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**Contact:**

Nate Langstraat, Public Information Officer  
360.383.3310 / [pio@whatcom.ctc.edu](mailto:pio@whatcom.ctc.edu)



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## **WCC LAUNCHES NEW SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR VETERAN STUDENTS**

### **Armed Forces Week Highlighted by Edge4Vets Program Announcement**

Bellingham, WA, May 3, 2011 – Whatcom is launching the Edge4Vets Program this fall. The College is making an official announcement as part of Armed Forces Week, which will be celebrated on campus during the week of May 16. The launch of this program marks WCC's continued leadership in helping American servicemen and women to make successful transitions to civilian life after their military service. Helping returning vets identify military skills that transfer to education and career paths, the program is the first of its kind in the nation and will be piloted at WCC and Fordham University. Whatcom was invited by The Human Resiliency Institute to join their successful "Resiliency Edge" program, where veterans get an opportunity to explore resiliency strengths and apply them to their own transition journeys to achieve optimum success at school.

"WCC recognizes the challenges that veterans are faced with as they return to school after the military and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to provide support to veteran students, particularly as this population of students continues to grow," President Hiyane-Brown stated. In the last three years, veteran students on WCC's campus have increased rapidly, serving 80 in 2008-09, 130 in 2009-10 and 245 already this academic year.

The announcement will take place in the Syre Student Center on May 17 in conjunction with Whatcom Community College becoming part of the Partners for Veteran Supportive Campuses Agreement. WCC President Kathi Hiyane-Brown will be joined by John Lee, Director of the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, Mike Gregoire, First Gentlemen Office of the Governor, and Dr. Peter Schmidt, Dean of Student Success and Retention at Edmonds Community College to sign this agreement. This partnership agreement signing will take place in the Syre Student Center, room 216 at 1:30 p.m. The agreement was adopted and signed by representatives from nine state agencies, including Governor Gregoire, on September 10, 2009. Higher education institutions have been charged "...to implement best practices and policies designed to foster social support, acceptance, a welcoming environment, and a setting that meaningfully acknowledges the contributions of our veterans."

Just prior to the agreement signing, Dr. Peter Schmidt will present a "Boots to Books" seminar from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Heiner Theater. The session focuses on the transitional process from the military to life as a civilian student. He will share best practices when working with veterans who have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and are reintegrating into society.

Veteran students at Whatcom are taking notice, fully appreciating the support they are receiving from WCC. Jason Kline served in the United States Air Force for six years and is currently a student at Whatcom. “During my time at WCC, I have had no trouble getting the classes required for my transfer degree, and the members of the VA [Veterans Affairs] Advising Department have been a great help in planning my course schedules. My instructors have been nothing less than passionate about the subjects they teach, and I have gained much from the classes I have taken. Additionally, it was the enthusiasm of my English professors that convinced me to focus on working towards an English degree. I have already received my acceptance letter from WWU [Western Washington University].”

Veteran student Travis Grimme was enlisted in the United States Marine Corps for 4.5 years and was sent on three combat tours in Iraq. “I needed to get my life on track and start looking into what I want my career path to be. I wanted to pass my knowledge and skills onto another generation which led me to the field of education. I heard about Whatcom Community College and when I first showed up, I was immediately introduced to Jarid Corbitt, the Veterans Advisor. He helped me set up a plan with classes and career goals in which I was able to best succeed in. I was recently accepted to the University of Texas at Austin to their College of Education and plan on attending after I graduate from Whatcom this spring.”

“Whatcom has demonstrated a genuine commitment to its Veteran students,” affirmed Vice President for Educational Services Trish Onion. This commitment is displayed in many forms: hiring a full-time coordinator in the Veterans Affairs Office, dedicating space for educational planning and academic affairs, linking departments and services that veteran students rely on, and forging strong partnerships with local veterans support organizations such as PTSD counseling services, the Bellingham Vet Center, and Disabled American Veterans Service Office. Jarid Corbitt, Veterans Services Coordinator and Advisor, added “This isn’t just a fad at WCC. The College is investing in an infrastructure that will support veteran students in the long-term.”

Corbitt recently returned from the Western Regional Community College Summit held in San Diego, CA. He was invited to this monumental event due to his expertise in veterans services. Titled “Challenges, Solutions, and Commitments,” the summit was one of four that continued the dialogue that began in October with the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges. Dr. Jill Biden convened the summit at the request of President Obama to highlight the importance of community colleges. Dr. Jill Biden served as the summit’s keynote speaker. With a focus on “Exemplary Programs for Veterans, Military Members, and Families,” Whatcom is proud to have had Jarid representing community colleges and WCC at this summit, serving as an expert in these community and nation-wide conversations.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college serving over 7,600 students quarterly. Whatcom offers transfer degrees, professional and technical training programs, as well as basic education, job skills and enrichment classes. For more information about WCC, please contact Nate Langstraat at 360.383.3310 or visit [www.whatcom.ctc.edu](http://www.whatcom.ctc.edu)

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