



Press Release  
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*For Immediate Release*

## **INSPIRING BTC AND WCC STUDENTS AMONG 2014 TRANSFORMING LIVES NOMINEES**

Bellingham, Washington – Feb. 7, 2014 – Bellingham Technical College (BTC) and Whatcom Community College (WCC) are pleased to congratulate two of the colleges' students who were nominees for the 2014 Transforming Lives Awards from the Trustees Association of Community and Technical Colleges (TACTC). The TACTC Transforming Lives Awards recognize students who have overcome significant barriers to achieve their higher education goals. Fidelis Eze represented BTC; Rodrigo Garcia-Berguecio was WCC's representative. Their experiences demonstrate how Washington community and technical colleges help transform lives through education and support.

"Fidelis' story is a prime example of what our college aims to provide its students - the opportunity to succeed in attaining a living-wage career. He reflects the best of our future by illustrating where commitment to excellence and achievement can take you," said Dr. Patricia McKeown, BTC president.

"Rodrigo's determination to succeed is inspiring," says Dr. Kathi Hiyane-Brown, WCC president. "He represents Whatcom's vision to graduate innovators who are engaged with our changing and diverse communities. The entire campus community is extremely proud of him."

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**Fidelis Eze, Bellingham Technical College**

After he was laid off from his job as a plumber, Eze was encouraged to pursue training and education by BTC Director and Counselor Malcolm Oliver. He is now pursuing a certificate in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning. Eze credits his success to BTC's outstanding faculty and staff and the support of financial aid. He enjoys the hands-on learning and believes his background coupled with the new skills he is gaining will lead to a steady job. "What I've learned is to know what you want and go for it," he says. "There will always be challenges in life, but knowing what you want and opening yourself up for advice will help. Keep focused and think of a better tomorrow."



**Rodrigo Garcia-Berguecio, Whatcom Community College**

A 20-year veteran of construction work, Garcia-Berguecio had to change direction following an irreversible injury. At the age of 40, he started with entry-level college classes at Whatcom, earned his associate degree in paralegal studies, and is now working toward his transfer degree so he may earn a bachelor's degree. Originally from Chile, Garcia-Berguecio had to overcome language barriers and the stress of returning to college later in life. "The one and only way I can become valuable to my family and community is with higher schooling," he says. "I agree with Aristotle's quote, 'Education is the best provision for the journey to old age.'"

**About Bellingham Technical College:**

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and offers 33 associate degrees and 55 certificate options providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to [www.btc.ctc.edu](http://www.btc.ctc.edu).

**About Whatcom Community College:**

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving 11,000 students annually. On its 72-acre campus in Bellingham, WA, and through online 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 about WCC, visit [www.whatcom.ctc.edu](http://www.whatcom.ctc.edu).