Remade Campus Center shines

Governor joins students, staff, legislators in celebrating new HCC center at grand opening

By JACQUELYN VOGHEL
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE — When Maiv Lee-Ruiz started as a student at Holyoke Community College in the fall of 2016, the Campus Center was not a highlight of her tour.

“I remember following the student leader into Campus Center and thinking, ‘This place is dark,’” Lee-Ruiz said. Her tour guide was friendly, but “the halls were gloomy and felt like a cave.”

But speaking at the newly renovated Campus Center’s grand opening Friday afternoon, Lee-Ruiz described the updated space as “light, open and spacious.”

“Kind of like an Apple Store,” she added to laughter from the audience. Lee-Ruiz spoke before a crowd of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and local and state legislators to celebrate the opening, which came after two years of construction and decades of leaks and water damage.

Now, the space previously described as drab has pops of blue, green and orange coloring, open spaces and plentiful natural light from large windows that span an entire length of one part of the building. The three-floor, 65,000-square-foot facility opened for use in the fall as construction crews finished the last phases of the $43.5 million project, which was funded by the state Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance.

Aside from aesthetic improvements, the building has also seen functional renovations such as an expanded dining area, waterproof exteriors, an added atrium entrance at the courtyard on...
New Campus Center applauded

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the west side of campus, better
energy efficiency, accessibility
improvements, and an added
bridge over Tannery Brook to
connect the visitors parking lot
and welcome center. Overall,
the project added around 9,000
square feet to the area of the
old Campus Center.

Massachusetts Gov. Char-
ilie Baker, who also spoke at
the event, had not visited the
Campus Center since 2015.
Upon returning to the building
Friday, he described the dif-
ference between the old and new
facility as “breathtaking,”
highlighting the center’s light-
ing, open space and opportu-
"A lot of people in your
class will be hanging
out as well,” he added, provid-
ing opportunities for academic
collaboration.

Jacquelyn Voghel can be
reached at juvoghel@gazettenet.com.

of student life.
“Our students deserve en-
vironments where they feel
safe, welcome, inspired and
worthy,” Royal said. “When
students feel deserving, they
begin to see their own self-
worth and they believe in the
power of their dreams.”

At the event, Royal also an-
nounced a $7.5 million Marieb
Foundation donation to the
college’s Center for Life Sci-
ces.
“This is the largest private
donation in HCC’s nearly 75-
year history,” Royal said, “and
to our knowledge, it is the
largest private contribution to
any community college in the
commonwealth.”

Students also expressed
their approval of the new Cam-
pus Center.

“I wish every building was
like this,” said first-year HCC
student Carolyn Sicbaldi,
adding that the large windows
are a particularly impactful
feature. “It’s very clean and
refreshing.”

Oliver Haas, also first-year
HCC student, said he uses the
Campus Center almost every
day, praising the building as
“very well streamlined, very
clean.”

Holyoke Community Col-
lege President Christina
Royal called the Campus Cen-
ter “not just another building
project,” but “the heartbeat of
our campus.” With the renova-
tions, Royal expects to see im-
provements across all aspects
of student life.

“Large people in your
other classes will be hanging
out as well,” he added, provid-
ing opportunities for academic
collaboration.

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