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**NEW HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION CENTER CREATES  
STATE-OF-THE-ART TRAINING FOR WCC HEALTHCARE STUDENTS**

*Center will also be available for community training needs*

**Bellingham, WA, Sept. 20, 2013** – Students enrolled in Whatcom Community College’s Health Professions programs will start the 2013-’14 academic year in a new building with state-of-the-art classroom and lab spaces that



will prepare graduates to successfully enter the healthcare workforce. Construction of the College’s Health Professions Education Center was completed in an impressive one-year timeframe thanks to a public-private partnership that may serve as a template for other higher education construction projects.

Acknowledging ongoing industry demand for well-trained healthcare professionals, College administrators spent years trying to identify capital funding for new instructional spaces and high-tech equipment. Aware of the need and the lack of available state funding, leaders of the WCC Foundation -- the College’s non-profit fundraising entity – and developers of the building site crafted an innovative agreement. Uncommon in the world of higher education, the agreement leases the building to the Foundation, who subsequently sub-leases it to the College. This partnership supplements the state’s capital budget process, which currently has limited dollars. By working locally to find a funding solution, the College was able to immediately address capacity and equipment issues. Project developers are Pete Dawson, Dawson Construction; Ken Hertz, Blossom Management Corporation; and Faruk Taysi, Integrated Real Estate Management Inc. (IRM Inc.).

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“We are committed to remaining among the top community colleges in the nation,” says WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown. “To do so, we must offer quality instructional space and ensure we have the capacity to meet student demand. The new Health Professions Education Center does exactly that. We are grateful to the Foundation and to our local business partners for the support that enabled us to quickly address this community need.”

“We’ve watched Whatcom Community College’s growth over the years and have witnessed the investments they’ve made to ensure outstanding education for students and engagement with our community,” says Pete Dawson, president of Dawson Construction. “We’re pleased that this project will enable Whatcom to continue its tradition of excellence.”

The 96,000-square-foot project site at the corner of Stuart Road and Cordata Parkway includes the two-story, 28,501-square-foot Health Professions Education Center and 134 parking spaces. The project’s potential phase two would add a 13,000-square-foot building to the site. The building includes classrooms, labs and offices for Whatcom’s state and nationally accredited programs in Nursing, Physical Therapist Assistant, Massage Practitioner and Medical Assisting. Interiors were designed to replicate the healthcare environments in which students will eventually work and provide as close to a real-world experience as possible. The space layout of each program area makes it easy for students to transition from lectures to hands-on skill exercises, allowing students to immediately apply methods and critical thinking with oversight by instructors.

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For instance, students in the Medical Assisting program practice procedures in a setting that mirrors a modern medical office, including a waiting area, reception and private patient consultation rooms. Nursing students refine skills by practicing techniques on lifelike mannequins in simulation labs that look like a hospital room. The mannequins feel real to the touch, make lifelike breath and abdominal sounds and respond to clinical choices. Physical Therapist Assistant students practice in a lab space that replicates both the out-patient clinic and the inpatient settings of physical therapy such as hospitals or extended care facilities. There are plans to offer a public clinic in the last quarter of the program. Massage Practitioner students practice massage on each other in the labs and perform massage on clients drawn from the public in a clinic setting during the third quarter of the program.

In addition to elevating instruction, the new center will allow the College to expand community partnerships, including continuing education for health professionals, middle- and high-school career awareness, paramedic skills training, and disaster training and preparation. An open house during which community members can tour the building will be held in November.

Whatcom's highly competitive Health Professions programs accept a total of 300 students each year. The programs are recognized locally and nationally for their excellence and have gained the professional accreditations and honors that affirm their standing. Graduates consistently exceed national average pass rates on professional licensure exams. The College is renovating the 20,000-square-foot of on-campus classrooms and labs formerly used by the health programs for use by other academic disciplines.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college with an accomplished faculty and staff who serve more than 11,000 students annually. On its campus in Bellingham, WA, and through on-line courses, Whatcom offers transfer degrees, professional and technical training programs, as well as basic education, job skills, and Continuing and Community Education classes. For more information, visit [www.whatcom.ctc.edu](http://www.whatcom.ctc.edu).

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