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JEFFREY HAYDEN, VICE PRESIDENT BUSINESS, COMMUNITY SERVICES, HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE TRAINING

Program designed to meet employers' needs

Culinary institute answers regional workforce demands

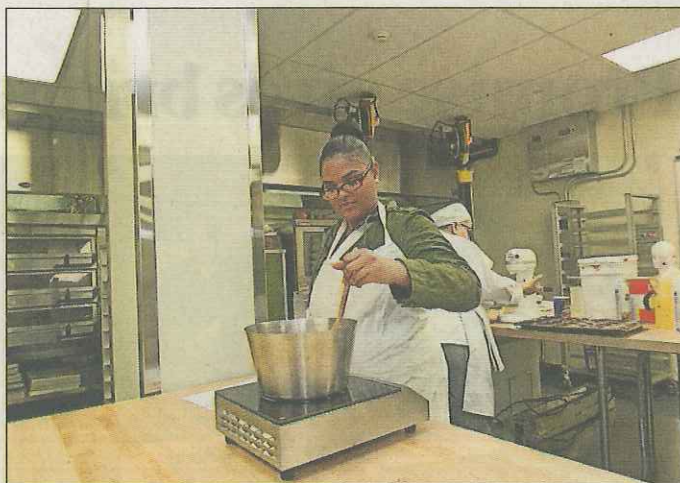
By JIM KINNEY
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The Holyoke canal walk just outside the windows of the Holyoke Community College-MGM Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street was covered with fresh snow.

But Warren Leigh, chairman of the college's hospitality management and culinary arts programs, imagines it as an outdoor dining room once the weather turns nice. There, students will serve foods they have prepared in the new institute, which opened for business in late January.

“We have a lot of plans,” says Leigh.

Those are plans befitting a 20,000-square-foot, \$7.5 million state-of-the-art culinary school with five kitchens. Those kitchens include a fully functional restaurant production kitchen, a separate teaching kitchen with lab stations and a baking kitchen. There is also a demonstration kitchen where students first watch and learn about tech-



niques and culinary science. A second teaching lab kitchen is on the second floor of the institute, where students began their studies the week of Jan. 22.

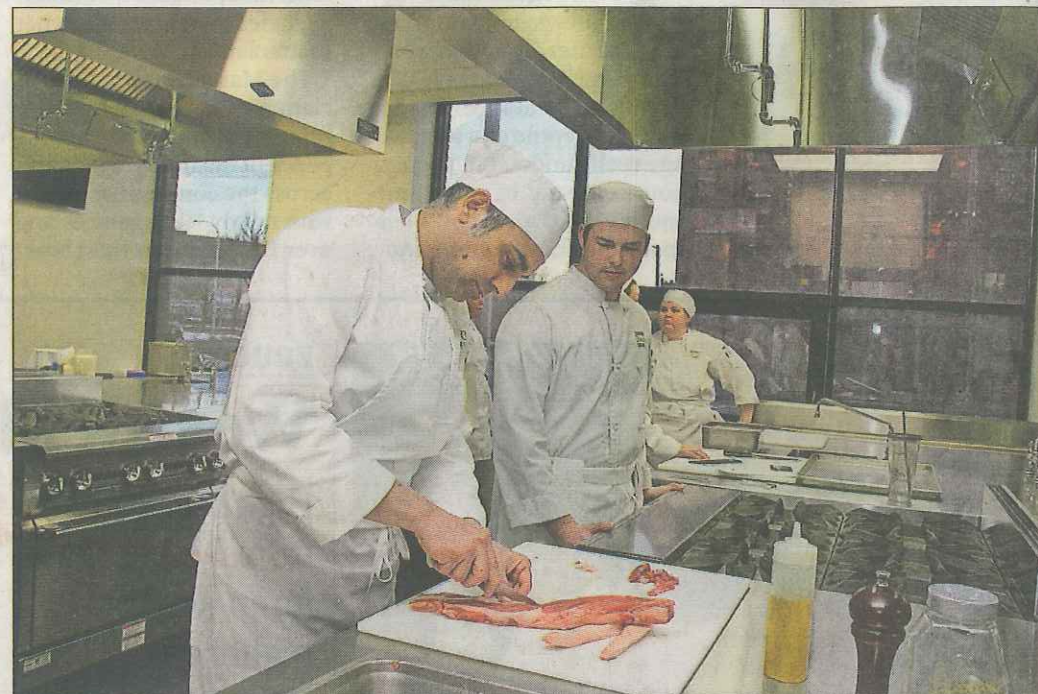
The school, which occupies two floors of the Cubit building, a renovated mill building, has a capacity of about 150 students at any one time and replaces one kitchen and a small baking room at Holyoke Community College.

It will be home to five separate programs, including two-semester certificate courses of study and four-semester, or two-year, associate's degree programs. That

includes a new associate's degree in applied sciences-culinary arts, according to Michele Cabral, interim dean for business and technology.

MGM Resorts International supported the creation of the center with a \$500,000 grant. MGM needs 200 line cooks for when it opens the doors at its \$960 million casino in Springfield in September.

“We worked with MGM not only to have them come in and demonstrate techniques or the latest best practice in the industry but also working with them to make connections with students,” said Jeffery Hayden, the college's



Above, culinary arts student Behnam “Ben” Alimirzaei, of South Hadley, trims beef in the first-floor teaching kitchen, one of five kitchens in the new Holyoke Community College-MGM Culinary Arts Institute. At left, first-year culinary arts student Rosaura Cardona, of Springfield, stirs a pot of jam in the first floor baking shop kitchen at the institute. (CHRIS YURKO / HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

vice president of business and community services.

MGM will offer work opportunities and networking.

“Not just MGM, but we are working with dozens of potential employers,” adds Hayden.

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County identified 1,700 vacancies in the food service industry in Hampden County one year ago.

MGM will also use the institute's facilities as a venue when it has tryouts for the experienced and high-level chefs it needs to hire. Those jobs require a “bench-test” where chefs cook a meal.



WATCH THE VIDEO

M To see a video of Holyoke Community College culinary arts chairman Warren Leigh talking about the role MGM will have in the new culinary institute, go online to MassLive.com.

The second-floor students' break room at the Holyoke Community College-MGM Culinary Arts Institute looks out over downtown Holyoke. To see a gallery of photos of the institute, go online to MassLive.com.

(MARK M. MURRAY / THE REPUBLICAN)