

## Seattle Colleges Announces Commitment to Expand College Access at White House Event

SEATTLE — Today, Seattle Colleges and Chancellor Jill Wakefield will join President Obama, the First Lady, and Vice President Biden along with hundreds of college presidents and higher education leaders to announce new actions to help more students prepare for and graduate from college.



The White House College Opportunity Day of Action helps to support the president's commitment to partner with colleges and universities, business leaders, and nonprofits to support students across the country to help our nation reach its goal of leading the world in college attainment.

The Seattle Colleges—Seattle Central College, North Seattle College and South Seattle College—commit to increasing the number of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) students receiving Associate of Science degrees and/or transferring to baccalaureate institutions. Strategies include implementing efficient and modern curricula, providing effective STEM student success supports, building a robust network in the STEM community, and participating in the creation of college and state policies that eliminate barriers to reform.

“We are in the middle of the Silicon Forest, and high-paying careers are multiplying as I speak,” says Seattle Colleges Chancellor Jill Wakefield. “Our colleges are committed to expanding opportunities to those who have not had access to STEM careers, including people of color, women, first generation, and low-income residents. We are creating support systems, revising curriculum, developing real-life projects and connecting our students to careers and universities.

“We all benefit when everyone has a lifetime of opportunity, and our individual success is made greater by the success of those around us.”

Today's participants were asked to commit to new action in one of four areas: building networks of colleges around promoting completion, creating K-16 partnerships around college readiness, investing in high school counselors as part of the First Lady's Reach Higher initiative, and increasing the number of college graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

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The president will announce new steps on how his administration is helping to support these actions, including announcing \$10 million to help promote college completion and a \$30 million AmeriCorps program that will improve low-income students' access to college. Today's event is the second College Opportunity Day of Action, and will include a progress report on the commitments made at the first day of action on January 14, 2014.

Expanding opportunity for more students to enroll and succeed in college, especially low-income and underrepresented students, is vital to building a strong economy and a strong middle class. Today, only nine percent of those born in the lowest family income quartile attain a bachelor's degree by age 25, compared to 54 percent in the top quartile. In an effort to expand college access, the Obama Administration has increased Pell scholarships by \$1,000 a year, created the new American Opportunity Tax Credit worth up to \$10,000 over four years of college, limited student loan payments to 10 percent of income, and laid out an ambitious agenda to reduce college costs and promote innovation and competition.

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### **About Seattle Colleges**

The [Seattle College District](#) is Washington state's largest college district, with nearly 50,000 students enrolled each year. It is comprised of Seattle Central College, North Seattle College, South Seattle College, Seattle Vocational Institute and four specialty centers. The district offers more than 135 workforce education and training programs that lead to bachelor's degrees in high-growth industries, associate degrees in various disciplines, certificates in professional-technical programs and transfer degrees to universities throughout the United States.

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