

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICIAL VISITS WHATCOM'S CAMPUS



From left: Anne Bowen, Executive Director, College Advancement and WCC Foundation; Ron Leatherbarrow, VP of Instruction; Kathi Hiyane-Brown, WCC President; Mark Mitsui, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Education; Ed Harri, Dean of Instruction; Corrinne Sande, CIS Faculty Lead; and Janice Walker, Workforce Education Director.

Bellingham, WA, Jan. 24, 2014 – Mark Mitsui, deputy assistant secretary with the U.S. Department of Education, met this week with Whatcom Community College officials to discuss the College's leadership in cybersecurity and health professions education, veterans programs and other College initiatives that encourage diversity and student success.

Mitsui works in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, which focuses on career, technical, adult and correctional education across the country, with an emphasis on programs involving community colleges. His role supports the Obama administration's objective to increase student access and completion rates at community colleges, especially for low-income students. Mitsui was president of North Seattle Community College before being named to the federal post in August 2013. His goals include increasing enrollment in Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses, which prepare students for college and careers. According to Mitsui, currently 1.8 million students take ABE classes, but there's a potential to serve as many as 35 million people.

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Top DOE Official Visits Whatcom
Page 2

Each year, approximately 800 students enroll in WCC's ABE and ESL classes, which include basic reading, writing and math as well as GED test preparation. Whatcom was one of seven schools awarded a grant from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to support the contextualization of Adult Basic Education classes. The \$42,000 grant will fund development of courses that teach basic math and English skills in the context of career and college pathways.

During the meeting with Mitsui, College leaders also described Whatcom's new state-of-the-art Health Professions Education Center and its importance in preparing the region's health professions workforce as well as its potential for community partnerships. Mitsui has a special interest in helping students with a military background, so he was intrigued to learn that 25 percent of students enrolled in the College's nationally acclaimed Computer Information Systems program are veterans. Whatcom's leadership in cybersecurity and health professions education has positive implications for local workforce and economic development.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college with a committed, accomplished faculty and staff who serve 11,000 students annually. On its beautiful 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 enrichment classes. For more information about WCC, please visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

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