

HCC to boost its 'Learning Community' courses

Federal grant will enable HCC to offer 6 new classes, partner with half-dozen other institutions

By **BERA DUNAU**
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HOLYOKE — Thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Holyoke Community College is set to offer — in collaboration with several area colleges and universities — a number of new "Learning Community" courses that seek to break down barriers between disciplines.

HCC's Learning Community courses are taught by two professors from different disciplines around a

common subject.

"We live in a complex world," said Jim Dutcher, an English professor at HCC and program manager for the grant.

"One discipline isn't enough," said Jack Mino, a psychology professor at HCC and co-founder of the Learning Community program.

Dutcher and Mino are co-teaching a Learning Community course this semester called "All Things Connect," which combines eco-psychology with eco-literature, along with a mixture of other disciplines.

The grant is being matched partly by the college, and came specifically from the NEH Division of Education Programs.

Based on previous Learning Community courses between HCC and Mount Holyoke College, and HCC

and Amherst College, each of the six courses funded by the grants will consist of half students from HCC, and half students from another institution.

The six partner institutions will be Smith, Mount Holyoke and Amherst colleges, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bay Path University and Tangshan Normal University in China.

"These are inter-institutional learning communities," said Dutcher.

Each class will have 20 to 25 students in it, split between the two institutions.

Here's a rundown of the courses HCC is offering:

■ "Journey" is being offered in collaboration with Tangshan Normal. The class will explore art, literature

and music from both America and China. It will be offered for free this spring semester to HCC students. It's also the first international Learning Community course HCC will offer, and will be conducted partly online.

■ "The Immigrant City," which combines history and political science with a focus on the city of Holyoke, will be offered again in the spring. A Learning Community course offered in collaboration with Amherst College, it will also be offered for free.

All other courses are being offered at half the cost of tuition and fees, including:

■ "Free to be Free: Mid-Century Experimental Art and Literature,"

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ing the... first year of operation, 22 percent of the students surveyed were computer science majors, compared to 14 percent in

said. One such interaction involves senior Kat Aiello and freshman Maya Reinstein,

many ways technology can be applied to education. An American foreign policy class used the space to build and

HCC boosts 'Learning Community'

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which has been meeting at the Smith College Museum of Art this semester, and is the course being offered with Smith.

■ "Red and White America: Native Responses to European Contact," will be taught by an HCC English professor and a professor of Native American History at Bay Path.

■ "Alien Incarcerations" will look at immigration and incarceration from philosophy and Latin American studies perspectives in partnership with Mount Holyoke.

■ "Breaking Bread and Making Friends: Food for the Common Good" will be a food journalism course offered with UMass.

The half-dozen courses funded by the grant will be offered over three years.

Mino said HCC sought the grant to improve the college's humanities teaching, and that the hope is that the funding will infuse some of the newer research from these partner institutions into HCC's courses. He also touted how useful these courses are to HCC students when they apply to four-

year colleges.

"It opens up transfer pathways," said Mino, who noted that it also gives HCC students the opportunity to develop relationships with professors at other colleges.

He said that HCC students are usually prized by area schools.

"Those five colleges look towards our students," he said.

A Learning Community course with Hampshire College is also being developed.

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