



Bellingham Technical College
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For Immediate Release

BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES RECONFIRMS ITS CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT FOR BTC PRESIDENT DR. KIMBERLY PERRY IN HER EFFORTS TO NAVIGATE UNION CONTRACT ISSUES

Bellingham, Washington – April 9, 2018 – Bellingham Technical College’s (BTC) Board of Trustees (BOT) strongly supports Dr. Kimberly Perry as she navigates union contract issues with Bellingham Educational Support Team (BEST) and Bellingham Education Association (BEA).

“The Board strongly supports what Dr. Perry is doing to navigate these long-standing issues, some of which were in play well before she arrived at BTC,” said Debbie Ahl, Chair of the BTC Board of Trustees. “BTC is in binding arbitration related to compensation for BEA faculty for the four days they did not hold classes last fall during the BEST strike. This is the appropriate process to which both sides should be committed. Additionally, Kim has taken constructive steps to improve the campus climate, including the creation and facilitation of participatory governance groups such as College Assembly and the Budgeting Committee (PARA). She was quick to bring in a neutral facilitator for campus issues, based on campus input. These are responsive steps toward creating an inclusive, collaborative campus, and it would be a shame to derail the good work of BTC employees as these groups are hitting their stride. The Board is disappointed the leadership of BEST and BEA do not appear to be engaging in work to improve the campus climate.”

BTC has been waiting for a signed contract from the BEST president since the BEST team ratified the collective bargaining agreement on Thursday, September 28, 2017 and BTC’s BOT approved/ratified the BEST contract on October 2, 2017

BTC immediately implemented all elements of the BEST contract at that time that were possible without a fully executed and signed agreement.

BTC has been following the negotiated dispute resolution and binding arbitration process in the BEA contract to resolve the pay dispute that arose when some BEA members chose to suspend classes for students and not come to work during four days of the BEST strike. This action was against the law—RCW 28B.52.078 states in relevant part, “The right of college faculty to engage in any strike is prohibited.”

BTC did pay the faculty and BEST members that came to work during the four days of the strike. BTC offered BEA members who did not come to work and hold classes a settlement in an attempt to resolve the dispute. BEA rejected that offer and requested to proceed to arbitration.

There has been no lawsuit filed against BTC at this time. BTC is following the prescribed steps in the current collective bargaining agreement; the parties are now working towards selecting an arbitrator through the American Arbitration Association (AAA), the organization from which the contract stipulates the arbitrator be chosen. "The AAA will make a binding decision regarding the pay dispute," said Ahl, noting that "BTC will honor that outcome."

Ahl also noted that Dr. Perry received the state's legislatively-mandated increase of 2% on July 1, 2017, which was the same increase legislated for all community and technical college non-represented employees.

BTC has been working diligently to solve the long-standing campus climate issues through many efforts including:

- Creating a new avenue of a participatory governance structure with a new College Assembly and eight other governance committees.
- Convening campus-wide budget forums to enhance communication and create opportunities for increased input into the decision-making process.
- Involving the entire campus in the development of the 2018-23 Strategic Plan
- Hiring a consultant with non-college funds to help address campus communication issues. The consultant is working with a Design Team made up of representatives from throughout the campus to help the campus community rebuild.

"BTC remains dedicated to serving our students by providing life-changing higher education and help our students train for and succeed in new careers. BTC is currently ranked second among two-year colleges across the state in graduation and graduation/transfer rates. We also have a high retention rate. This is due to the dedication, expertise and student-centered focus on the part of our faculty and staff. We want to focus on serving our students in the best ways possible", said Marni Saling Mayer, Public Information Officer, Bellingham Technical College.

About Bellingham Technical College

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and offers two Bachelor of Applied Science degrees, seven direct transfer degrees such as pre-engineering, pre-nursing, electronics, mechanical engineering, and technology and business. Completion of these degrees prepares BTC

students to transfer with a junior status to participating colleges and universities in Washington State. BTC offers 38 associate degree and 51 certificate options providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to www.btc.edu.