



Student trustee Jonathan Jasmi, left, and Vice President of the Student Senate Boshan "Bo" Zheng, right, present Christina Royal with the presidential medallion during her inauguration yesterday at the Leslie Phillips Theater on the Holyoke campus. Royal is the college's fourth president and first female president. For more photos visit MassLive.com/photos. (DAVE ROBACK / THE REPUBLICAN)

HOLYOKE

First lady at HCC

Royal inaugurated as school's 4th president

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At her inauguration yesterday as the fourth person, and the first woman, to serve as president of Holyoke Community College, Christina Royal recalled arriving for her first semester in college.

From a family of modest means, she thought she was all set for her first two semesters at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, between a scholarship, grants, student loans and a job. Then she found out she needed \$400 worth of books.

"We just didn't have it," Royal told the audience of more than 200 who attended the ceremo-



Christina Royal was inaugurated as the fourth president of Holyoke Community College yesterday at the Leslie Phillips Theater on the Holyoke campus. (DAVE ROBACK / THE REPUBLICAN)

ny yesterday morning at the college. "We didn't realize that we would have to pay separately for textbooks, every semester, or how costly they would be."

Improving college affordability and access, helping more students complete their degrees and closing achievement gaps separating demographic groups are the goals of the state's public colleges, said

Carlos E. Santiago, state commissioner of higher education. The same is true for Royal, who came to Holyoke Community College in January from Inver Hills Community College in Minnesota.

William Messner, the college's third president, retired in August 2016 after serving 12 years. Messner succeeded David Bartley, who served

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from 1975-2003, and George Frost, who served from 1946-75 and was the school's founding president.

Royal singled out Bartley, also a former speaker of the state House of Representatives, in her remarks. She recalled meeting with Bartley soon after getting the job. The meeting felt to her like another intense interview, despite her already having been hired, Royal said.

At the end Bartley, who was in attendance yesterday, told her: "You will do good work here."

She asked: "How do you know?"

She said Bartley replied: "Because you said you listen and you care about students."

State Rep. Aaron Vega, D-Holyoke, told of seeing Royal at scores of community events from gatherings of business leaders to a friendly competition at a farmers market cook-off.

"And you aren't even running for office," Vega said. "You already have the job."

Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse said Royal could have sought jobs elsewhere in the



Christina Royal is the first woman to hold the position of president at Holyoke Community College. She was inaugurated yesterday at the Leslie Phillips Theater on the Holyoke campus. For more photos visit MassLive.com/photos. (DAVE ROBACK / THE REPUBLICAN)

country, but she chose Holyoke because of the challenges and the opportunities present here.

With about 8,200 students, Holyoke

Community College is either in the midst of or has recently completed a number of improvements and expansions.

The Holyoke Community College Center of Health Education opened on Jarvis Avenue in 2014. A new culinary center in the Cubit building downtown opens next month, as does a gaming school for training casino workers run in cooperation with Springfield Technical Community College and MGM Springfield.

Workers are also renovating the student center and life sciences building as part of a \$43.5 million renovation project.

Royal has a doctorate in education from Capella University and a master's degree in educational psychology and a bachelor's degree in math from Marist. She joined Inver Hills Community College in 2013. Prior to that she served as associate vice president for e-learning and innovation at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland and director of technology-assisted learning for the School of Graduate and Continuing Education for Marist College, according to her official biography.

She has also worked as the director of curriculum for The Beacon Institute of Learning and was the manager of research and development at CompUSA.

She grew up near Albany, New York.