

## ► In The News

# HCC to hold grand opening for Center for Life Sciences

HOLYOKE – U.S. Rep. Richard Neal of Springfield and Massachusetts Secretary of Education James Peyser will be the featured speakers at a ribbon-cutting and grand opening celebration for the new \$4.55 million Center for Life Sciences at Holyoke Community College Wednesday, Oct. 24 during Mass STEM Week.

The celebration will run from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the Center for Life Sciences, located on the lower level of HCC's Marieb Building. Refreshments will be served, and the public is welcome to attend.

The 13,000-square-foot facility features a suite of biotechnology labs and classrooms, and what is believed to be the only ISO-certified cleanroom at any Massachusetts community college and one of very few at any college or university in western Massachusetts.

"These state-of-the-art facilities and new equipment will allow us to train our students in laboratory settings similar to what they will experience in industry, making them more competitive for the biotech job market," said HCC professor Emily Rabinsky, biotechnology program coordinator.

The Oct. 24 celebration will include tours of the facility, lab demonstrations by Rabinsky and her students, refreshments, and a ceremonial ribbon-cutting at 10:45 a.m. Also expected to attend are state representatives Aaron Vega of Holyoke, Brian Ashe of Longmeadow, and Angelo Puppolo of Springfield, as well as repre-



New Center for Life Sciences lab window shows one of the new laboratories in the Center for Life Sciences with a view of the cleanroom window.

sentatives from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, which awarded HCC a \$3.8 million grant for the project.

The new labs will be used primarily for biotechnology, genetics and microbiology classes, and as need for other biology courses. Once it's fully operational, the cleanroom in the Center for Life Sciences will have a certification rating of ISO 8—air quality of no more than 100,000 parti-

cles per cubic foot. Inside the cleanroom there will be a hooded biosafety cabinet where the sterility will increase to ISO 7—no more than 10,000 particles per cubic foot.

Cleanroom operations are being incorporated into biotechnology classes for degree-seeking students, and HCC also plans to offer a non-credit, professional development course called "Introduction

to Cleanroom Technology" for people who want to learn cleanroom operations.

Grant funds and donations also paid for new equipment including a high-end, research grade fluorescent microscope like those used in the pharmaceutical industry, a micro volume spectrophotometer used to measure small amounts of genetic material, and an electroporator for genetic engineering.