn what I could and do as well as I can."

She did very well.

As a member of the HCC Class of 2020, Pasquale, a math major, completed her associate degree with a grade-point average of 3.86, high honors, and two transfer scholarships from the HCC Foundation that she will apply toward her continuing education at Agnes Scott College, a small, all-women's college outside Atlanta, where she plans to study physics or math.

"I think it will be an interesting place to go to school," Pasquale said. "It's so different from Western Massachusetts. I've grown up my whole life here, and I wanted to experience something different."

While attending to her studies, Pasquale taught gymnastics at a studio in East Longmeadow and was co-founder of Youth Rides Together, a group of area homeschooled

and young activists who work on projects related to contemporary issues like immigration and climate change.

At HCC, she was founder of the college's first-ever Dual Enrollment Club.

Although U.S. History II was her "absolute favorite class" at HCC, she ultimately gravitated toward math.

"I like all of the rules, and how there's no guesswork involved," she said. "It's really concrete, and there's always a right answer."

Heading into her final semester this spring, Pasquale didn't slack off. Instead, she took Calculus 3, Physics 2,

and a six-credit honors colloquium called "Ecosocialism or Ecocide? The Challenges of Environmental Ethics and Politics." All of them fit right in with her interests and career pathway.

"I'm interested in engineering," she said. "Civil engineering or environmental engineering, because I think that will be a really important part of combating climate change."

As COVID-19 restrictions began to ease, Pasquale was hoping to soon be able to start a summer job as a counselor at a gymnastics camp in Burlington, Vermont.