

Holyoke Community College Receives Record \$7.5 Million Donation

HOLYOKE, MA – Holyoke Community College has received by far the largest donation in the college’s 74-year history – \$7.5 million – and what could very well be the largest donation ever recorded by a community college in Massachusetts.

The gift comes from a familiar source, the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Foundation, established by the late Elaine Marieb, a longtime HCC faculty member, alumna, best-selling textbook author and Northampton native.

The \$7.5 million includes \$5 million outright and a \$2.5 million matching gift that will go toward future renovations of HCC’s main science facility, the Marieb Building, as part of a multiphase plan to expand the recently opened Center for Life Sciences to encompass the entire, three-story structure.

“This gift is a testimony to the importance of community colleges in the lives of their students,” said Carlos Santiago, commissioner of the state Dept. of Higher Education. “Under President Royal’s leadership, HCC is to be congratulated for raising the bar for community college philanthropy that will benefit all of our public institutions.”

Marieb died in December 2018. During her lifetime, she was the college’s biggest benefactor, donating more than \$1.5 million to HCC in large and small amounts, including a \$1 million gift in 2014 to support construction of HCC’s



HCC biology professor Emily Rabinsky, seated, during a biotechnology lab in the college’s Center for Life Sciences, which will benefit from a \$7.5 million donation to HCC from the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Foundation.

Center for Health Education & Simulation and the Center for Life Sciences.

Until then HCC had received only one other gift of that magnitude, a \$1 million donation from alumnus and Yankee Candle Company founder Michael Kittredge in 2003 to establish the Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development.

Last year, the Marieb Foundation made a \$1 million legacy gift to the college that Marieb had set up as part of her estate plan, money targeted for HCC programs that benefit nontraditional-age students, particularly women.

The Center for Life Sciences opened in 2018 on the first floor of the Marieb Building, featuring state-of-the-art microbiology and biotechnology labs as well as an ISO-certified, instructional cleanroom.

“This is thrilling,” said HCC president Christina Royal. “We are honored and incredibly grateful for the Marieb Foundation’s generous and unprecedented gift. This will support HCC’s continued investment in high-demand, high-wage fields in STEM and healthcare and help us provide generations of students with the academic space and experience they need and deserve. The Marieb Building represents the heart of her life’s work, since HCC is where her career began.”

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According to a database maintained by the Chronicle of Philanthropy, the \$7.5 million gift to HCC is the single largest private donation ever made to a community college in Massachusetts. The largest previous gift was a \$5 million donation to Cape Cod Community College in January 2019.

“Dr. Marieb’s belief in HCC was extraordinary,” said Amanda Sbriscia, HCC vice president of Institutional Advancement and executive director of the college’s nonprofit fundraising corporation, the HCC Foundation. “Private and individual philanthropy

to our community colleges sends a powerful message about the exceptional quality of education our students receive, because these gifts come most often from the alumni and friends who have experienced those classrooms first hand.”

The \$7.5 million Marieb donation follows the Feb. 28 grand opening of the HCC Campus Center after a two-year, \$43.5 million renovation and expansion.

“While we are here today to celebrate the grand opening of this new space and what it means for our students today,” Royal said during the Campus Center grand opening ceremony, “we know that the higher edu-

cation landscape requires us to look ahead, so we’re already preparing for tomorrow with our next building project.”

A native of Northampton, Marieb started working at HCC in 1969 as a professor of biology after earning a bachelor’s degree from Westfield State, a master’s degree from Mount Holyoke College, and a PhD in zoology from the University of Massachusetts.

She started writing textbooks on anatomy and physiology to address complaints from her nursing students that the materials then available were ineffective. To inform her writing, she enrolled in HCC’s nursing program,

graduating with her associate degree in 1980. She retired in 1993 to devote herself full time to writing, becoming the author or co-author of more than 10 best-selling textbooks and laboratory manuals on anatomy and physiology.

In 2016, Marieb ranked number seven on *Time Magazine’s* list of the “100 Most Read Female Writers in College Classes,” just behind Mary Shelley at number six and beating out the likes of George Eliot, Alice Walker, Charlotte Bronte and many other famous authors.

Former HCC president David Bartley used to introduce her as “the Stephen King of A&P.” ■