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**WCC AWARDED NSF GRANT TO SUPPORT CYBERWATCH WEST CENTER
College Continues Efforts to Strengthen Cybersecurity Education**

Bellingham, WA, December 12, 2011 – Whatcom Community College (WCC), along with a consortium of West Coast institutions, will share a \$3 million grant awarded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to establish the west coast cybersecurity region. WCC will be allocated \$336,501. In addition to WCC, the CyberWatch West consortium includes: Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) as the lead college; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; California State University, Dominguez Hills; and California State University, San Bernardino.

With WCC as a key partner, the grant will support the establishment and operation of a regional center in cybersecurity from 2011 through 2015 and support CyberWatch West programs. While similar centers have been established in the Midwest and on the East Coast, this is the only center located on the West Coast. The CyberWatch West Center will address challenges and concerns in education and the business industry, specifically the shortage of security professionals. The center will also work to enhance business and team-work skills among information technology professionals as well as enhance cybersecurity curriculum at many higher education institutions.

The consortium members will collaborate to share best practices, methodologies, curricula, course modules and materials, provide student cybersecurity competitions and faculty training, and support to colleges who want to develop cybersecurity/information assurance programs and curriculum. Initially, faculty from 16 additional community colleges and universities throughout California, Oregon and Washington will be involved in the center's activities as will industry partners and professional associations.

According to Corrinne Sande, WCC CIS Program Coordinator and the center's only co-principal investigator in the state of Washington, "CyberWatch West offers a coordinated approach to increasing an educated and skilled workforce in a field critical to the U.S. economy and national security, providing both short-term and long-term solutions." Sande added, "The overarching goal of CyberWatch West is to strengthen and build an information security workforce and produce a greater number of highly-qualified information assurance professionals in the Pacific Northwest and California."

Whatcom Community College's partnership in the CyberWatch West Center is one of several current strategies being employed by the College to reinforce the significance of cybersecurity education. Last spring, WCC was designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Two-Year Education (CAE2Y) by the National Security Agency (NSA) and

the Department of Homeland Security – one of only 13 community colleges in the nation (www.whatcom.ctc.edu/cybercenter). In addition, Whatcom Community College was recently awarded a \$200,000 NSF grant to fund the development and implementation of cybersecurity camps for local high school students hosted at the College. ConocoPhillips has supported the College’s initiative through a private grant that helped outfit the Computer Information Systems (CIS) labs with state-of-the-art equipment, including operating systems, hardware, and other industry-standard technologies.

College President Kathi Hiyane-Brown affirmed, “WCC is working diligently to secure funding to support cybersecurity-related training opportunities. The College has strong expertise and resources in this emerging field. We are confident that we can provide the education that students need to pursue a career in this high-demand area.”

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving over 7,600 students quarterly. 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 contact Nate Langstraat at 360.383.3310 or visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

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