

## HOLYOKE

# State grant boosts HCC health sciences training

Students enrolled in health science programs at Holyoke Community College will benefit from a \$230,068 state grant for the purchase of telehealth equipment and other cutting-edge medical training technology at the college's Center for Health Education & Simulation.

The college will use some of those funds, awarded through the Executive Office of Education's Skills Capital Grants program, to buy autoclaves, microscopes, vital signs monitors, IV simulators, sutures, dressing materials and other items that will allow the college to enhance and expand its medical assistant program.

"The demand is growing," said Clare Lamontagne, dean of health sciences. "If you look on employment sites, they're all hiring medical assistants. We would conceivably like to double our enrollment."

Students who complete the one-year medical assistant certificate program are then eligible to take the national certification exam, which, if passed, qualifies them to work in doctor's offices, hospitals, and clinics or for other health care organizations.

The majority of the grant, about \$141,000, will be used to purchase three state-of-the-art medical simulators - a



Holyoke Community College nursing instructor Kara Moriarty, left, watches as a student nurse in the college's Center for Health Education & Simulation works with a simulator. The college recently received a \$230,068 state grant for the purchase of telehealth equipment and other cutting-edge medical training technology for the center. Officials say the demand for medical assistants is growing, and the college could see its enrollment in health sciences training courses double.

(HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO)

birthing simulator, pediatric simulator and tracheostomy simulator. Simulators are programmable, high-tech mannequins that students in health science programs, such as nursing, can examine, talk to and treat as if they were real-life patients.

The new birthing simulator, "Victoria," will join an older model that HCC purchased several years ago, called "Noelle," in the simulation center's maternity suite.

"One of the things these simulators provide is the opportunity for students to be exposed to patients experiencing high-risk, low-occurrence types of medical situations, like significant complications in labor," said Lamontagne. "The technology changes quickly. The material of the new simulator makes it more lifelike, and that adds to the fidelity of the experience."

The third big chunk of the grant will be applied toward

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the purchase of telehealth equipment. Telehealth is expanding area of health-care that allows for remote consultations and treatment. The device which Holyoke Community is buying is a computer on a cart that has videoconferencing capabilities and medical assessment instruments attached, such as a stethoscope, otoscope and ophthalmoscope.

"It's a really great infusion of dollars to help support our students as we move into all these different learning modalities," said Lamontagne. "We're really cutting edge to have this telehealth equipment."

The telehealth equipment will also enable HCC to offer collaborative teaching exercises and expand its partnerships with other area colleges, such as Bay Path University, she said.

"We've been working with (Bay Path's physician assistant) students on simula-

tion," said Lamontagne, "and they are eager to work with us on the telehealth equipment."

The skills capital grants are awarded by Gov. Charlie Baker's Workforce Skills Cabinet to educational institutions that demonstrate partnerships with local businesses, as well as align curriculum and credentials with industry demand in order to maximize hiring opportunities in each region of the state.

"It is encouraging to see schools that are awarded skills capital grants put the funds toward career pathways to give Massachusetts students experience and expertise in industries that are expanding in the commonwealth," Baker said in announcing the grants. "These beneficial programs will give thousands of students a head-start on prosperous careers and we look forward to seeing their progress."