



Bellingham Technical College Press Release

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BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE RECEIVES \$299,387 FOR INNOVATIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE TRAINING CURRICULUM

Bellingham, Washington – January 28, 2011 – Bellingham Technical College (BTC) was awarded \$299,387 by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA Grant) to develop a training program for technicians to operate, repair, and maintain anaerobic digester (AD) units. AD technology is emerging in the dairy industry as a resource for renewable energy generation and as a way to help resolve waste management issues. In partnership with Washington State University (WSU) and local business, Andgar Corporation, model curriculum and training materials will be designed for an Anaerobic Digester Technician Certificate.

"Bellingham Technical College has made sustainability and renewable energy a priority goal across the campus. This project and the curriculum it will develop is the first step in an overall plan to green the College's industrial curriculum with renewable energy technology, knowledge, and skills," said Dr. Patricia McKeown, President, Bellingham Technical College.

BTC's recognized education expertise and its cluster of industrial programs relating directly to AD operation was integral to Washington State University (WSU) and its Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR) in deciding to approach BTC for this grant collaboration. BTC was the grant writer and recipient, with WSU CSANR offering curriculum development support, and assisting in dissemination of that curriculum.

"The mix of WSU's established expertise in AD technology, BTC's technical programs, Andgar as a leading business partner coupled with Whatcom County's strong agricultural community made this collaboration a perfect fit," said Dr. Craig Frear, Assistant Professor at WSU (CSANR).

WSU's CSANR is a leader in AD education and outreach and has partnered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to fund and organize regional AD conferences for producers, entrepreneurs, and industry. WSU CSANR and BTC are excited about this partnership which will fill the gap for technical training and provide a curriculum that will be available to other institutions in Washington State and elsewhere.

BTC will be adding the newly developed curriculum to existing technical programs including Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Technology, Process and Control Technology and Diesel Technology, which will give existing program students an added edge in their finished program degree.

AD technology has risen to the forefront for renewable energy because of its proven abilities to simultaneously solve issues related to energy, waste management, environmental impacts, and climate change—all in a decentralized manner. This project will help improve the long-term operation of anaerobic digesters, enhance yearly run-times of the digester and engine systems, and create a positive economic impact by supporting rural-based jobs in rural communities.

This two year project is off to a great start with professional development for faculty and an industry based panel to outline the essential knowledge and skills for the curriculum. Small digesters will be developed as training tools on campus.

About Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and offers 35 associate degree 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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