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Professor chosen for HCC commencement honor



Holyoke Community College criminal justice professor Alejandro Sanchez, a former Holyoke city councilor and Springfield police officer, will carry the ceremonial mace and lead the procession of graduates at the college's commencement on Saturday after being chosen for the school's highest honor, the Elaine Marieb Faculty Chair

for Teaching Excellence.

"It's not just me," Sanchez said to his colleagues during the annual staff and faculty awards ceremony, "it's everyone working together that makes this place happen, that makes this place tick. I appreciate the recognition, but I do it because I enjoy doing it, and I like being here."

The Marieb Award, en-

dowed by professor emeritus Elaine Marieb, a 1980 alumna, recognizes a full-time member of the faculty for outstanding classroom teaching. Award recipients serve for one year and receive a small stipend for professional development, lead the procession at commencement, and also give the keynote graduation speech.

The college's 71st annual commencement ceremony will be held at the MassMutual Center in Springfield starting at 10 a.m. The event will also be streamed live on the college's website, hcc.edu.

A tenured member of the criminal justice faculty, Sanchez, who goes by Alex, has been teaching full-time at the

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college since 2006. He is also an alumnus from the class of 1990.

Sanchez joined the Springfield Police Department a few years after high school, earned his associate degree from HCC in criminal justice and then went on for a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Westfield State and a master's degree in criminal justice from Anna

Maria College. He also served on the police departments in Hatfield and Sunderland, was elected to multiple terms on the Holyoke City Council and held seats on the city planning board and fire commission.

A Holyoke native and graduate of Holyoke High School, Sanchez, 54, now lives in Southwick with his wife, Stefanie, and two daughters, Samantha and Gabriella. He has three adult children from a previous marriage and two grandchildren.