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Study Funds Free Tuition for Select Applicants Considering Office Assistant Careers

Application deadline is Sept. 23 for fall quarter and Jan. 3 for winter quarter.

Bellingham, WA, July 29, 2013 – Money from a federal study will support free tuition for select students who enroll in Whatcom Community College’s IBEST Office Assistant certificate program. IBEST or Integrated Basic Education Skills Training program is a statewide program at community and technical colleges that pairs basic skills instruction such as English and math with a vocational program. The free tuition is associated with a research project to evaluate program effectiveness.

An IBEST pathway is ideal for people who are working on their basic educational skills but who are also eager to begin a new career. There are two teachers in the classroom – one who leads the technical coursework and another who supports basic skills. IBEST students also participate in a separate support class where they explore in more detail difficult concepts, study skills, and homework assignments. Many of the credits are pathways into other certificates, training endorsements or degrees.

Students in Whatcom’s IBEST Office Assistant program take classes in business, keyboarding, customer service and accounting. They can earn a certificate in as little as two quarters. The program allows for flexibility to accommodate varying schedules. Job opportunities in this field are on the rise. Graduates may continue their educations to earn certificates in accounting or office administration, or an associate degree in Business Administration.

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Whatcom also offers IBEST certificates in Medical Assisting, Medical Billing and Coding, Medical Front Office, and Nursing Assistant Certified. The free tuition is only valid for the Office Assistant certificate and only for those students selected to participate in the study. The study is part of a 10-year project, funded by the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information, contact Travis Peterson, IBEST coordinator, 360.383.3970 or tpeterson@whatcom.ctc.edu. Application deadline is Sept. 23, 2013, for fall quarter and Jan. 3, 2014, for winter quarter. Typically, program tuition and fees equal \$3,000. Program participants receive free text books. Financial Aid is also available. The free tuition offer ends Jan. 3, 2014.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving more than 11,000 students annually. On its 71-acre 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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