

MassSTEP

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Newsletter

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: My Journey

By Charles Pierre, Student, MassSTEP IT Fundamentals + Program at Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc.

My Name is Charles Pierre. I have a good language background. I was born in Haiti, so I speak fluent Creole and French. I moved to the U.S. twelve years ago. I'm still learning to be fluent in English. When I was working at Logan Airport as a dispatcher, I learned how to speak Spanish too.

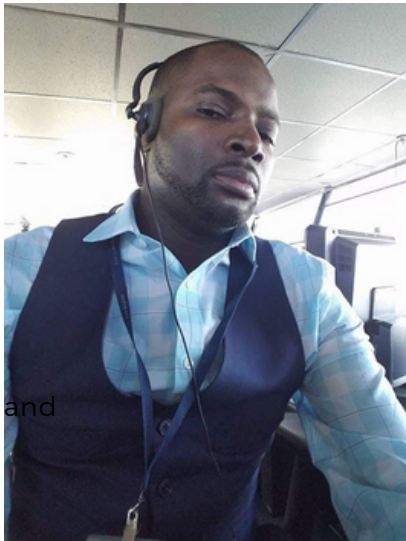


Photo: Charles Pierre, Student, MassSTEP IT Fundamentals+ at QCAP

I believe in education. I studied for degrees in both Chemistry and Accounting in Haiti. One of my goals was having good skills in IT. In September 2021, I started the **MassSTEP IT Fundamentals+** program with Quincy Community Action Programs (QCAP) and Quincy College. That gave me the possibility to learn English, customer service and Operating Systems (CompTIA IT Fundamentals+).

In our English class we had a lot of work starting with learning styles ending with sharing our culture, religion and information with classmates. We learned grammar, civics and skills about presentation particularly on PowerPoint and how to create a flow chart. I remember the first time I heard about John Adams in civics class. I was so mad because he defended the English soldiers after the Boston Massacre. After studying the subject profoundly, I concluded he made the right decision. I also learned about parallelism and paraphrases.

Our Quincy College professor taught us about CompTIA IT fundamentals. Before the class, I didn't know quasi-anything about operating systems, hardware or software. Now, I know about core hardware components, peripherals and connections, networking, database, and security systems. I know how computers work. I understand how different components communicate, how software communicates to hardware, etc. I just need to review those concepts.

Finally, in our customer service class our professor helped me understand how important it is when dealing with customers. He showed us how to handle a situation and with his help I got some money back from a mobile company. I learned 10 skills about customer service that require zero talent. I really enjoyed the class.

QCAP and Quincy College gave me a restart in life and it allowed me to rebuild confidence. If someone had told me that this was where I would be now, I would never have believed them. I have a completely different outlook on life. My future is something that I never thought it could be. I've

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: My Journey, Continued

By Charles Pierre, Student, MassSTEP IT Fundamentals + Program at Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc.

completed further training at a school in Cambridge where I learned AWS Cloud computing and AWS core services skills. I'm able to perform project based and routine cloud tasks. I still hope to do more training. Then I'll be able to enter a field where I can make a competitive income to sustain myself in Boston. I would like to thank the IT Fundamentals+ program for all you've done for us. We, the graduates, are going to work hard to become successful people in American society.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: MassSTEP: A Model of Successful Collaboration

By Susanne Campagna, Director, Hampden County Sheriff's Office



The MassSTEP program offered at the Hampden County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) continues to be a successful collaboration between HCSO and Holyoke Community College's Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development. Although the current program has expanded from the grassroots program that started back in 2015 (before Integrated Education and Training grants became available), the focus on Culinary Arts training and high school equivalency attainment remains the same.

The success of the MassSTEP program is in part due to the partnership between the Sheriff's Office and Holyoke Community College (HCC). The personal commitment from the organizations' leaders begins from the top down. Hampden County's Sheriff, Nicholas Cocchi, and Dr. Christina Royal, President of HCC, have enthusiastically supported the MassSTEP Culinary Arts/HSE program over the past several years by participating in and speaking at the graduation ceremonies.

The design of the MassSTEP program is dependent upon each partner's contribution to ensure program success. The MassSTEP program is offered to residents at the Western MA Recovery and Wellness Center (WMRWC is a minimum security facility of the HCSO) who meet the criteria for acceptance. The 15-week program design focuses on offering Culinary Arts skills training on Saturdays integrated with contextualized academics and digital literacy skills during the week. The Chef Instructors provide hands-on culinary training to students at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute in Holyoke, MA. The goal of the program is to help instill work readiness skills along with vocational training and education to ease the transition back to the community once the resident is released from custody.



Photo: Dr. Christina Royal, HCC President and Hampden County Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi

The staff from both HCSO and HCC who work and teach in the MassSTEP program are at the root of the program's success. Their dedication, patience, enthusiasm and belief in the students are qualities that every instructor should possess. The Chefs and HCC vocational staff offer 90 hours of instruction during the program. In addition to the speakers, workforce readiness workshops, employment partner presentations, and the MGM mock interviews that the MassSTEP students complete, the program is balanced with rigorous academic instruction provided by the teaching staff at the Hampden County Sheriff's Office. Students must attend a minimum of four hours per week of contextualized ELA, math and digital literacy classes. The ASE instructor also offers up to

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Continued

MassSTEP: A Model of Successful Collaboration

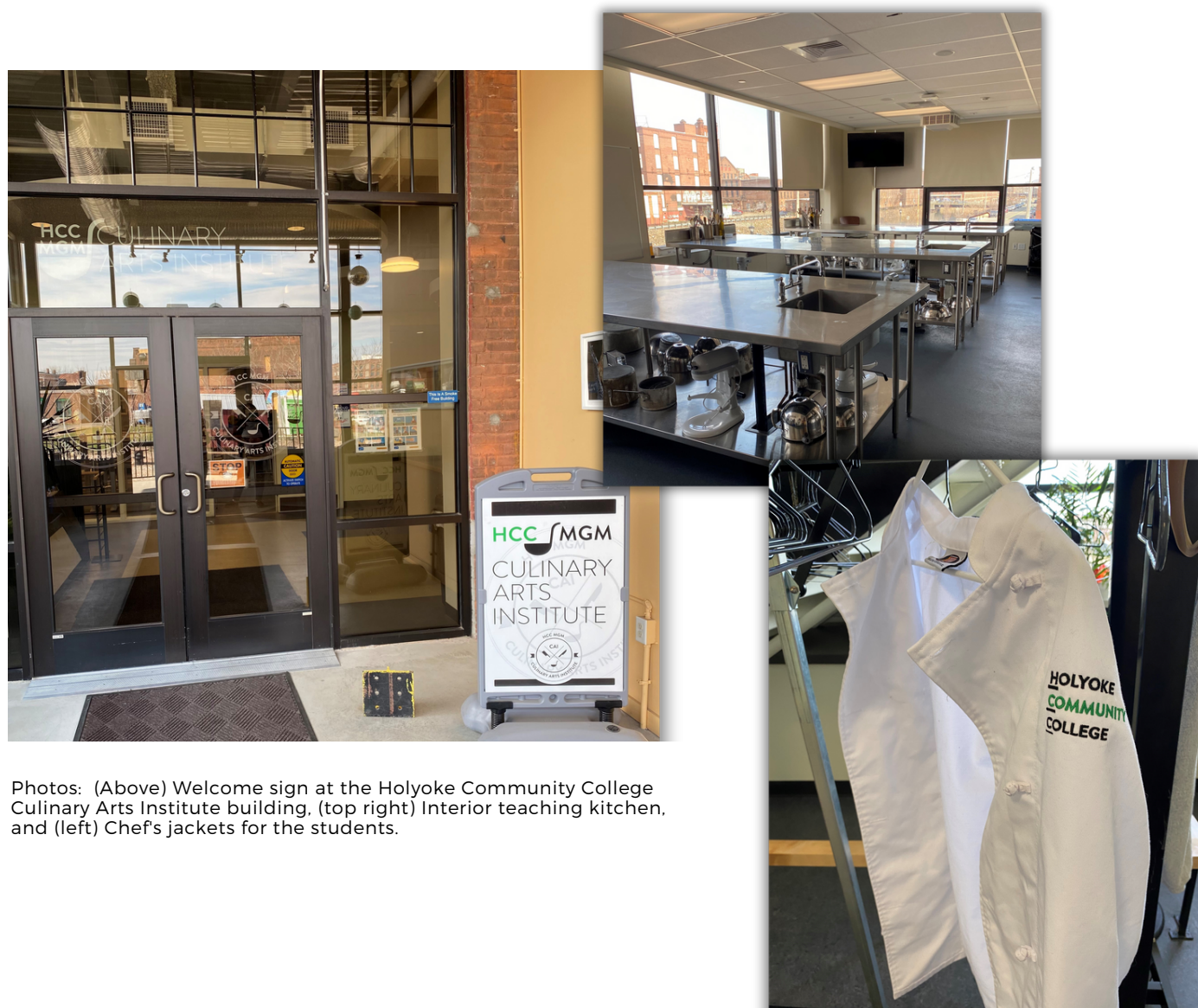
By Susanne Campagna, Director, Hampden County Sheriff's Office

four hours of academics in preparation for taking the high school equivalency exam. Every student spends two hours a week working on their Food Truck project while learning digital literacy skills. Over the 15-week cycle, students receive approximately 90 hours of academic and digital literacy instruction.

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HCSO's MassSTEP program culminates with a graduation celebration at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute in Holyoke. The graduates are allowed to invite family and friends to the ceremony where they cook a delicious meal, serve their guests, and present their Food Truck projects prior to receiving their certificates of completion. To see the program's slideshow from the last cycle, please access the link to our presentation at: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3du2mv>

1 Western Mass CORE at HCC assists formerly justice involved students providing linkages to HCC support services.



Photos: (Above) Welcome sign at the Holyoke Community College Culinary Arts Institute building, (top right) Interior teaching kitchen, and (left) Chef's jackets for the students.

Massachusetts Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals Releases Report and Recommendations

By Derek Kalchbrenner, ACLS

The state Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals released its report and recommendations regarding the licensing of internationally trained health professionals with the goal of expanding and improving medical services in rural and underserved areas. In addition, the Commission was charged with making recommendations on addressing licensing regulations that may pose unnecessary barriers to practice for foreign-trained medical professionals. Adult Education directors Noemí Custodia-Lora of Northern Essex Community College and Laurie Millman of Center for New Americans were Commission members.

Massachusetts has the highest physician to population ratio in the country, yet serious gaps exist across the state in primary care, dental health, and mental health care, affecting hundreds of thousands of state residents.

In Massachusetts, immigrants make up 19.2% of health care practitioners. Despite this high representation, internationally trained health professionals face barriers to licensure and career advancement. For example, 24% of all internationally educated nurses in the state are either working in low-skilled jobs or unemployed, compared to just 6% of U.S.-educated immigrant nurses. 13% of all immigrants in Massachusetts with health-related undergraduate degrees from outside the U.S. are either unemployed or working in lower paying, less-skilled jobs, compared to 9% of immigrants with U.S. health degrees.

ACLS currently funds MassSTEP healthcare programs at Abisi Adult Education Center, Boston Public Schools, Brockton Adult Learning Center, Cambridge Community Learning Center, Center for New Americans, Holyoke Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, Notre Dame Education Center – Lawrence, North Shore Community Action Programs, Inc., Quinsigamond Community Center, UMass – Dartmouth, and Worcester Adult Learning Program. Many MassSTEP ESOL students have medical credentials that are not currently valid in the United States. The proposed legislative changes could make it easier and faster for them to find employment that matches their education and experience.

“We have students who represent a tremendous asset who are being forced into jobs that are beneath their education and experience because as a state we have created a system that does not recognize or value foreign-trained professionals,” Millman said. “We have highly qualified, caring community members who would like to work and fill valuable and needed positions but are being thwarted by a series of rigid regulations and this report pointed out places where we could remediate that.”

One example of a barrier to practice is the state’s postgraduate training requirement. In Massachusetts, internationally trained health professionals must complete three years of postgraduate training before they are eligible to apply for full licensure, while U.S. medical graduates must complete only two.

Additional barriers to licensure include limited English proficiency, the complexity of state licensing requirements, arbitrary and sometimes discriminatory regulations, including required non-clinical coursework, time limits to complete testing, rigid English Proficiency Testing regulations, and unclear and inconsistent messages from licensing boards, workforce bodies, and higher education institutions on the relicensing process.

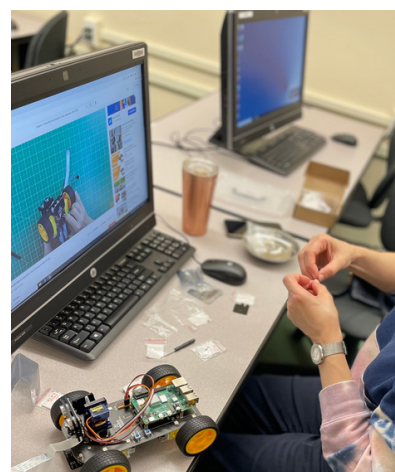
Massachusetts Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals Releases Report and Recommendations, Continued

By Derek Kalchbrenner, ACLS

The Commission made multiple administrative and legislative recommendations to accelerate the entry of foreign-trained immigrants into the Massachusetts healthcare workforce. These recommendations included creating detailed licensing/career pathway guides to help internationally trained health professionals understand state licensing requirements, allowing for more English Proficiency testing options, expanding accepted credential evaluation services to avoid delays in processing, and creating pathways to full licensure for physicians and dentists.

**BREAKING
NEWS**

[Help foreign-trained doctors get licensed \(bostonglobe.com\)](https://www.bostonglobe.com)



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