
Building Our Future Together

Strategic Plan
3.0

HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



Table of Contents

From the President	2
Forward	3
Strategic Planning Process	4
Mission	7
Vision	7
Student Experience Statement.	8
Values	9
Strategic Frameworks and Objectives.	10
Strategic Frameworks and Measurable Objectives / Metrics.	15
Strategic Planning Steering Committee	17



From the President

It is with great determination and enthusiasm that we present **Building Our Future Together: Strategic Plan 3.0 for Holyoke Community College**. This plan reflects the collaboration, insight, and broad participation by students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, workforce partners, and community members. It is their collective contributions that have helped to shape the mission, vision, values, student experience, and strategic priorities of Holyoke Community College.



We live during a period of constant and profound change, ensuring that the future of community college education will be shaped by numerous innovations and collaborative intelligence. The intentional integration of voices across sectors will help us to meet the challenges facing students and our region, affording us the opportunity to identify strategies that strengthen student success, inform academic offerings, deepen partnerships, and align our work with the needs of western Massachusetts.

Strategic Plan 3.0 provides Holyoke Community College with clarity of purpose and a strong foundation for the future. I am grateful to all who contributed to this vital work. Together we will position Holyoke Community College and our entire region to thrive in the years ahead.

George Timmons, Ph.D.
President





Forward

At Holyoke Community College, everything starts and ends with the college mission to **educate, inspire, and connect**. Members of the faculty and staff work every day to ensure that anyone who visits the campus – for an event, for a course, for a certificate, or for a degree – connects in a way that is meaningful and life changing. Through the education provided, internal and external communities are inspired to grow. Strategic planning has become the cornerstone of how the college faculty and staff advance this mission. This journey began in 2017 with our inaugural plan, continued in 2021 when the first strategic plan was refreshed amid pandemic disruptions and growing awareness of social justice issues, and now Strategic Plan 3.0 will guide us into the future under the current leadership of the college.

Although school-aged populations have declined, programs like MassReconnect and MassEducate offer fresh avenues for free tuition and growth. This positions the college and helps attract more local students, whether they have just graduated from high school or are somewhere else on their lifelong path. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the college will continue to serve the diverse western Massachusetts community by enhancing transfer pathways and strengthening partnerships with local and regional employers.

SP 3.0 reflects the extraordinary commitment of countless faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, and community members who came together for workshops, brainstorming sessions, discussions, brown bag lunches, surveys, focus groups, and forums. At the core of this process was an understanding of the distinctive college history of an institution born as Holyoke Graduate School in 1946 and rebuilt after a fire in 1968. Today, Holyoke Community College continues to forge ahead, bolstered by its drive, innovation, and student-centered approach.

As the college celebrates its 80th anniversary, Strategic Plan 3.0 provides clarity of purpose, a strong foundation for the future, and a commitment to advancing the Massachusetts Division of Higher Education vision to “produce the best-educated citizenry and workforce in the nation.”

At Holyoke
Community College,
everything starts and ends
with the college mission
to educate, inspire, and
connect.

Strategic Planning Process

Strategic planning is crucial to the success of Holyoke Community College, and provides a clear roadmap to advancing its mission, vision, and priorities while emphasizing student achievement, responsive leadership, and institutional sustainability. A blueprint for decision-making, strategic planning ensures that resources are allocated to the initiatives with the most significant impact.

By establishing measurable goals and outcomes, strategic planning promotes accountability throughout the institution. Involving all community members in the process fosters shared ownership and strengthens commitment to college objectives. Moreover, strategic planning equips the institution to respond effectively to changes in demographics, economic challenges, and workforce needs, ensuring its relevance and resilience.

Holyoke Community College demonstrated institutional agility during the extraordinary challenges experienced at the start of the 2020s. As the institution adapted to pandemic disruptions, the community focused on integrating evolving perspectives on equity and social justice. The resulting 2023-26 Strategic Plan strengthened the competitive position of Holyoke Community College and reinforced its role as a regional anchor institution.

Strategic Plan 3.0 underscores the continued commitment to advancing the college mission while serving as a catalyst for economic mobility and community development.

Our Fall 2025 Journey

In the fall 2025 semester, HCC embarked on an ambitious journey together. The community asked big questions, listened deeply, and dreamed boldly about what HCC could become — a future-focused, student-centered institution that met the evolving needs of the region while staying true to its mission of transforming lives through accessible, high-quality education.

Strategic Plan 3.0 Kickoff

The process began by examining national trends in higher education and conducting a comprehensive SWOT analysis, gathering honest input about institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This foundation helped the college understand the landscape it was navigating and the distinctive role HCC played within it.

Strategic planning
provides a clear
roadmap for HCC to
advance its mission,
vision, and priorities.



The Power of Collective Voice

Hundreds of members of the HCC community – students, employees, trustees, and regional leaders – took part in articulating the challenges the college faced, the opportunities before it, and the areas where HCC could elevate its impact. This level of participation reflected the deep investment the community had in HCC's success and the future being built together.

Student Experience Workshop

Perhaps most importantly, space was created to hear directly from those at the heart of HCC's mission – its students. This workshop offered an opportunity to engage deeply with their perspectives: what they loved about HCC, what they wished was different, and how the college could best serve them and future students. Their voices remained central as the work moved forward.

Future Summit

The campus community came together for a transformative day of learning and visioning. Board of Trustees Chair Vanessa Smith reminded participants that this strategic plan belonged to the entire HCC community and would be shaped by collective input. The community was privileged to learn from three nationally recognized thought leaders:

- Josh Wyner from the Aspen Institute challenged HCC to improve transfer outcomes, strengthen workforce programs, and overhaul advising to ensure credentials led to both good jobs and bachelor's degree attainment.
- Kate McConnell from AAC&U inspired the community to modernize teaching with high-impact practices, authentic assessment, and AI-aware pedagogy that built long-term learning and adaptability.
- David Trujillo from Trujillo & Associates called on HCC to center people, culture, and equity in its work – pursuing systemic, community-responsive change supported by professional development and continuous improvement.

In breakout sessions, participants drafted powerful impact statements on topics ranging from labor-market alignment and advising transformation to equity and access, and community partnerships. These conversations were already informing the measurable objectives that would drive Strategic Plan 3.0.



Community Conversation

A distinguished panel of regional leaders gathered for a breakfast conversation that brought external perspectives into the planning process. Over 80 community members participated in these conversations. Through facilitated table discussions, community members explored opportunities, challenges, and big questions facing higher education and the region. Their input helped HCC understand how it could best serve as an anchor institution and partner in addressing the community's most pressing needs.

The Steering Committee's Leadership

The Strategic Plan 3.0 Steering Committee provided invaluable guidance and facilitation. Members served as table captains for the Student Experience Workshop and Community Conversation and helped navigate the rich discussions at the Future Summit. Their dedication exemplified the collaborative leadership that made HCC special.

Deep appreciation was also expressed to the faculty, deans, and program directors who participated throughout these events, bringing both their expertise and their openness to new ideas. Their engagement sent a powerful message about HCC's institutional culture and its commitment to continuous improvement.

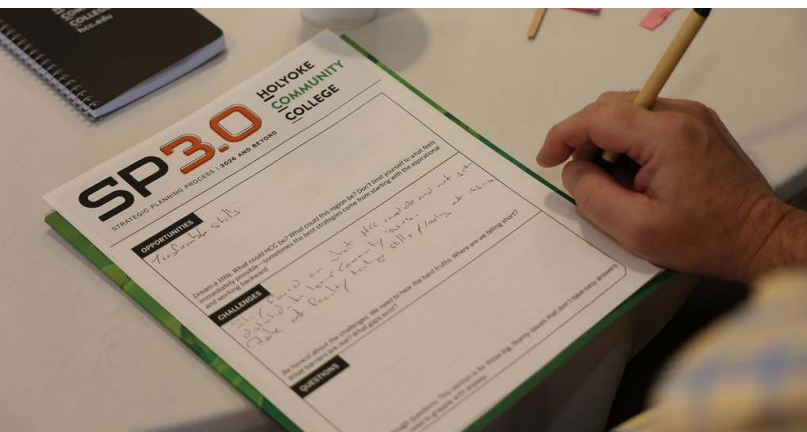
Looking Ahead

The work accomplished in fall 2025 was just the beginning. Spring 2026 included a process where themes took greater shape as feedback and data were synthesized and translated into measurable objectives and action items. The college community continued to engage its employees; faculty and staff in meaningful ways, ensuring that Strategic Plan 3.0 truly reflected collective aspirations and addressed the real challenges students faced.

A Community Committed to Excellence and Engagement

What stood out most about this work was not just the quantity of participation, but the quality of engagement. People came prepared. They listened to one another. They challenged assumptions respectfully. They offered creative solutions. They kept students at the center of every conversation.

HCC showed who it is — a community that believes in the transformative power of education and in its responsibility to make that transformation accessible to every student who walks through its doors. Together, the college will continue to build a future worthy of the students it serves and the community it calls home.



[2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#)

[2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

Mission



Educate. Inspire. Connect.

Vision

Holyoke Community College
aspires to be a college of
academic excellence known
for helping students overcome
barriers to success.



Student Experience Statement

Holyoke Community College commits to delivering a transformational student experience characterized by:

- A student-ready environment with connections that draw people, services, and resources together to address students' needs and ensure their success;
- An affordable, relevant education that leads to equitable student outcomes and builds strong career and transfer pathways;
- A culture of lifelong learning that supports educating the whole person, meets students where they are, and engages them in real-world learning experiences; and
- A vibrant, diverse, and inclusive college community that enriches learning and builds lifelong connections.

Members of the Holyoke Community College community commit to support this transformative experience through:

- Processes that create a student-ready environment by simplifying navigation, expanding access to services, and coordinating resource management;
- Culturally responsive approaches that ensure relevance, affordability and equity in every classroom and program, ensuring all students are valued and represented;
- Engagement activities that center on well-being, belonging, and meaningful learning in all interactions; and
- Professional learning and communities of practice that use technology and data to deliver personalized, proactive support.



Values

Kindness, inclusion, and trust are the foundations of the work that we do together. Innovation and collaboration enable us to explore and implement the ideas that will shape our future.

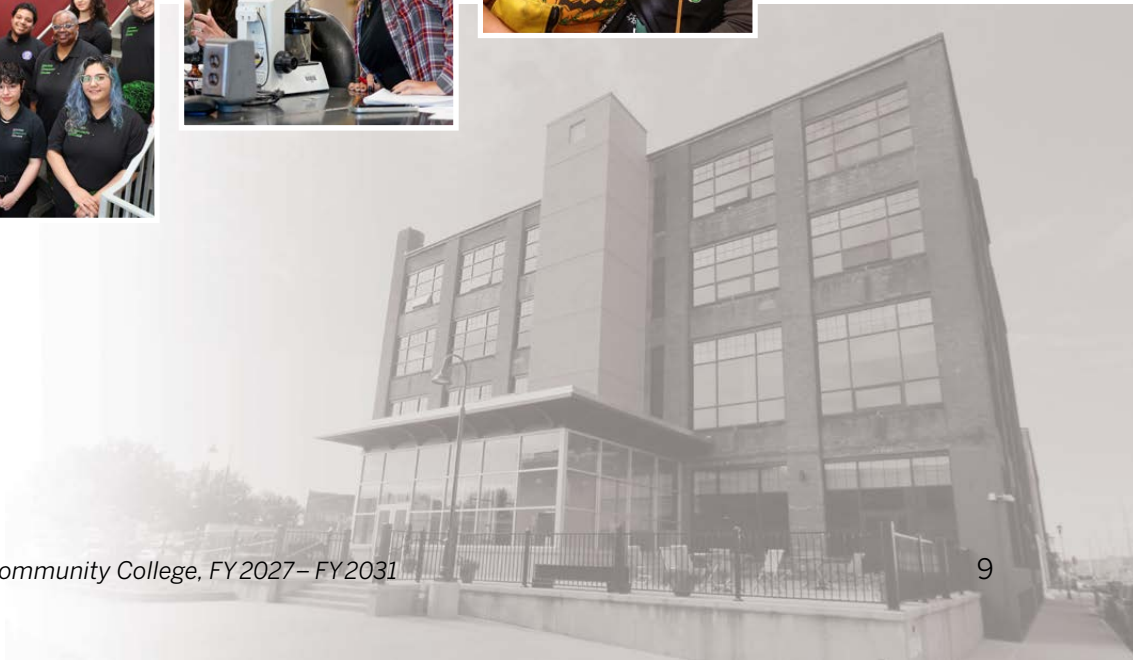
INNOVATION: We empower each other to explore, share, and actualize our ideas to continuously improve the Holyoke Community College experience for all. We do this with creativity and agility by keeping an open mind, taking risks, evaluating outcomes, and learning from mistakes.

COLLABORATION: We work as a community to develop and achieve common goals through an open exchange of ideas. We do this by encouraging wide-ranging participation, intentional communication, and the pursuit of diverse perspectives and expertise.

KINDNESS: We approach all interactions with empathy and in consideration of one another's needs. We act with the highest levels of professionalism, respect, and civility as we seek common ground and strive for mutual understanding.

INCLUSION: We provide a fair and welcoming environment where all voices are heard and meaningfully included to contribute to the growth and success of Holyoke Community College. We take intentional action, challenge our assumptions, foster belonging, and respect the uniqueness of individuals and diverse groups.

TRUST: We assume the best in others, prioritize transparency, and communicate with honesty, clarity, and consistency. We do this thoughtfully by including all stakeholders in the decision-making process and following through with our commitments.



Strategic Frameworks and Objectives

Framework One: Values In Action

Make Holyoke Community College an exceptional workplace through its commitment to equity, people, and culture.

1.1 *Increase the demographic alignment between employees and the student population by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- The composition of the college workforce closely mirrors the diversity of the student population, with measurable parity achieved and sustained across employee groups and levels.

1.2 *Increase employee retention from 93% to 95% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- Employees across all demographics, job classifications, and divisions remain at higher, equitable rates, with reduced turnover gaps and increased stability in key talent areas.
- Established and sustained partnerships with community organizations, professional associations, and affinity groups expand diverse applicant pools and increase recruitment reach into historically underrepresented communities.

1.3 *Increase employee joy as evidenced by satisfaction from 68% to 75% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- Employees consistently report high levels of satisfaction, engagement, and well-being, and survey results reflect a positive, inclusive workplace culture for all employees.
- Employees' voices elevate to support one another across campus.
- Professional development opportunities are offered to all employees to elevate and strengthen work performance.



Framework Two: Academic Distinction

Elevate the college reputation for offering high quality, responsive, and experiential learning opportunities.

2.1 *Increase the percentage of students enrolling in courses with High-Impact Practices (HIPs) from 23% to 28% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- A significantly larger and more diverse share of students enroll in HIP courses, with equitable access across all student populations.
- Participation in HIP classes increases year over year with reduced participation gaps across all student populations.
- More faculty members teach HIP courses across academic disciplines to increase access for all students.

2.2 *Increase the course completion rate from 79% to 84% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- Students successfully complete courses at higher rates overall, with consistent academic progress across all demographic groups.
- Students across all demographic groups complete courses at higher and more consistent rates.

2.3 *By 2031, eliminate course completion rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all students.*

Success looks like:

- Course completion rates are equitable across all student groups, with no measurable differences among populations.
- Course completion rate gaps for all students narrow steadily each year and reach 0 percentage points by 2031 relative to all students.
- Annual reporting shows consistent year-over-year improvement in completion equity for all students



2.4 *Increase the graduation rate of first-time incoming degree and certificate-seeking students from 23% to 28% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- A greater proportion of first-time degree- and certificate-seeking students graduate within the expected timeframe, reflecting improved student progression and completion.
- The graduation rate of first-time, incoming degree and certificate-seeking students increases steadily each year.
- An increasing number of students complete degrees or certificates within the expected timeframe, indicating stronger persistence and progression for all students.
- Graduation rates improve for all students, with year-over-year gains.

2.5 *By 2031, eliminate graduation rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all first-time incoming degree and certificate-seeking students.*

Success looks like:

- Graduation outcomes are equal for all students.
- Graduation rate gaps for all disaggregated student groups narrow steadily each year and reach 0 percentage points by 2031 relative to all first-time incoming degree and certificate-seeking students.
- Annual data show consistent year-over-year reduction in graduation gaps for all students.
- Increased faculty professional development on HIPs across disciplines increases student success measures across all populations.

2.6 *By 2031, increase the percentages of active academic courses designated as and assessed for college general education outcomes.*

Success looks like:

- Academic courses clearly align with general education outcomes and are assessed regularly, ensuring consistent measurement of student learning across the curriculum.
- The percentage of academic courses designated as and assessed for general education outcomes increases steadily each year.
- Annual reporting shows measurable year-over-year growth in both course designation and assessment participation.
- Faculty members and programs demonstrate increased participation in general education outcome assessment, resulting in broader curricular alignment.



Framework Three: Student Experience

Foster a transformational and integrated student experience rooted in community and belonging.

3.1 *Increase students' sense of belonging from 80% to 85% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- Students across all backgrounds report a strong and consistent sense of belonging, connection, and inclusion within the community.

3.2 *Increase the percentage of all first-time degree-seeking students who completed the expected number of credits in their first year from 38% to 45% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- A growing proportion of first-time students successfully complete the expected credit thresholds in the first year, demonstrating strong academic momentum across all student groups.

3.3 *Increase the retention rate of first-time incoming degree- and certificate-seeking students from 54% to 59% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- More students persist from year to year, with improved continuation rates and consistent retention gains across all demographics.

3.4 *By 2031, eliminate retention rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all first-time incoming degree- and certificate-seeking students.*

Success looks like:

- Retention rates are equal for all students, with no measurable disparities in persistence outcomes.

3.5 *Increase the percentage of workforce (noncredit) students who matriculate into credit certificate or degree programs from 28% to 33% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- Increased numbers of noncredit workforce students transition into credit certificate or degree programs.



Framework Four: Workforce, Partnerships, and Post-Completion Success

Create opportunities for students and community members through innovative work with strategic partners.

4.1 *Strengthen the college reputation as a partner of choice by increasing the number of innovative, intentional, and scalable alliances (AI literacy and apprenticeship and career services infrastructure).*

Success looks like:

- The college is widely recognized as a trusted, high-value partner, with a growing portfolio of active, innovative, and scalable alliances across key sectors.
- Increased numbers of requests are received from community partners (businesses, nonprofits, schools, municipalities, regional agencies) resulting in opportunities for collaboration on educational and workforce development initiatives.

4.2 *By 2031, increase the percentage of credentials awarded in high-demand fields (credit and noncredit programs).*

Success looks like:

- A larger share of the credentials awarded aligns with regional and emerging workforce needs, positioning graduates for in-demand careers.
- A college-wide, five-year plan for education and training in high-demand fields is produced through collaboration between college leaders, regional labor market trend and data experts, and resource development stakeholders (local and state officials, and public and private funding source representatives).

4.3 *Increase the transfer rate of first-time incoming degree- and certificate-seeking students to four-year institutions from 24% to 29% by 2031.*

Success looks like:

- More students successfully transfer to four-year institutions, with equitable outcomes across demographic groups and clear, supported pathways to bachelor's degree attainment.
- Transfer resources and support services align with students' goals, finances, well-being, and credit transfer needs.



Strategic Frameworks and Measurable Objectives / Metrics

VALUES IN ACTION						
Strategy #1: Make Holyoke Community College an exceptional workplace through its commitment to equity, people, and culture.	Baseline Data	Target (by 2031)	Ambitious Metric (by 2031)	DHE Target (by 2033)	Alignment: MA PMRS	Alignment: BHE Priorities
1.1 Increase the demographic alignment between employees and the student populations by 2031.						
Representation Ratio: Employees of color vs. Students of color	0.5	1.0	1.0			
Representation Ratio: Hispanic employees vs. Hispanic students	0.4	1.0	1.0			
Representation Ratio: Black employees vs. Black students	1.1	1.0	1.0			
Representation Ratio: Asian employees vs. Asian students	1.0	1.0	1.0			
Representation Ratio: White employees vs. White students	1.4	1.0	1.0			
1.2 Increase employee retention from 93% to 95% by 2031.	93%	95%	97%			
1.3 Increase employee joy as evidenced by satisfaction from 68% to 75% by 2031.	68%	75%	80%			
ACADEMIC DISTINCTION						
Strategy #2: Elevate the college reputation for offering high quality, responsive, and experiential learning opportunities.	Baseline Data	Target (by 2031)	Ambitious Metric (by 2031)	DHE Target (by 2033)	Alignment: MA PMRS	Alignment: BHE Priorities
2.1 Increase the percentage of students enrolling in courses with High-Impact Practices (HIPs) from 23% to 28% by 2031.	23%	28%	31%			Innovation
2.2 Increase the course completion rate from 79% to 84% by 2031.	79%	84%	87%			
2.3 By 2031, eliminate course completion rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all students.						
Students of color	4 points	0	0			
Hispanic	4 points	0	0			
Black	8 points	0	0			
Adult students	-1 points	0	0			
Pell Eligible	2 points	0	0			
2.4 Increase the graduation rate of first-time incoming degree/certificate-seeking students from 23% to 28% by 2031.	23%	28%	31%		MA PMRS: Long-Term Success	Student Success and Financial Aid

2.5 By 2031, eliminate graduation rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all first-time incoming degree/certificate-seeking students.					MA PMRS: Long-Term Success	
Students of color	7 points	0	0			
Hispanic	9 points	0	0			
Black	12 points	0	0			
Adult students	1 points	0	0			
Pell Eligible	4 points	0	0			
2.6 By 2031, increase the percentages of active academic courses designated as and assessed for general education outcomes.						
% of designated courses	TBD	TBD	TBD			
% of designated courses assessed	TBD	TBD	TBD			
STUDENT EXPERIENCE						
Strategy #3: Foster a transformational and integrated student experience rooted in community and belonging.	Baseline Data	Target (by 2031)	Ambitious Metric (by 2031)	DHE Target (by 2033)	Alignment: MA PMRS	Alignment: BHE Priorities
3.1 Increase students' sense of belonging from 80% to 85% by 2031.	80%	85%	90%		MA PMRS: Sense of Belonging	
3.2 Increase the percentage of all first-time degree-seeking students who completed the expected number of credits in their first year from 38% to 45% by 2031. (For full-time students, the target is at least 24 credits; for part-time, it is at least 12 credits.)	38%	45%	48%	40%	MA PMRS: Student Success & Completion	
3.3 Increase the retention rate of first-time incoming degree/certificate-seeking students from 54% to 59% by 2031.	54%	59%	62%	65%	MA PMRS: Student Success & Completion	Student Success and Financial Aid
3.4 By 2031, eliminate retention rate gaps for disaggregated student groups relative to all first-time incoming degree/certificate-seeking students.					MA PMRS: Student Success & Completion	
Students of color	5	0	0			
Hispanic	5	0	0			
Black	7	0	0			
Adult students	5	0	0			
Pell Eligible	0	0	0			
3.5 Increase the percentage of workforce (noncredit) students who matriculate into credit certificate or degree programs from 28% to 33% by 2031.	28%	33%	36%			

WORKFORCE, PARTNERSHIPS, AND POST-COMPLETION SUCCESS						
Strategy #4: Create opportunities for students and community members through innovative work with strategic partners.	Baseline Data	Target (by 2031)	Ambitious Metric (by 2031)	DHE Target (by 2033)	Alignment: MA PMRS	Alignment: BHE Priorities
4.1 Strengthen the college reputation as a partner of choice by increasing the number of innovative, intentional, and scalable partnerships (AI literacy and apprenticeship and career services infrastructure).	TBD	TBD	TBD			
4.2 By 2031, increase the percentage of credentials awarded in high-demand fields.					MA PMRS: Workforce Alignment	Economic Mobility
Credit Program	TBD	TBD	TBD		MA PMRS: Workforce Alignment	Economic Mobility
Non-Credit Program	TBD	TBD	TBD			Economic Mobility
4.3 Increase the transfer rate of first-time incoming degree/certificate seeking students to four-year institutions from 24% to 29% by 2031.	24%	29%	32%	25%	MA PMRS: Long-Term Success	

Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Sara Avery, Manager of Auxiliary Services

Eli Baez, Student

Tom Barrup, Faculty, Engineering

Alan Bloomgarden, Ed.D., Director of Foundation and Government Grants

Pesha Black, Director of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Beth Breton, Faculty, Forensic Science

Rebecca Bragg, Adjunct Faculty in BSTEM

Angela Cardenas, Chief of Operations, Office of the President;
Interim Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of HCC Foundation

Jian Chang, Faculty, Math

Linda Chavers, Ph.D., Director of Restorative Practices and Mediation

Mari Cintron, Staff Assistant, Institutional Advancement

Danielle Clough, Academic Counselor, Elaine Marieb Adult Learner Success Center

Julissa Colon, Dean of Student Experience

Jamal Cumberbatch, Student

Lucien Dalton, STEM Support and Retention Specialist; Adjunct Math Faculty

Veena Dhankher, Ph.D., Assistant Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Analytics

Edgar Fisher, Faculty, Math

Robert Greeney, Faculty, Physics

Liza Hurley, Coordinator of Orientation and New Student Programs

Alicia Hyman, Librarian

Gyuri Kepes, Faculty, Digital Media

Jane Lerner, Director of the Learning Collaborative

Bonnie Mannix, Associate Dean of BSTEM

Vanessa Martinez, Ph.D., Faculty, Anthropology, and Coordinator of CBL Program

Irma Medina, Dean of Integrative and Applied Learning

Chaitali Newman, Academic Counselor, TRIO STEM H-S Student Support Services

Monica Ovalles, Academic Counselor, TRIO Student Support Services

Jose Perez, Student

Megan Pereira, Assistant Director of Foundation and Government Grants

Laura Porter, ESOL Curriculum and Instruction Coach; Literacy Specialist

Kimm Quinlan, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives

Heidi Ragno, Faculty, Biology

Kris Ricker Choleva, Director of Planning, Curriculum, and Assessment

Elsie Rodriguez-Garcia, Director of TRIO Programs

Amreen Shaikh, Jumpstart Program Coordinator

John Sieracki, Leadership Gift Officer and Manager of Campaign Initiatives

Diane Stengle, Faculty, Chemistry (Retired)

Renee Tastad, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Wendi Tatro, Faculty, Foundations of Health

Amanda Thayer, Ed.D., Early Childhood Initiatives Program Administrator

Richard (Rick) Tremblay, Assistant Vice President of People and Talent

**HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**

303 Homestead Avenue
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040

413.538.7000

hcc.edu