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**Whatcom Community College Will Lead
Prestigious Cybersecurity Education Consortium**
CyberWatch West is one of only four such centers in the nation

Bellingham, WA, Oct. 4, 2013 – Whatcom Community College (WCC) is now the lead institution of CyberWatch West, a regional cybersecurity education consortium funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). An NSF-Advanced Technology Education center, CyberWatch West is one of only four centers in the nation dedicated to cybersecurity education. Corrinne Sande, the lead faculty member of Whatcom’s Computer Information Systems program, will direct the project, and the CyberWatch West center will move from its current California location to Whatcom’s campus.

“This is a great honor,” said **WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown**. “Naming Whatcom as the lead institution acknowledges our expertise in the field of cybersecurity education and the ability of our faculty and staff to advance the NSF-funded project. It also recognizes Corrinne Sande’s standing as a national leader in cybersecurity education.”

“Within the cybersecurity industry, Washington state has emerged as leaders in the United States. The unique and nationally recognized resources the region has to offer have created an environment for cybersecurity to flourish, and I’m thrilled that Whatcom Community College will build on that foundation as the lead institution for CyberWatch West,” said **U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)**. “Our nation’s single most important cybersecurity resource is its cyber workforce. Without the right people using it, even the most sophisticated technology is only of limited use, so it’s critical that we’re training highly-qualified cybersecurity professionals right here in Washington state.”

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CyberWatch West was formed in 2011 to increase the quantity and quality of the cybersecurity workforce throughout the western United States. Whatcom was one of five founding members along with Mt. San Antonio College (CA), California State Polytechnic University Pomona, California State University Dominguez Hills and California State University San Bernardino. Today, 36 high schools, colleges and universities are CyberWatch West members. The NSF provided a \$3 million Advanced Technology Education grant over four years to support CyberWatch West operations.

The center's four primary initiatives are student development, curriculum development and dissemination, faculty development, and outreach/partnerships with colleges and businesses. The goal is to create a network of higher education institutions, businesses, and government agencies focused on building and maintaining a robust cybersecurity workforce in the western United States.

Whatcom early on identified the need for Computer Information Systems education and has been steadily investing in the program and earning accolades. Program Coordinator Corrinne Sande added the first security class in 2000; computer forensics followed in 2004. Two NSF grants have funded further program development. Among its designations, the CIS program is a Cisco-certified Networking Academy and was named a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance 2-Year Education in 2011 - one of only 13 community colleges nationwide at the time and currently one of only three in the western United States. College faculty and administrators also led a NSF-funded capacity building project to create a four-year degree for students studying cybersecurity, meaning students who complete the first two years at WCC may transfer on to Western Washington University to complete the final two years.

In addition to strengthening Whatcom's reputation as a leader in cybersecurity education, moving the center to Bellingham means WCC students will have access to the latest developments in their field. Graduating from a college that is a leader of a NSF center will also enhance WCC student resumes, potentially leading to increased employment opportunities. The move also will benefit Bellingham's growing technology industry by providing a well-trained workforce and helps to solidify the region's reputation as an up-and-coming technology center.

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The tech industry in Whatcom County is growing at a remarkable pace: 164 percent growth in the past 20 years compared to King County's 66 percent and the state's 58 percent growth over the same time frame, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In just the past five years, Whatcom County has seen an 8 percent growth over the state's 6 percent and King County's 5.5 percent. According to the Technology Alliance Group for Northwest Washington (TAG), Whatcom County currently has approximately 6,000 tech employees and TAG estimates that there are more than 575 tech-based companies in the region.

“Whatcom has quietly been establishing a reputation as a significant national player in technology education and building a level of expertise that’s setting a standard for community college cybersecurity programs,” says Mark Knittel, owner of Bellingham-based Ovation Technical Services. He is also chairman of TAG’s Board of Directors and a member of the WCC Computer Information Systems Advisory Committee. “If we’re going to grow the local technology industry, we can’t do it casually. We need to delineate growth areas and foster future employees. With Whatcom as a partner, we can develop core competencies of the future technology workforce and attract people and companies to our region.”

About CyberWatch West: Established in 2011, CyberWatch West (CWW) is the only National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education Center for Cybersecurity in the western United States. CWW offers the most current cybersecurity information via educational and industry partnerships, professional and student development, and events. Its mission is to increase the quantity and quality of the cybersecurity workforce throughout the western United States. For more information, visit www.cyberwatchwest.org.

About Whatcom Community College: Whatcom Community College (WCC) is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving 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 about WCC, visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

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