



Bellingham Technical College
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For Immediate Release

Bellingham Technical College announced as finalist for national 2024 Bellwether Award

Bellingham, WA — Bellingham Technical College (BTC) has been selected as a finalist for the 2024 Bellwether Awards for the collaborative work the college has done to increase the local Chinook population for tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, and to feed an endangered population of orca whales.

The Bellwether College Consortium announced its Bellwether Finalists Nov. 15, and BTC will compete against nine other community and technical colleges throughout the country in the planning, governance, and finance category at the 30th Annual Community College Futures Assembly (CCFA). This nationally recognized award identifies and honors outstanding and innovative community college programs in three award categories.

The award recognizes work that began in 2018, when the BTC Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences program was approached by the two government entities who co-manage fisheries in Washington State — Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Treaty Tribes — with the opportunity to rear and release 500,000 Chinook at the program's student-run hatchery at the mouth of Whatcom Creek in downtown Bellingham.

Raising an entirely new species of salmon came with a learning curve – altering rearing practices, increased water quality requirements, and adjusting curriculum to accommodate the additional care required for 500,000 juvenile salmon. Over the years, this project has proved to be a valuable model for increasing student engagement and supporting learning, while strengthening important community partnerships.

“Students know that their work is not just for a grade or their own learning, but directly benefits their community and local aquatic ecosystems,” Instructor Sara Smith says.

“We are so proud to share the work that our Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences program has done, and to really get to celebrate the fact that a small two-year technical college

located in the northwest corner of Washington state was able to partner with state and tribal governments to help solve a big problem,” BTC President James Lemerond says.

Presenters for BTC will be: Dr. James Lemerond; Dr. Bradley Smith, BTC Trustee; Matthew Santos, Dean of Professional Technical Education; and Brittany Palm, Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences Instructor. The work of BTC’s Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences program also received national attention earlier this fall, when the team was selected to present at the Association of Community College Trustees Leadership Conference in October.

For the Bellwether Award, college teams will conduct presentations to a jury of anonymous judges, fellow community college practitioners and CEOs and share how they significantly addressed a critical issue affecting community colleges. Event co-sponsors include the National Council of Instructional Administrators, the National Council for State Directors of Community Colleges, and the National Council for Continuing Education and Training. The national competition will be held February 25 - 27, in San Antonio, Texas. The 2024 Bellwether Award recipients will be named at the event.

The Community College Futures Assembly convenes annually as an independent national forum for innovators to work as a think tank. It identifies successful responses to critical issues facing the future of community colleges and hosts its national award competition annually.

“The ingenuity and innovation demonstrated by these community colleges make them shining examples of the solutions-focused culture prevalent in these organizations,” said Rose Martinez, Ph.D., Director for the Bellwether College Consortium. “The consortium looks forward to hosting 30 award-winning finalists at the Community College Futures Assembly.”

The Bellwether Award categories are: Instructional Programs and Services; Workforce Development; and Planning, Governance, and Finance.

Finalists in the Planning, Governance, and Finance category, which recognizes programs or activities that improve college efficiency and effectiveness are:

Bellingham Technical College (WA)

Lone Star College (TX)

Western Dakota Technical College (SD)

Fletcher Technical Community College (LA)

Stanly Community College (NC)

Northeast Texas Community College (TX)

Hudson County Community Colleges (NJ)

Norco College (CA)

Southwest Tennessee Community College (TN)

Lakeshore Technical College (WI)

The Bellwether College Consortium issued a call for nominations in the summer of 2023. Finalists representing 18 states and 29 community colleges were selected to compete from a large pool of submissions.

Visit the Bellwether College Consortium website for more information:

www.bellwethercollegeconsortium.com

About Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College provides student-centered, high-quality professional technical education for today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities. Accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, BTC offers more than 50 associate degree, over 30 certificate options and two bachelor of applied science degrees providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to www.btc.edu.

For more news, events, and photos from the college follow us on

<http://www.facebook.com/bellinghamtechcollegecollege>,

www.instagram.com/bellinghamtechcollege and www.linkedin.com/school/bellingham-technical-college/

Follow our Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences program at

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