



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 18, 2021**

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### **Large-Scale Community Vaccination Clinic Coming in March**

**Whatcom County, WA** — Today, a community collaboration of healthcare providers, including Bellingham Technical College (BTC), Family Care Network, PeaceHealth, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Unity Care NW and the Whatcom County Health Department announce plans to open a large-scale community COVID-19 vaccination clinic to be located at Bellingham Technical College.

“We are pleased to announce that Bellingham Technical College has agreed to host the community vaccination site,” said Shanon Hardie, Unity Care NW’s chief operations officer and co-chair of the Whatcom County Large-Scale Vaccine Planning Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee anticipates opening the vaccine clinic in March, depending on vaccine availability. The group’s goal is to vaccinate up to 5,000 people at this site per week, depending on the reliability of weekly vaccine shipments from the state. The group is working diligently to finalize operations, staffing, logistics and other details.

“Bellingham Technical College is proud to continue its over-60-year tradition of serving the Whatcom County community by participating in this vaccination effort,” said BTC Interim President Walter Hudsick.

At a time when the community’s healthcare professionals are under considerable strain, the assistance offered by BTC provides much needed resources for this project. In addition to hosting the vaccination site, students in BTC’s nursing program will help staff the site.

“The BTC Nursing Program is excited to partner with this team and participate in a substantial way in the COVID-19 recovery plan for our community. Nursing students stand ready to assist the community vaccination effort and look forward to serving our community,” said BTC’s Dean of Nursing and Allied Health Julie Samms.

Nursing students from Whatcom Community College’s nursing program will also lend their expertise and help staff the vaccination site.

“This is an incredible opportunity for WCC’s nursing students to gain hands-on experience while directly supporting county-wide efforts to keep our community safe,” said Grace Kolodychuk, WCC’s nursing program director.

The community vaccination clinic will abide by the Washington State Department of Health’s phased guidelines for vaccine eligibility. Whatcom County is currently in Phase 1B Tier 1 of vaccine distribution. Those currently eligible for vaccination include anyone 65 and older, all people 50 and older who live in multigenerational households, workers in healthcare settings and long-term care facility staff and residents. Demand for the vaccine still exceeds supply. All parties are hopeful vaccine shipments will increase in the coming weeks.

All partners are finalizing logistics and operations related to the site’s launch, including an appointment scheduling system. Community members are asked not to call BTC with questions about vaccination scheduling. Updates about the community vaccination site, including launch date, hours of operation and how to book appointments, will be available on the Whatcom County Health Department’s website soon. Community members can also use the Vaccine Location function at [www.covidvaccineWA.org](http://www.covidvaccineWA.org) for the latest news on vaccine providers who are accepting appointments.

“It’s an honor to work collaboratively with our partners to develop plans for a community vaccination clinic that will be open to all,” said Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department. “When Whatcom County partners work collectively, we can do more to support our residents. The vaccine promises a return to normality.”

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit [www.whatcomcounty.us/covidvaccine](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/covidvaccine) or [www.covidvaccinewa.org](http://www.covidvaccinewa.org).

### **About Bellingham Technical College**

Bellingham Technical College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and has been approved to offer a new RN to Bachelor of Nursing program is hoped to start in Fall 2022. BTC also has seven transfer degrees such as nursing, computer science and business; 39 associate degrees, 55 certificate options and two bachelor of applied science degrees, providing professional technical education to support local and regional industry workforce needs. For more information, go to [www.btc.edu](http://www.btc.edu).



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