

# BTC, WCC receive grants to create health tech offerings

ZOE FRALEY; THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM - Students at Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College will be able to earn certificates in health information technology as early as fall 2013, as the schools received nearly \$1.2 million to expand their offerings.

BTC is getting about \$644,000 and WCC is getting more than \$531,000 as part of an \$11.8 million federal grant to provide health information technology training to displaced workers and veterans.

Both colleges are part of a group of schools named in the grant from the Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training program. With the money, the two colleges are creating common courses that can transfer to Bellevue College's health information technology bachelor's degree.

As health care records have become electronic, health care vendors and hospitals need people who can manage them, whether it as support specialists or computer information system managers, said BTC spokeswoman Marni Saling Mayer.

"It's a really large cross-section of jobs you're able to qualify for when you have that health information technology training," she said. "These types of health occupations are in demand in our state and in Whatcom County."

BTC will use the grant to create a certificate program and three new courses in health information technology, which deals with the storage, management and analysis of medical results and records. Saling Mayer said the courses and certificate program could help information technology students be more competitive once they're in the job market.

The grant will pay for a program manager, curriculum development specialist, curriculum development navigator and instructional support, all working part-time to create the new courses at BTC. Staff will look at the school's current information technology courses to make sure they align with transfer requirements at Bellevue College.

WCC will enhance health information technology training in its nursing, physical therapist assistant and medical assistant programs. It also will develop a health information technology security certificate, which will be available through the college's computer information systems program.