

HCC receives \$1 million legacy gift from late professor

HOLYOKE – During her lifetime, Elaine Marieb donated more than \$1.5 million to Holyoke Community College in large and small amounts she once described as “tokens of gratitude” to the institution where she earned her nursing degree and taught biology for 24 years.

Even after her death in December, Marieb’s generosity continues.

HCC is the beneficiary of a \$1 million legacy gift Marieb set up as part of her estate plan, money earmarked for HCC programs that support nontraditional age students.

The gift was officially announced Tuesday, May 28, at HCC’s monthly Board of Trustees meeting, followed by the presentation of a \$1 million ceremonial check.

“This is incredible. We are so thrilled and grateful,” said Amanda Sbriscia, HCC vice president of Institutional Advancement and executive director of the HCC Foundation, the college’s nonprofit fundraising corporation, which will invest and administer the funds. “This gift will significantly enhance our efforts to support adult students and adult women at HCC.”

This was Marieb’s second \$1 million donation to HCC. The first came in 2014 to support construction of the college’s Center for Health Education and Center for Life Sciences. Over the years, her other donations helped establish scholarships, science labs, an endowed faculty chair, and the Elaine



Holyoke Community College officials hold a check for \$1 million check as a legacy gift from alumni Elaine Marieb to the school.

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Marieb New Pathways Center, a computer room and study area for students in New Directions and Pathways, two support programs that were particularly meaningful to Marieb that will benefit from this new \$1 million gift.

“This is very exciting for us, and it’s wonderful going into the next academic year knowing we’ve got new dol-

lars to support some of the initiatives we’ve highlighted as growth opportunities in our strategic plan,” said HCC President Christina Royal.

Marieb was herself a nontraditional college student. A native of Northampton, Marieb earned a bachelor’s degree from Westfield State in 1964 when she was 28 years old. After

that, she received a master’s degree from Mount Holyoke College and a PhD in zoology from UMass. She was hired as a professor of biology at HCC in 1969.

She started writing textbooks on anatomy and physiology to address complaints from her nursing students that the materials then available were ineffective. She enrolled in HCC’s nursing program to inform her writing, graduating with her associate degree in 1980. She retired in 1983 to devote herself to writing, becoming the author or co-author of more than 10 best-selling textbooks and laboratory manuals in anatomy and physiology.

Though she moved to Sarasota, Florida, she made annual trips to HCC and always visited the Marieb Center to talk to students.

“I can’t believe how fortunate I am to be part of something like this,” said Irma Medina, coordinator of HCC’s Pathways Program, which helps nontraditional students prepare for and transfer to selective four-year colleges. “For her to bestow that kind of generosity. I just hope we can reach more and do more.”

The ceremonial \$1 million check from the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Foundation is now on display in the Marieb Center.

“I feel like the students here need to see it,” she said. “It says, yea, you’re worth it. You’re worth a million bucks. You’re special.”