

# Gov. Baker helps open HCC Campus Center

Holyoke Community College will welcome Gov. Charlie Baker and other state and local officials to the grand opening celebration of its Campus Center on Friday, Feb. 28.

The event begins at 2 p.m. with tours, remarks, a ribbon-cutting, food and a variety of student-led activities on all three floors of the 66,000 square-foot facility, which is the result of a two-year, \$43.5 million, top-to-bottom renovation and expansion.

Other expected guests include Patricia Marshall, deputy commissioner for academic affairs and student success at the state Department of Higher Education; Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse; state Rep. Aaron Vega, D-Holyoke, and legislators serving surrounding cities and towns.

A short speaking program in the second floor dining area will begin at 2:30 p.m. with remarks from Baker, state Secretary of Education Jim Peyser, HCC President Christina Royal, and Maiv Lee-Ruiz, a nursing student and new student orientation leader from Holyoke.

Before and after the speeches, guests will be invited to sample food prepared by HCC Dining Services/Aramark; listen to live music from an HCC student quartet; play dominoes

with students in El Centro, home to HCC's Multicultural Academic Services program; watch e-sports students in action on a virtual playing field; buy HCC gear in the College Store; and visit HCC's student engagement area to talk to students representing clubs and other campus activities.

The Campus Center first opened in 1978 and had been plagued by insidious leaks and water damage for decades before it was closed for reconstruction in 2017. The lower floors of the building were essentially gutted down to its concrete foundation and supports before being rebuilt. It reopened for the start of the fall 2019 semester while construction crews continued the finish work.

Key parts of the project included adding about 9,000 square feet to the building, enclosing an external walkway on the second floor to expand the dining area, squaring off the sloping façade and encapsulating the entire building to make it watertight, adding an atrium entrance off the HCC Courtyard on the west side and a bridge over Tannery Brook that leads from a dedicated visitor parking lot to a first-floor welcome center, where visitors and students will find easier access to HCC's admissions, advising, careers, transfer and testing offices.



A bridge over Tannery Brook leads from the visitor parking lot to a new first-floor welcome center in the HCC Campus Center.

*Submitted photos*



Gov. Charlie Baker and other state officials will help open the renovated Holyoke Community College Campus Center on Friday.