

News

Quinsigamond Community College Opens Campus at Old Telegram & Gazette Building

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Workmen walk through a lobby of Quinsigamond Community College's new Healthcare and Workforce Development Center on Franklin Street in Worcester on Wednesday. (T&G Staff/PAUL KAPTEYN)

WORCESTER — Colee Ladue didn't know she'd be taking classes downtown when she was admitted to the nursing program at Quinsigamond Community College, but she's very happy to be there.

"I love it. I think it's very professionally oriented. Everybody here is very focused," she said of the college's new Healthcare and Workforce Development Center.

Ms. Ladue, of Worcester, is one of roughly 500 students who is helping to break in the new facility at Franklin and Federal streets. The \$40 million center occupies 72,409 square feet on three floors in the 135,000-square-foot building that formerly housed the Telegram & Gazette.

The new center is home to QCC's health care programs (except dental) as well as non-credit workforce and development programming.

It's part of QCC's commitment to help drive the redevelopment of downtown. The project was a joint effort of the college, the city and the Worcester Business Development Corp., which bought the building in 2011.

"Our ability to put more than 2,000 'feet on the street' adds significantly to the effort of revitalizing downtown Worcester," said QCC President Gail E. Carberry, referring to the capacity of the downtown facility.

Ms. Carberry was among several speakers and guests who celebrated the building's grand opening Wednesday

morning under a tent on Franklin Street. John W. Polanowicz, secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, delivered the keynote address.

"It's really incredible to see this project come to fruition," he said. "I know the impact we'll make on this community and across the commonwealth is going to be incredible."

"The Worcester Business Development Corporation could not be more proud," said George E. Tetler III, WBDC chairman. "We took an important but troubled downtown building, and we transformed it into the jewel you see today. The project is not just a building. It is part of a broader vision for the transformation of downtown Worcester," he said.

Earlier this year, WBDC President and CEO Craig L. Blais asked the city's colleges and universities to make an investment in downtown Worcester.

U.S. Rep James P. McGovern, D-Worcester, lauded the addition of students downtown, which he said began 14 years ago when the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences established a campus on Foster Street.

In addition to putting feet on the street, "We're putting brains off Main," said state Sen. Harriette L. Chandler, D-Worcester.

Councilor at-Large Frederick C. Rushton and City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. presented Ms. Carberry with a key to the city.

"Behind us stood the building that housed the Telegram & Gazette that wrote our past," Mr. Rushton said. "Now, bright young faces are going to come in and write our future."

Laurance S. Morrison, president of the QCC Foundation, implored guests to look 10 years into the future, then make a U-turn and look back at today. "I think we'll all appreciate this moment as the pivot point when Worcester started becoming a great American college town."

For Ms. Ladue, who is studying to be an LPN, the downtown facility is more than she could have hoped for.

"Our lab is insanely awesome," she said. "It's so big. Everything is brand-new."

Kristina Lemoine of Worcester, also a nursing student, didn't know what to expect when she found out her classes would be downtown instead of on QCC's West Boylston Street campus.

"I was thinking it would be limited in terms of resources," she said. "I was thinking it was just going to be a tiny, little classroom. But this is huge. It definitely has all the resources we need. And the parking is good," she said, citing valet parking available in the Federal Street lot.



A tour of the facility revealed a spacious, modern facility featuring classrooms with attached labs, testing rooms, a library, advising area, student lounge, campus police office and more. While the main entrance is at 25 Federal St., the building is also accessible via 20 Franklin St.

While Ms. Ladue is happy to be studying downtown — "You can walk everywhere. It feels more college-y" — she admitted she would like to see more student-oriented development. "Maybe more coffee shops, cute little restaurants where you can eat outside or study." She cited Nu Café on Chandler Street as a place she likes to go.

Planned for the remaining space is a 6,500-square-foot technology incubator anchored by Ten24 Digital Solutions of Northboro, as well as an art gallery, cafe and a lecture hall/theater, pending cultural grants.

Also Wednesday, Susan Mailman, chairwoman of QCC's RISE Campaign, announced that \$3.2 million has been raised toward the \$5 million goal. The Regional Investment in Service and Education campaign seeks to raise money for equipment, furniture and fixtures for QCC's QuEST Center, downtown building and regional sites.