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**WCC'S ETHNIC STUDENT ASSOCIATION CLAIMS "A FIRST"
AT STATEWIDE STUDENTS OF COLOR CONFERENCE**



Members of WCC's Ethnic Student Association attended the Students of Color Conference in Yakima, WA.

Bellingham, WA, May 4, 2012 – A group of Whatcom Community College students made history recently when they became the first student organization to present at the April 19-21 Students of Color Conference in Yakima, WA. WCC's Ethnic Student Association (ESA) presented its signature "I Am From" Identity Development Workshop. The workshop was one of the sessions and activities at which conference participants explored issues of social justice, social activism, personal and identity development, awareness of others, and life skills. In Whatcom's "I Am From" session, students wrote poems that explored and celebrated who they are through their past, present, and what they want for the future. The goal of the conference is to provide a fun, educational, and safe experience that promotes leadership, diversity, and academic success.

The conference is also an excellent opportunity for students to network with one another. This year more than 750 Washington state community college students attended the three-day event. WCC traditionally sends a group of students to the annual conference, but this year's group of 26 high achieving students was the largest ever. Each of the students met the 2.5 cumulative GPA requirement to participate.

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“The strong academic results are without a doubt because of the establishment of the Multicultural Academic Support Center headed by coordinator Krysta Walia,” says ESA President Stacey McGee. Established in March 2011, the center’s mission is to support educational equity and academic achievement for diverse student populations by providing access to resources and a safe place to connect through a culture of inclusion and respect. “Over the past year the center has helped the Ethnic Student Association to grow into one of the most active student organizations on campus,” McGee adds. “The center has facilitated the connections of first generation, low-income students and students of color to campus resources and opportunities.”

Student Life staff Laura Singletary, Monica Koller, and WCC intern Natalie Washington provided crucial support and advocated to make the conference a success. According to McGee, the campus collaboration and support from different departments strengthened the shared experience and sense of activism amongst students.

“The SOCC was a remarkable experience for me,” says student Lakhwinder Randhawa. “I enjoyed this wonderful learning process -- a fun ride -- of finding who I am. Through this amazing conference, I have made so many new friends. I truly feel blessed to be part of such an incredible conference.” Students who attended this year’s conference will be discussing how to share what they learned with the community.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college with a committed, accomplished faculty and staff who serve more than 7,600 students quarterly. On its beautiful 71 acre campus in Bellingham WA, and through on-line courses, 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 visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

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