

# HCC awarded grant to expand Learning Communities

*College will offer classes jointly with Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Bay Path, UMass and Tangshan Normal University in China*

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College has been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will allow the college to expand its catalog of popular and highly regarded Learning Community courses and offer free or reduced tuition to students who enroll in those classes.

With a \$100,000 grant from the NEH Division of Education Programs — matched in part by the college — HCC is adding five new “inter-institutional” courses to its rotation of Learning Communities. Those classes will be offered in partnership with Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, Bay Path University, UMass-Amherst and Tangshan Normal University in China.

For more than 20 years, HCC has been a national leader in the development of Learning Community courses — unique educational experiences that combine two classes from distinct academic areas focusing on a common subject or theme. HCC has the oldest LC program in Massachusetts and is still one of only a handful of colleges in the state, public or private, that offers them.

Learning Communities are part of a trio of programs at HCC known as Integrative Learning that also includes the Honors and Service Learning programs.

Each semester, HCC lists about a dozen or so LCs in its course catalog, such as “Cli-Fi: Stories and Science of the Coming Climate Apocalypse,” a combination of English composition and environmental science, a lab class. In 2015, the “Cli-Fi” course received mention in *The New York Times* and other newspa-



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**Thomas Bradbury, of Florence, a student in the Learning Community course “All Things Connect,” a class that combines psychology and English literature in an exploration of environmental issues, holds a Harris’s hawk on a recent field trip to New England Falconry in Hadley.**

pers around the world in stories about the emerging study of “climate fiction.”

Typically, Learning Community courses, called “LCs” for short, are co-taught by two instructors from HCC. These new courses will feature one instructor from HCC and another from one of its partners. Students from both institutions are eligible to enroll and the classes will meet on each campus, with the exception of the LC with China, where students from both countries will “meet” and collaborate online.

“One of the purposes of the grant is to promote the humanities,” said HCC psychology professor Jack Mino, co-founder of HCC’s LC program. “It’s partly about enhancing the LC program, but what’s really exciting is that we’ll be

able to offer more inter-institutional LCs as well as our first international LC.”

This semester, Mino is co-teaching “All Things Connect,” an LC combining psychology and literature that focuses on the environment.

The new LCs will follow a model established by courses HCC has offered before in collaboration with Mount Holyoke College and Amherst College. In fact, the HCC-Amherst College course, “The Immigrant City,” a combination of history and political science focusing on the city of Holyoke, will continue under the grant this coming spring. Thanks to the grant and the matching funds from HCC, tuition and fees for that course will be waived.

HCC’s first international LC,

“Journey,” will also be offered for free for the spring semester, a savings of more than \$1,000 for HCC students who enroll. That six-credit class combines composition and special topics in humanities and will include ESL students from Tangshan Normal University in an exploration of music, art and literature from both American and Chinese cultures.

For the other courses, HCC will be waiving half of the tuition and fees, a discount of about \$500 per student, or the cost of one regular three-credit class.

Another new LC, “Red and White America: Native Responses to European Contact,” will pair an English professor from HCC with a professor of Native American History at Bay Path.

“Alien Incarcerations” will take a look at immigration and incarceration from the perspectives of Latin-American Studies (Mount Holyoke) and philosophy (HCC).

HCC English professor Jim Dutcher, the grant program manager, will teach the HCC component of a new LC with UMass, “Breaking Bread and Making Friends: Food for the Common Good,” a look at food journalism.

The LC course with Smith, “Free to be Free: Mid-Century Experimental Art and Literature,” was offered for the first time for the fall 2017 semester, and classes have been meeting frequently at the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton.

“Learning Community courses are very well regarded by the four-year colleges and universities our students attend after they earn their HCC degrees,” said Dutcher, who will also be the HCC instructor for the “Journey” class with China. “We’re hoping these Learning Communities will open even more transfer pathways for our students as they become familiar with other campuses and the faculty members and students there.”