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## BTC awarded \$2.75 million grant to retrain unemployed for nursing jobs

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BELLINGHAM - Bellingham Technical College has been awarded a \$2.75 million federal grant to retrain unemployed workers for high-demand jobs in health care, specifically nursing.

The dollars were among 57 grants totaling \$474.5 million to community colleges and universities announced by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The money comes from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Program, which focuses on unemployed workers, especially those who lost their jobs because of foreign trade. BTC also will recruit students among veterans and their families, as well as the underemployed in the region.

BTC was one of two colleges in the state to receive funding, totaling about \$4.1 million. Spokane Falls Community College was the other.

BTC will use the money to expand and streamline its nursing education program.

It will develop an associate degree in nursing, align courses to prepare licensed practical nurses - those at the entry level of nursing - to move up in their careers, and create a dual-admission, dual-enrollment model with university partners, to help students with associate degrees in nursing earn bachelor's degrees in the field.

The grant also will be spent to form a new medication assistant certificate, for a new simulation laboratory, to redesign clinical experiences, and technology-enhanced classrooms so students leave with skills demanded by employers.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Rick Larsen announced the funding, with Larsen, D-Everett, saying it will help with Washington state's projected shortage of nurses

An April report by the state's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board found that by 2017, Washington state will be training only 87 percent of the people needed to work in health care, according to Larsen.

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Bellingham Technical College nursing students Angela Kok, left, ask questions of Kate Hanson as inserting nasogastric tubes Oct. 21, 2010 in Bellingham.

ANDY BRONSON — THE BELLINGHAM HERALD