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WCC AWARDED \$567,500 HEET INNOVATION GRANT TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR EMERGING HEALTHCARE CAREERS

Whatcom Community College leads collaborative effort among colleges, local industry

Bellingham, WA, June 26, 2014 – Whatcom Community College (WCC) has been awarded a \$567,500 state grant to develop instructional programs that will prepare students for emerging careers in the healthcare industry. The Hospital Employee Education and Training (HEET) Innovation grant – *North to South Consortium Improving Pathways to Healthcare Careers* – is funded through the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Whatcom is the lead institution. Partner organizations include Edmonds Community College, Highline College, Seattle Central College, and Clark College; regional workforce development councils; UW Valley Medical Center; Group Health; and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund.

“Whatcom is honored to receive this grant which will help support our work in the education and preparation of our community’s healthcare professionals to meet changing needs of industry,” says WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown. “We are excited to collaborate with our partners to create real-world solutions to workforce challenges facing today’s healthcare industry.”

The grant will fund the development and creation of training that addresses skills gaps associated with changing patient needs and new requirements in the Affordable Care Act. Whatcom will lead the partnership to develop common courses and credit bearing certificates for emerging positions in the continuum of care coordination – such as *patient navigator* – as well as for

integration into existing roles such as *medical assistant*. Patient navigators are advocates who help individuals and their families traverse the sometimes confusing medical system. The project will convene practicing healthcare professionals statewide to help guide the development of course content to ensure it meets industry standards as well as expectations created through the Affordable Care Act. Whatcom will work with the Northwest Workforce Council to engage members of the local healthcare industry.

WCC was selected to direct this project due to previous success leading HEET grants and developing proven patient navigator and advocacy curriculum. The initiative will leverage the expertise of College faculty and classrooms at Whatcom's Health Professions Education Center. The one-year HEET Innovation grant continues through June 2015, with a possible one-year extension.

About Whatcom Community College: Whatcom Community College (WCC) is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving 11,000 students annually. On its campus in Bellingham, Wash., 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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