

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Contact:**

Mary Vermillion, Public Information Officer  
[pio@whatcom.ctc.edu](mailto:pio@whatcom.ctc.edu), 360.383.3310

---

**LOCAL COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGES, INDUSTRY JOIN FORCES  
TO DEVELOP HEALTHCARE TRAINING PROGRAM**

*Whatcom Community College leads collaborative effort funded by HEET Innovation grant*

**Bellingham, WA, Feb. 20, 2013** – A new state grant is helping local community and technical colleges to fill a critical training gap for nursing students. The \$189,088 Hospital Employee Education and Training (HEET) Innovation grant supports the creation of curriculum that will simulate real-world patient care experiences traditionally found in clinical placements. Whatcom Community College is the lead agency on the collaborative project that includes Bellingham Technical College, Skagit Valley College, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund, the Northwest Workforce Council, PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, and the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Advancement.

In addition to helping nursing students and active healthcare professionals gain clinical experience, the project also addresses skill gaps in medical surgical nursing and continuum of care. Local educators, hospital industry members, and labor management partners acknowledge the need for training and education in these areas. However, there are not enough employer-based clinical training opportunities to meet the demand in Whatcom and Skagit counties as well as across the state. This grant allows the college system to fill that void by funding the development of new medical surgical unit simulation scenarios that mirror the real-world experience otherwise gained in a hospital environment. The scenarios will focus on the needs of the nurse to problem-solve and prioritize issues related to managing a five-patient assignment in real time.

-more-

## **Local Colleges Receive Grant to Develop Healthcare Training Program**

### **Page 2**

For instance, new simulations will require students to simultaneously manage multiple patients with individualized care needs and family aspects, similar to what they would experience in a live medical surgical ward. The simulation will require the student to prioritize and respond to each patient situation, while capturing the student's "performance" digitally, allowing the instructor to provide feedback or to use the content in future class discussions. The student can also review the tape at a later time to aid reflection and learning.

"It is part of our mission as community and technical colleges to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community. In Whatcom and Skagit counties, that includes a very real need to provide training opportunities for the nurses of tomorrow," says WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown. "This grant allows us to collaborate with our partners and to create an innovative solution to the shortage of clinical placements."

In addition to the simulated clinical experiences, the curriculum will include scenarios involving coordination of care among teams of health professionals and across general medical patient situations. This skill set is critical under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which includes access to care coordination as a key strategy for improving the quality and cost effectiveness of health care. The goal is to decrease fragmentation of care so that as patients transfer between facilities or doctors there is a continuum of patient support focused on chronic disease management to lessen hospital readmissions and to increase patient-centered care and safety. Additional goals include incorporation into the new simulation of aspects of patient behavioral health, electronic records management, and teamwork and collaboration, which are rapidly emerging areas of importance to patient-centered care.

-more-

**Local Colleges Receive Grant to Develop Healthcare Training Program**  
**Page 2**

In year one of the project, the partners will collaborate on an environmental scan of simulation activities, new curriculum development and scenario evaluation as well as training college faculty to implement the new simulation curriculum. If the project receives additional funding, in year two, the new curriculum will be offered at the three colleges with partner assistance for student recruitment and retention. Once completed, the new curriculum will also be made available for use by other colleges across the state.

The project will leverage the colleges' current and expanding simulation labs, equipment and faculty expertise. The partners are acknowledged leaders in health education and have extensive experience in managing HEET and other federal and state grants. For instance, BTC, WCC and SVC are currently implementing the HEET Moving Forward: Health Occupations Pathways Program. This \$750,000 grant is supporting development and implementation of educational pathways to advance the careers of incumbent workers in a variety of entry and mid-level positions in five Northwest Washington hospitals.

To learn more about Allied Health programs at WCC, BTC and SVC, please visit the colleges' websites: [www.whatcom.ctc.edu](http://www.whatcom.ctc.edu), [www.btc.ctc.edu](http://www.btc.ctc.edu) and [www.skagit.edu](http://www.skagit.edu).

###