



## **HCC plans 'epic celebrations' for 2020 graduation**

In lieu of its traditional spring commencement ceremony at the MassMutual Center, Holyoke Community College will instead recognize the Class of 2020 with a virtual celebration in August and also invite graduates to walk across the stage next year with the Class of 2021.

"Every year, one of my most anticipated moments is commencement," HCC President Christina Royal said in

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an email to students last Friday. "As a first-generation college student, I remember how significant commencement was for my family and me. I take great pride in joining you and your families in celebrating your achievements, and in shaking each of your hands as you walk across the stage. But as we have all seen, the rapid spread of Covid-19 has changed nearly everything. It's no surprise that we will not be able to host this event in person on May 30, 2020."

She continued: "We must balance our desire to celebrate your academic achievements in all the ways you were expecting with the need to keep our community healthy, which continues to be our highest priority."

The new plan is for HCC to hold a virtual celebration in August, complete with special remarks, honors and recognition of graduates. All members of

the Class of 2020 will receive a special surprise package in the mail during the summer and be invited to host their own celebrations to share through videos and photos using the hashtag #HolyokeCC20.

The exact date for the virtual celebration has not yet been determined.

Also, Royal said, "The Class of 2020 will have a traditional commencement in May 2021, where we will celebrate each of you, in person with your loved ones present, along with the Class of 2021, on what will be a truly historic day.

"Your perseverance toward graduation in these unprecedented times deserves to be celebrated in every way possible," she said. "On behalf of your faculty and the entire HCC community, I applaud you for your strength and resilience, and will look forward to seeing you virtually in August and at the Mass Mutual Center in May 2021. What epic celebrations these will be!"

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