

Whatcom County colleges receive grants to increase enrollment and graduation

KIRA M. COX - THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM - Three Whatcom County colleges are receiving \$250,000 grants after joining Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit organization that helps students in two-year college programs succeed.

Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College and Whatcom Community College are among 30 schools that joined the organization this year.

The schools will receive the grants over four years, with the goal of increasing the number of students enrolled and graduating from the colleges.

As part of Achieving the Dream, colleges are required to gather data on student achievement and need, and regularly update practices and policies based on the findings. For example, schools can gather data on achievement gaps between student groups, income levels of students, and where students run into financial or personal problems.

The 30 schools within the 2011 cohort group will share information with each other, helping to guide priorities and measure progress. Other Washington schools in the new group include Skagit Valley College, Everett Community College, Lower Columbia College, Edmonds Community College, Clover Park Technical College, Spokane Falls Community College and Grays Harbor College.

Achieving the Dream was created in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation for Education and other organizations. The nonprofit currently includes 160 colleges around the country. Other Washington schools in the organization include Seattle Central Community College, Tacoma Community College and Yakima Community College.