

# HCC award to honor retiring president

HOLYOKE — The Holyoke Community College Board of Trustees has established an annual award to honor the legacy of retiring President Christina Royal's work as a champion of equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Christina Royal Equity Award will be awarded annually to an HCC employee who demonstrates a sustained commitment to advancing equity.

Creation of the award was announced June 27 by Robert Gilbert, chair of the Board of Trustees, during the board's regular monthly meeting, which was also Royal's last. Her final day as president of HCC was July 14.

"The list of Dr. Royal's accomplishments is long and leaves us inspired, and woven through it all has been her commitment to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion," Gilbert said. "Therefore, we believe it is fitting that our faculty and staff, the heartbeat of this institution, be acknowledged and celebrated for their efforts with an award that bears her name."

Recipients of the annual award will receive a plaque along with

a monetary award funded through the Holyoke Community College Foundation. So far, Gilbert said, contributions to the award fund total more than \$10,000.

"Recipients of the Christina Royal Equity Award may be supporting a culture of transformative justice, working to remove barriers for historically marginalized groups, improving cultural competency through dialogue and education, exhibiting leadership and best practice for social equity, or making the larger community a more just and equitable place to reside," said Gilbert, who noted that Royal was not only the first woman to hold the position but also the first person of color and first queer person to serve as president of HCC.

Royal said she had not expected any surprises during her final HCC board meeting.

"Wow," she said, "it touches my heart to hear about this award in my honor. When I think about the work that I'm most proud of over the last seven years, it is actually bringing and elevating equity into the conver-



**Robert Gilbert, chair of the Board of Trustees at Holyoke Community College, sits with outgoing President Christina Royal at a June 27 meeting.** (SUBMITTED / HCC)

sation and into our strategic plan, and having a chance to really dig more into the data and really look at how we are able to provide an environment where all students can succeed."

Royal went on to thank the Board of Trustees for their guidance and support; the greater Holyoke community for fully embracing HCC; as well as faculty and staff; and HCC students, who are "our future," she said.

"Thank you for the acknowledgment and the establishment

of this award," she said. "This means a great deal to me. It means that, beyond my tenure, the college is going to be committed to recognizing people doing this kind of work, and honoring and supporting and ultimately recognizing people who are making an impact."

A new era for HCC begins this week, as George Timmons, Ph.D., starts his tenure as HCC's fifth president and the first African American man to hold that position.