

Friday
May 31, 2019

DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE

Established 1786
Northampton, Massachusetts

Volume 232, No. 226

\$1.00

GAZETTENET.COM

Northampton native leaves \$1M to HCC

The late Elaine Nicpon
Marieb makes gift for
nontraditional-age students

By **DUSTY CHRISTENSEN**
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE — When Time magazine published a list of the 100 most-read female writers in college classes in 2016, the top 10 featured many of the country's most well-known wordsmiths, from Toni Morrison to Virginia Woolf.

Tucked into the list in seventh

place was a local figure whose books have long filled the bookshelves of anyone studying anatomy and physiology: Elaine Nicpon Marieb. A best-selling textbook author raised in Northampton, Marieb was a graduate of many of the area's institutions of higher education.

And although she died at the age



**ELAINE NICPON
MARIEB**

of 82 on Dec. 20 of complications from Parkinson's disease, Marieb's legacy will continue to be felt locally after she gifted Holyoke Community College a \$1 million legacy donation.

On Tuesday, the college announced Marieb's gift, which was set up as part of her estate plan and is earmarked to support programs for nontraditional-age students.

"Frankly, this gift will be life-changing for students," said Amanda Sbriscia, the executive director of the HCC Foundation and the college's vice president of institutional advancement. "And because of the extra amount of the gift, for generations

of students at HCC."

A longtime donor to HCC, Marieb had earlier given more than \$1.5 million to the school where she had earned a nursing degree and taught biology for 24 years.

In 2014, Marieb gave a \$1 million gift toward construction of HCC's Center for Health Education and Center for Life Sciences. Previously, she had also helped establish scholarships and an endowed faculty chair, as well as science labs.

Marieb was born in 1936 in Northampton, where she grew up on the family farm. She was a nontraditional student, having earned her

bachelor's degree from Westfield State College at age 28. She went on to earn a master's degree in biology at Mount Holyoke College and a Ph.D. in zoology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst before landing a teaching job at HCC — then known as Holyoke Junior College — in 1969.

Marieb was best known for writing anatomy and physiology textbooks, which she began doing after hearing from nursing students how ineffective their materials were. So she decided to enroll in HCC's nursing program to better understand those con-

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Gift bequeathed to HCC

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cerns, graduating with an associate degree in 1980. She went on to get her bachelor's in nursing from Fitchburg State College and a master's in nursing and gerontology from UMass.

Marieb was a big financial supporter of HCC over the years because of the way it serves those from underprivileged backgrounds, she said.

"It's only halfway to a bachelor's degree, but it's a very fine halfway," she told the Gazette in 2014. "HCC has always been the best in giving its students the best possible background."

As someone who had been a nontraditional-age student herself, Marieb focused much of her philanthropy on those students. For example, she helped fund the Elaine Marieb New Pathways Center, which functions as a lounge and study area for nontraditional female students.

"Women generally end up having to co-opt space in their kitchen or doing laundry to do homework," said Irma Medina, the coordinator of HCC's Pathways program, which gives academic help to students at HCC and helps them explore transferring to the area's prestigious liberal arts colleges. "She felt very strongly that they needed a space here for themselves."

Medina said that when



HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE/FILE PHOTO

Elaine Nicpon Marieb, right, is shown during one of her visits to Holyoke Community College's Elaine Marieb New Pathways Center, a computer and study center for students in the college's New Directions and Pathways programs.

Marieb would come to visit the college, she would spend most of her time listening to students.

"She felt connected with the program because she'd seen so many of the students just like her," she said. "There's a lot of sacrifice in terms of their time, their families, and balancing all of those demands to be here."

Around a third of HCC students are older than 25, Sbriscia said. And the gift will allow the college to continue

supporting those students through their education.

"From our perspective, this is her continuing vote of confidence in what we're doing for nontraditional students," Sbriscia said.

Medina added that she hopes that the students at HCC see the gift as a vote of confidence in them, too.

"You are worth \$1 million," Medina said to them.

Dusty Christensen can be reached at dchristensen@gazettenet.com.