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**WCC, SBDC AND NWIRC JOIN FORCES TO LAUNCH
ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM**
Classes begin in September

Bellingham, WA, June 13, 2012 – Whatcom Community College (WCC), the NW Innovation Resource Center (NWIRC) and Western Washington University’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are joining forces to launch an innovative entrepreneurship program at WCC. The program, titled *Launch and Build Your Business*, will help locals successfully start new ventures and develop their business ideas. WCC, NWIRC and SBDC together have organized the six-month course, which blends on-line instruction with live workshops and support services. The series will provide participants the step-by-step foundation to build their new enterprises and to learn from local business owners and experts. The organizers expect the program will foster a community of like-minded entrepreneurs. Classes begin in September.

“Whatcom is thrilled with this partnership and with the opportunity to host this new program,” says WCC’s President Kathi Hiyane-Brown. “The community relies on WCC to provide quality instruction on the essential pieces of business start-up such as new ways of selling and marketing, bookkeeping and accounting, and how to write and pitch a business plan. What’s new is that we are packaging these topics comprehensively and leveraging the expertise and wrap-around support provided by experts at NWIRC and SBDC.”

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Organizers say clients' on-going requests for start-up business development support led to the idea. "Some of the business people we've heard from have been successfully employed for years in other industries," says SBDC Director Jennifer Shelton. "They are looking for that extra information that will help them to make decisions and complete elements that are missing for a business launch; to explore accelerated concepts; and to connect with experts and other entrepreneurs in the region for encouragement and inspiration."

The on-line course content from Palo Alto Software is self-paced and will be augmented by the monthly live seminars. On-line course topics will include business basics, market analysis and marketing strategy, basic financial considerations and getting financed, building a business team, utilizing the web, cash flow and taxes, and planning and pitching a business concept. The on-line *Start, Run & Grow Your Business* curriculum is based on Tim Berry's long-running course at the University of Oregon's Lundquist College of Business and is approved by the Association of Small Business Development Centers. The course has helped thousands of business people launch successful ventures and is considered an ideal source for would-be entrepreneurs.

Monthly seminars led by experts from NWIRC and SBDC will tie-in course content with presentations by successful local business owners and business experts. Seminar topics will include tools for bootstrapping start-up businesses; successful ways to launch new products; how to structure a business; and related tax, finance and cash flow information. The entire program cost is \$239; starting in August, students may register at any time during the six-month period. Registration, which will be available through WCC's Continuing Education, includes the monthly workshops, access to Business Plan Pro's LivePlan and three text books.

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The monthly workshops will include roundtables and live interviews with successful entrepreneurs from our region. "Hearing personal stories and lessons learned from people who have built a business from the ground floor is very helpful to entrepreneurs who are just starting out," says NWIRC Director Diane Kamionka. "Also, the roundtables will give participants the opportunity to ask questions of the NWIRC and SBDC staff experts as well as connect with other participants working through the start-up process."

As the lead educational institution, Whatcom will host the course workshops the second Thursday of the month, starting noon-1:30 p.m. Sept. 13. In addition to students who register on their own, the NWIRC and SBDC will refer clientele to the program and will provide ongoing support to help participants with their businesses during and after the program ends. Pre-course information sessions will be held at WWU's SBDC downtown Bellingham office, 115 Unity Street, Suite 101, noon-1 p.m. July 25 and 4-5 p.m. Aug. 22.

The NW Innovation Resource Center is a non-profit organization providing economic opportunities and jobs through innovation in Whatcom County. The NWIRC accelerates early-stage startup companies and their rate of success through mentorship, resources, and accountability. For more information, please visit www.nwirc.com.

WWU SBDC is part of the most comprehensive small business assistance network in the United States and its territories made up of more than 1,000 SBDC programs funded in part through a partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC serving Whatcom County is part of Western Washington University's College of Business and Economics. Certified Business Advisors provide free, confidential advising, technical assistance, and research to business owners and managers.

Whatcom Community College is an accredited, comprehensive two-year college with an accomplished faculty and staff who serve more than 7,800 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, please visit www.whatcom.ctc.edu.

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