

# COMMUNITY

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### In Last Official Act, Retiring HCC President Raises Pride Flag Once More

**HOLYOKE** – Two years ago, in June 2021, Holyoke Community College President Christina Royal raised the Pride flag over the HCC campus for the first time. On Friday, July 14, a large crowd of students, faculty, and staff braved the rain to watch her do it again for the third and final time, as she conducted her last official act as president of HCC.

“From the first day that Christina walked onto the HCC campus until today, which is her last day with us, she’s really set forward a path of visibility and awareness for LGBTQ folks here at HCC,” said Renee Tastad, assistant vice president of Student Affairs and dean of Enrollment Management. “And at a time when so many rights are being taken away from our community, Christina has been loud and proud that this won’t happen at HCC, not now and not ever.”

This year, Royal’s fiancé, Karen MacGeorge, joined her at the flagpole.

“In so many ways, raising the flag is a symbolic gesture,” said Royal, HCC’s fourth president, the first woman, first bi-racial, and first queer person to hold that position. “That alone isn’t the action that creates a welcoming and inclusive environment, but symbolism is important along with action. We need all of it to create a safe environment where people can speak up and share their experiences so that we all have a comfortable place to live and coexist together.”

After the flag-raising, Royal lingered for good-byes. As of 11:59 p.m., she would be officially retired.

“I can’t wait to see all the ways that HCC continues to grow,” said Royal, who lives in Northampton. “And so I will always be excited to support the college, now as a community member and former president. I have so much love for this institution, and that love is because of all the work we’ve done



*Christina Royal, left, is joined by her fiancé Karen MacGeorge, and Renee Tastad, HCC assistant vice president of Student Affairs and dean of Enrollment Management, right, for the raising of the Pride flag at HCC on Friday, July 14, Royal’s last day as HCC president.*

together.”

Royal was succeeded by George Timmons, HCC’s fifth president, who was on hand Friday to witness the flag-raising. He started his new job on

Monday, July 14. ■

**Williams Electric**