

## EDITORIAL

# Community at the core of HCC's legacy

**T**HE TRUMAN COMMISSION REPORT IN 1947 served as a catalyst for the creation of public community colleges across the U.S. It came at a time when thousands of World War II veterans were coming home to pursue their education and return to the changing workforce of the post-war economy.

The community colleges were to be affordable for all and serve the needs of the areas in which they were established. "Equality of opportunity" was the credo for this effort.

Even before President Harry S. Truman accepted that report on higher education in December 1947, forward-thinking civic leaders in Holyoke had conceptualized and created what was known in 1946 as Holyoke Graduate School. Later Holyoke Junior College, its founding came more than a decade before the Massachusetts community college system was formally established between 1958 and 1960.

As the college celebrates its 75th anniversary, the very precepts on which it was founded remain true to this day: providing affordable, flexible, high-quality education to meet the needs and demands of students wherever they are in life.

Today, Holyoke is among 15 community colleges across the commonwealth that serve more than 135,000 students with average tuition and fees of \$6,380, according to the statewide association. They offer associate degree and certificate programs to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions or for entry into high-demand occupational fields.

Christina Royal, Holyoke Community's fourth president, is leading HCC into its next chapter. Here since 2017, her initiatives have helped HCC innovate to meet the challenges and demands of an ever-changing and more diverse student body.

"Many students ask themselves, is college even possible? What we offer is that anything is possible," Royal says. "If your desire is to attend a prestigious four-year school, you can start here and finish anywhere — anywhere."

The HCC-MGM Culinary Arts Institute, where the college hosted its community celebration on Thursday, is a key example of how the college is delivering for its students. Alumna Brianna Couture shared that the institute gave her the confidence and the foundation to launch her own culinary business.

"All the instructors have influenced me greatly, but it was the unique experience of going to a culinary school with so many fantastic female chefs, instructors, mentors and friends," Couture said. "I will be forever grateful to this college. It is a community with an indomitable heart."

All of Western Massachusetts should be grateful for HCC.