

Students 'leave their mark on history' at HCC

By Sandra Dias
thesun@turley.com

Students, faculty, and staff signed their names to a beam that will complete the framework of a renovated Campus Center at a "top-

ping off ceremony" at Holyoke Community College on Wednesday.

Construction workers from Walsh Brothers Inc. of Boston then hoisted the beam, which was adorned with a small evergreen tree on one

end and an American flag on the other, to its full height at the top of the building, which is undergoing a \$43.5 million state-funded renovation.

Construction is expected to be completed in the spring of 2019, when the building

will become home to a college Welcome Center, including the admissions office, assessment and testing center, advising, and a career and transfer center on the first floor. The second floor will feature a cafeteria and food court, college

store, student activities and clubs, Multicultural Academic Services, and lounge areas with study pods and charging stations. The third floor will house the Media Arts Center.

HCC President Christina Royal said the new Campus Center effectively brings together the offices and services that support student life all under one roof. She said the new center will serve as the college's most visible face to the community, and the building will now be the largest structure on campus.

"This beam represents the last piece of the building we are erecting," she said. "I want to highlight the point that you will not necessarily see it, but by signing it, you are leaving an imprint and footprint on the history and the future of the college."

"We are signing the last beam that is going up to the building that will become



Photos by Sandra Dias

Carolyn Smith of Holyoke Community College's student accounts office signs her name to the final girder of the school's renovated Campus Center, which was raised on Wednesday.



Workers from Walsh Brothers Inc. get ready to raise the last beam, adorned with the traditional evergreen tree and American flag, during the Feb. 28 "topping off" ceremony.

See CEREMONY, page 8

IN THE CLASSROOM

CEREMONY, from page 1

the new entryway to our school," said Bianca Thomas, who described herself as an older, nontraditional student at HCC who is studying sustainable agriculture. "I just wanted to leave my mark. HCC has been very good to me."

Thomas said she was excited to learn the new Campus Center will be an environmentally friendly "green" building. She won't be on campus any longer when it opens, but said she planned to return just to see the building.

Liberal arts student Caitlin Kazunas, 18, of Southampton, said she won't be on campus, either, when the building is unveiled, but she also plans to come back for a visit. Kazunas was recently accepted into Boston Architectural College to study interior architecture design for next year.

"I'll come and judge it once it's done," she said, laughing. Kazunas, who is involved with HCC's Student Senate, encouraged her peers to join her "in leaving our mark on history."

"With this structure and all the services it will offer, I honestly think it makes HCC one of the best schools in this area," she said.

Brandon Bass, 18, of Springfield, who is studying food service and hospitality management at HCC, said he was excited to sign the beam.

"I wanted to be a part of history at HCC," he said. "I think the new Campus Center will be great for all the students to connect more around student life."

"This building looks beautiful from the rendering," said Carolyn Smith,

who works in student accounts, as she signed the beam. "I can't wait to have it open on campus and I know the students can't wait."

Bob Gilbert, chairman of the Board of Trustees, said the topping-off ceremony is a pivotal event for Holyoke

Community College.

"This is the first step of the next 20 years of life here at the college," he said. "This is all about attracting more students and getting them ready for life. It's a whole new approach, a holistic approach ... it's going to make a big

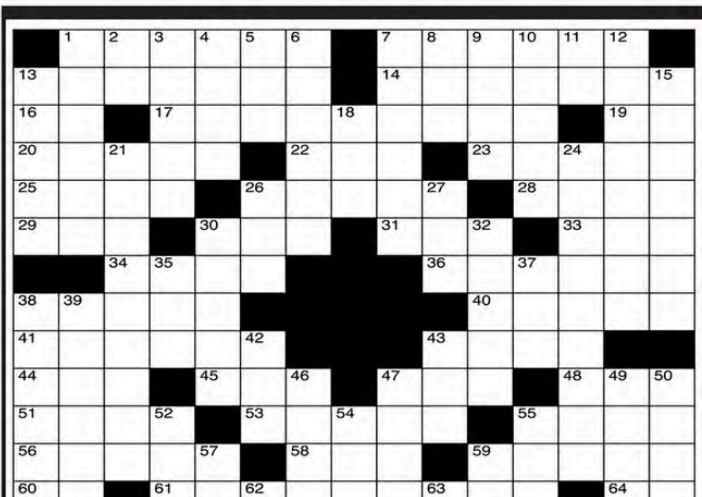
difference for the life of students."

Akin to a barn raising, "topping off" ceremonies are traditionally held as the last beam is raised into place on new buildings. Besides being painted white, the evergreen tree and American flag are common traditions.

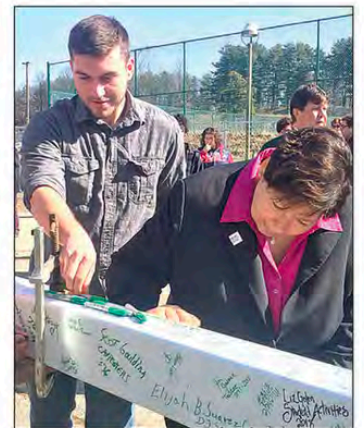


The last beam is set into place at the Holyoke Community College Campus Center.

Submitted photo



Student Brandon Bass adds his name to the



Holyoke Community College President Christina Royal signs the "topping off" beam for the renovated Campus Center during a