

New BTC center home to culinary arts, computer classes

By ZOE FRALEY — THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM - Bellingham Technical College has a new home for its popular culinary arts program, and a new student-run café to go with it.

"It looks like a bistro out of New York City," said BTC spokeswoman Marni Saling Mayer. "It's gorgeous."

The school's Campus Center building was completed this summer after about two years of construction. It opened to students this fall.

The Campus Center, located in the middle of the campus, is three stories high with 72,885 square feet. Crews are still working on the project's outdoor areas, and an outdoor sculpture is set to be installed in December.

The first floor houses the school's culinary arts program, including a learning kitchen and lab space as well as a student-run training restaurant Café Culinaire. Students create menus for the restaurant with a chef instructor, and then cook, present and serve the meals.

"They're honing every level of their skills for a full-on gourmet restaurant experience," Saling Mayer said. "That's integral to their training."

Students train during fall quarter, and the restaurant is open winter and spring quarters.

With the expanded and updated space, BTC can accommodate more students in the culinary arts, which traditionally has a two-year waiting list.

Also on the first floor is the new Settlemyer Hall auditorium, a campus store, coffee shop and classrooms.

The second floor is home to classes in computer networking and computer information systems, as well as conference rooms and student sitting areas.

On the third floor is the library, which, at about 14,800 square feet, is almost three times the size of the previous library. It also has more computer stations for students who don't have access to computers at home. A student center funded by the Associated Students provides another gathering place on the third floor.

The total project cost was \$27 million, Saling Mayer said.

"We had to replace the buildings to stay current," she said. "To really be competitive and up-to-date, we're replacing buildings that were getting old. The space wasn't compatible with the kind of technology we had."

The project also added 55 parking spaces on the West Illinois Street side of campus.



Chef Bill McDonald, left, instructs culinary students Cassandra Carriaga and Fabian Madrigal how to make chutney in the lab kitchen at Bellingham Technical College's new Campus Center building Wednesday Oct 24, 2012. The building, which also houses computer labs, bookstore and the library will have a grand opening Friday.

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