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Whatcom
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



**BTC AND WCC ARE TWO OF SIX WASHINGTON COMMUNITY
AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES NAMED CONTENDERS FOR \$1
MILLION ASPEN PRIZE**

Bellingham Washington – April 30, 2012– Bellingham Technical College (BTC) and Whatcom Community College (WCC) are two of six community and technical colleges in Washington State that have been named among the nation’s top 120 community colleges by the prestigious Aspen Institute and are now eligible to compete for a \$1 million prize. The nonprofit institute placed the following colleges in the running for the 2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Bellingham Technical College, Olympic College, Pierce College Fort Steilacoom, Renton Technical College, Walla Walla Community College, and Whatcom Community College.

The Aspen Institute selected the 120 colleges from a pool of more than 1,000 public two-year colleges across the nation. The colleges were recognized for achieving excellent results for their students, based on retention and completion rates, student performance, and equitable outcomes for minority and low-income students.

“We are honored to be among the select colleges receiving this nomination,” said Patricia McKeown, President, at Bellingham Technical College. “Nationally BTC has some of the highest student retention and completion rates and it is exciting that the Aspen Institute -

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has identified and recognized our success. BTC is committed to continuing its analysis of student completion data with the Achieving the Dream grant, to develop strategies to further improve student retention and graduation rates.

“It’s remarkable that two of the 120 nationally recognized colleges are here in Bellingham. The nomination confirms the quality of education available in our community,” WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown added. “We believe the Aspen Institute recognized our successful student-centered approach, which, like BTC, we are bolstering with our participation in Achieving the Dream.”

Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College are in the process of pursuing this award. Each of the other colleges will decide whether to enter the competition, which involves in-depth research into how well their students learn, complete degrees, and get jobs with competitive wages after graduating. The last round involves an on-site visit by Aspen Institute officials. Prize winners will be announced in March 2013.

Walla Walla Community College was named a finalist with distinction and one of the top five community colleges in the nation in last year’s competition. The college was awarded a \$100,000 prize. Pierce College Fort Steilacoom was also nominated by the Aspen Institute for the award last year.

For more information about the Aspen Prize, visit

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/aspen-prize/2013eligibleinstitutions>.

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and offers 35 associate degree and 64 certificate options providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to www.btc.ctc.edu.

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Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving more than 7,000 students quarterly. Whatcom offers transfer degrees, professional and technical training programs, as well as basic education and enrichment classes. For more information, please visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

About the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges:

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is led by a Governor-appointed board and provides leadership, advocacy, and coordination for Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Each year, nearly 500,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education. Visit our website at www.SBCTC.edu.

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