

Lea Occhialini named HCC ombudsperson

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College welcomes Lea Occhialini of East Longmeadow as its first ombudsperson and chief culture officer.

Occhialini is the former faculty and staff ombudsperson at Hampshire College and mediator/trainer in the Smith College Office of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity. Prior to that, she worked as a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court qualified mediator for the Mediation and Training Collaborative in Greenfield and helped oversee the Massachusetts Attorney General's Face-to-Face mediation program in Holyoke,



Lea Occhialini

Northampton and Greenfield small claims courts.

The ombudsperson/chief culture officer position is new at HCC.

"I'm excited about this," said HCC president Christina Royal. "Although it's very common at four-year institutions, to my understanding, this is the first time a community college in Massachusetts has had an ombudsperson."

Occhialini has worked in the mediation field since 2013. She started at HCC March 4.

"My job is to protect the interests of faculty and staff at all levels of the college and to promote fairness," she said. "I assist in clarifying issues and deter-

mining options for resolving conflicts, and I also bring systemic concerns to the attention of the president, and I do this as a confidential, neutral and independent resource."

Occhialini holds a bachelor's degree from Smith College, a law degree from American University's Washington College School of Law and a certificate in the foundations of organizational ombudsman practice from the International Ombudsman Association.

She grew up in western Massachusetts and now lives in East Longmeadow.

Holyoke Community College is the Commonwealth's oldest community college, serving more than 11,500 students annually in credit and noncredit programs and courses.