



BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE | FEBRUARY 2024  
BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY INSTITUTION

## JIM'S JOURNAL

Dear Campus Community,

I am excited to share some wonderful news with all of you. BTC has been selected as one of 10 finalists in the Planning, Governance, and Finance category for the Bellwether Award. This recognition is part of the Futures Assembly taking place in San Antonio, Texas, this February. The Bellwether Award is a unique recognition that highlights innovative programs in community and technical colleges across the United States. Each year, 30 colleges are chosen as finalists (in three categories) from a pool of applicants. These finalists undergo a rigorous selection process, including two rounds of judging by peers and experts in the field. The finalists present their programs at the Community College Futures Assembly, where they compete for one of three Bellwether Awards, which are aimed at identifying and promoting innovative programs worthy of replication.

I want to extend a thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the presentation. The team involved in crafting and delivering the presentation included BTC Trustee Dr. Bradley Smith, Dean Matthew Santos, Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences Instructor Brittany Palm-Flawd, Heidi Ypma, Ronda Laughlin and myself. Additionally, special recognition goes to Fisheries & Aquaculture Sciences Instructor Sara Smith, Director of Communications and Marketing Zoe Fraley, and Creative Service Manager Sebastian Schoells for their invaluable contributions in creating and refining the presentation. Truly, it was a collaborative effort that yielded an outstanding presentation.

Below, you will find a brief description of BTC's presentation, Feeding Knowledge, the Economy, and the Planet.

"Since 2018, Bellingham Technical College has collaborated with tribal and state partners to expand the production of its salmon hatchery, meeting the growing demand for skilled workers in fisheries and aquaculture. Through updated curriculum and enhanced community partnerships, the college launched a program releasing 500k Chinook salmon annually to support tribal, recreational, and commercial fisheries, as well as an endangered whale population. BTC stands as Washington state's sole two-year college operating a fully functional salmon hatchery, with graduates employed statewide and along the West Coast contributing to sustainable and healthy seafood production for our nation."

The Bellwether Award nomination underscores our commitment to excellence and innovation in education.

Please join me in wishing our team the best of luck as they represent BTC at the Futures Assembly.



## SFR: FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION

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Financial aid applications for the 2024-2025 academic year have undergone significant changes due to the FAFSA Simplification Act. The Act is intended to make the process of applying for financial aid easier. The Department of Education calls the redesigned form “the most ambitious and significant redesign...in decades.” While some students can submit the application with ease, many others have experienced frustration and confusion with completing the new form. Staff in the Student Financial Resources office have been working to remain informed of the changes and sharing information with students and colleagues across campus.

A few of the changes that occurred with the FAFSA Simplification Act are:

- All students and their parent(s) must have an FSA ID to submit the FAFSA. There is a 1-3 business day waiting period when setting up a new FSA ID.
- The Expected Family Contribution “EFC” will no longer be used. In its place, the Student Aid Index “SAI” is now used to assess a student’s eligibility for need-based financial aid.
- Students and contributors will no longer enter their tax information or use the IRS Data Retrieval. Applicants and contributors are required to consent to the IRS Data Exchange, which will automatically import tax information into the FAFSA.
- Dependent students may be required to report a different parent on the 2024-2025 FAFSA or WASFA compared to prior year applications. Students will begin to report the parent who provided the most financial support in the 12 months prior.
- Pell Grant eligibility changes. Students from families who earned less than 175% and single parents who earned less than 225% of the federal poverty level will receive a maximum Federal Pell Grant award. Minimum Pell Grants will be guaranteed to students from households below 275%, 325%, 350%, or 400% of the poverty level depending on household structure. Pell awards between the maximum and minimum amounts will be determined by the Student Aid Index (SAI).

Staff are working diligently to learn all these changes to continue providing services to students. During the January All Student Services meeting, staff were able to hear from guest speakers from the Washington Student Achievement Council and BTC’s partner agency, FuturesNW. This meeting provided staff with an overview of the new application and addressed some of the challenges applicants are facing. Regular updates are being made to the BTC FAFSA Simplification webpage on the Student Financial Resources website.

Despite these challenges, we want to ensure that all BTC students receive the financial aid they qualify for. BTC students are encouraged to submit their financial aid application by May 1, 2024, for summer quarter enrollment or by June 1, 2024 for fall quarter.

**Help is available!** There are numerous resources available for students to get help with submitting their financial aid application. FAFSA/WASFA filing support is offered both virtually and in-person. Information about support is below.

Learn about [WA Student Achievement Council 12<sup>th</sup> Year Campaign events](#).

Explore [FuturesNW virtual and in-person financial aid assistance](#).

Book an appointment for [FuturesNW 1-1 virtual support](#).

Find [BTC Student Financial Resources FAFSA/WASFA assistance](#).

## ASBTC CORNER

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### Food Fight

BTC has won this year’s Food Fight! Together our community donated 6,748 pounds of food to our food pantry!

It’s inspiring to see all our schools come together for a good purpose. Saturday, Jan. 27, ASBTC attended Whatcom Community College’s basketball game, where the women’s basketball team showed up to win. During halftime, we had a “food fight” ourselves, as BTC, Whatcom Community College, and Skagit Valley College fought it out in a dodgeball tournament with food shaped foam balls. BTC didn’t win the tournament, but we’ll be practicing for next year!



Thank you to everyone who donated to help fight food insecurity for our students!

## ASBTC CORNER CONTINUED

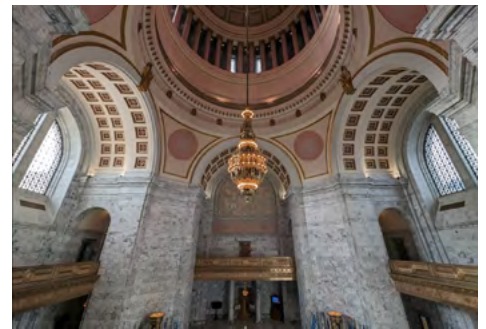
### Advocacy Day in Olympia

ASBTC Director of Legislation Victoria Ulm had the pleasure of planning this year's advocacy day for ASBTC and it was a blast. ASBTC Executives, Student Life Director Chris Eder, and BTC President James Lemerond visited Sen. Sharon Shewmake, Sen. Liz Lovelett, and Rep. Debra Lekanoff. ASBTC had an agenda laid out by the Council of Unions and Student Programs (CUSP), which included textbook affordability, student housing, financial aid for students, harm reduction, and student pay equity. Students added information about BTC's current building closure, hoping to help secure funding to fix the building.



### Media Literacy

ASBTC hosted a Media Literacy event this Wednesday. Students joined in and had a chance to earn some Valentine's Day candy as they learned about how to process the news that they see every day. ASBTC worked with the library to create an information session on resources that students and staff can use to find the truth behind some articles.



## PROCURE TO PAY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Welcome to the Procure to Pay Question of the Month (QOM) section! Each month there will be a new question with answers to help with your purchasing, contract, shipping & receiving and accounts payable questions. Do you or someone you know have a question you'd like answered in a future installment? Email Melisa Nelson, Director of Purchasing, at [mnelson@btc.edu](mailto:mnelson@btc.edu) with the subject: Procure to Pay QOM and your question might be answered in an upcoming Notable News!

**February Question:** I had a piece of equipment break down and it needs to be repaired. Is there a process for this?

**Answer:** I know it can be frustrating when equipment breaks down. Luckily, there is some great guidance on the repair process at BTC. Here's a quick summary of the information you can find in the [BTC - Repair Equipment Process](#) document on the Budget SharePoint. Lesya Melnik, [lmelnik@btc.edu](mailto:lmelnik@btc.edu), is BTC's Budget Analyst.

1. Equipment repairs and maintenance less than \$150 that will be repaired by employees within the department: The department budget authority should follow procurement processes to purchase the parts.
2. Equipment repairs and maintenance over \$150: The department budget authority must submit a request for approval of the expense to their supervisor and cc the Budget Analyst. More information on the process is found in the process document.
3. The Budget Analyst will review account 5081250 (Repairs & Maintenance) expenditures quarterly and increase budgets from the repair/maintenance budget pool as necessary to match current 5081250 expenditures.
4. New equipment in lieu of high-cost repairs: If the repair cost is 75% of the replacement cost (or greater), the department budget authority may request authorization from the VP of Admin Services (Chad) for an exception to use repair funds to purchase new equipment. More info can be found in the process document.

Broken/unrepairable equipment: There are three options (more information in the [BTC - Repair Equipment Process](#) document):

- a. Purchase replacement equipment if their department budget has the funds;
- b. Submit a resource request during the annual process;
- c. Submit an exception request to the VP of Admin Services to replace using repair funds.

**I still have questions!** For more information about this topic feel free to email Lesya Melnik at [lmelnik@btc.edu](mailto:lmelnik@btc.edu).



## FOCUS ON CHILDREN CONFERENCE

On Saturday, Feb. 3, BTC's Child & Family Studies program hosted our 40th annual Focus on Children conference. The conference took place at the Four Points by Sheraton, and awarded six hours of professional development to attendees.

We had over 200 early childhood education professionals in attendance, along with vendors, community partners, and presenters from around the country. During lunch, we honored 15 retired early learning champions from our community, who have cumulatively contributed over 430 years to the growth and development of this field. Special thanks to our conference sponsors: The Bainum Family Foundation, Imagine Institute, Opportunity Council, Northwest Indian College, BTC Foundation, Whatcom Early Learning Alliance, and the PNW Chapter of WAEYC.



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

This month's employee spotlight is shining on **Caren Kongshaug**.

**Q: What's your position and title here at BTC? Now and in the future?**

A: College Readiness Instructor. I teach basic skills in Math and English in Transitional Studies and Developmental English in the General Eds.

**Q: What do you like to do for fun outside the office? Any hobbies?**

A: This definitely qualifies as outside the office although I would not always characterize it as "fun" per se. It's more like "something I really want (and need) to do." I am a self-taught painter, and I have a small space at home in our sunroom where I paint. Stylized faces, suns, moons, trees, flowers, owls are my usual subjects, although I don't plan what I am going to paint, I just let it happen. I mostly paint with a feeling, and an urgency to express it. Since I am a messy painter, (paint in my hair or spilled bottle on the floor) I only use acrylics as they are more forgiving, in this department, than oil. I'm in the process of making an oracle deck with an accompanying text. I hope to have it finished by next December. I sell my art when I can, and that always feels really good.

**Q: Any fun or funny facts that folks might not know about you?**

A: Having grown up in the San Fernando Valley of California, I'm technically a Valley Girl. Like totally.

**Q: Any pets or pet plans?**

A: Our sweet dog, Merlin, has been with us for over a year. He is a rescue mutt with hound, retriever and shepherd mix, maybe. He is tri-colored, and cozy as can be. Merlin gets three walks a day between Lars (my husband) and I, and he gets the best spot on the couch.

**Q: If you could bring one food, book, and movie to a desert island, what would you choose?**

A: Filet Mignon, Mists of Avalon, Shtisel (TV series)

In another mood, I might say: Cheese, The Red Tent, The Tudors (TV series).

**Q: Anything else we should know about you?**

A: I read the Tarot. Need a reading?

