



Bellingham Technical College
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For Immediate Release

GOVERNOR CHRISTINE GREGOIRE APPOINTS NEW TRUSTEE, DEBBIE AHL TO BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE.

Bellingham, Washington - April 15, 2011 - Bellingham Technical College announces Governor Christine Gregoire's appointment of Debbie Ahl to Bellingham Technical College's Board of Trustees. Her term runs March 30, 2011 through September 30, 2013.

Ahl is an experienced CEO, with a career spanning 30 years at nationally recognized companies, primarily focused in the health insurance arena. She successfully navigated four corporate acquisitions and integrations and has extensive experience in strategy development, business growth and corporate leadership.

"We are delighted to have Debbie as our new trustee," said BTC President Patricia McKeown. "Her extensive experience with government regulatory issues coupled with her business acumen, her forward perspective and her support of Bellingham Technical College will be a fantastic resource."

As president and CEO of Sterling Life Insurance Company and Olympic Health Management Systems, Inc., she provided leadership for comprehensive insurance company operations long term strategy in a highly regulated and competitive market. Sterling and Olympic specialize in Medicare and senior-related products.

Ahl started with Olympic in 1989 and held a variety of executive positions, including Executive Vice President of Corporate Development, where she was responsible for network development, government relationships, compliance and regulatory filings and new product development, and Chief Operating Officer. Ahl became President and CEO in January, 2001, and under her leadership, Sterling grew to serve more than 200,000 enrollees exceeding \$1 billion in revenue for 2008. Sterling was acquired by Munich Re in 2008 for \$352 million. Prior to joining Olympic, she held key management positions with UniHealth America, a multi-hospital system based in Los Angeles, and ElderMed of Washington, a healthcare service contractor.

"The trustees are so pleased to have Debbie joining OUR ranks. Her considerable expertise and her enthusiasm about the position will be a significantly positive addition to our board," said Trustee Chair Yvonne Cartwright.

As a nationally recognized speaker, she has testified before Congress and spoken on topics related to Medicare and senior insurance products for a number of key industry

associations. She served on the Board of Directors for America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) from 2005-2009. Retired from Sterling Life Insurance Company in August, 2009, Debbie is interested in working with small businesses and entrepreneurial start ups to support economic growth in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. She serves on the Joint Quality Committee for Peace Health St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham and is on the board for the Center for Excellence in Management Education for the College of Business & Economics, Western Washington University.

Ahl earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Washington University in Communications.

She is married to Bill Ziels, and resides in Bellingham, WA. They have six children. Two daughters are at Bellingham High School; of the four sons, one graduated from Bellingham Technical College with a technical degree in Instrumentation & Control and works in the oil industry; one graduated from WWU and works in the marine industry, one is completing his degree in environmental engineering at Humboldt State University. The oldest is married and has recently completed his service to the U.S. Army, including serving two tours in Iraq.

Ahl joins the existing BTC Board of Trustees, comprising Yvonne Cartwright, Chair; Vice Chair; Jim Cunningham, Mark Asmundson and Jim Groves.

About Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and offers 35 associate degrees and 64 certificate options providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to www.btc.ctc.edu

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