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Five Washington colleges join the Guided Pathways Initiative to improve college completion, awarded \$2.5 million in grants

SEATTLE - No matter the reason that a student enrolls in college, the ultimate goal is usually the same: a degree that will expand opportunities. But for too many students, staying enrolled and graduating with a degree may pose stark and unanticipated challenges. "First-generation, low-income students get to college without a support network of friends or family members knowledgeable about college life," said Christine McCabe, Executive Director at College Spark Washington. "Without this support structure, they struggle with the transition to college and navigating through the college system."

College Spark Washington and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges are partnering to help colleges implement Guided Pathways, an approach that reduces and simplifies the number of choices about course selection a student must make and directs students into an intentional, comprehensive program of study within one or two terms. The process from college entrance to program selection to degree completion is streamlined, providing students with a clearer, more efficient path to completion.

Five colleges, of seventeen that applied, were selected to receive implementation grants totaling \$2.5 million over five years:

- Clover Park Technical College
- Lower Columbia Community College
- Renton Technical College
- Spokane Falls Community College
- Tacoma Community College

Each college will receive \$500,000 in grant funding from College Spark, matched with a \$500,000 allocation from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, over five years.

"These colleges demonstrated a strong understanding of Guided Pathways and a deep commitment to the benefits and challenges associated with this ambitious reform," said Jan Yoshiwara, Executive Director for the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. These colleges will join the first cohort of colleges - Everett Community College, Peninsula College, Pierce College, South Puget Sound Community College, and South Seattle College - in the Guided Pathways Initiative funded by College Spark.

During the first implementation year, the pilot colleges will create plans for how they will implement Guided Pathways. To support their efforts, SBCTC will provide colleges with technical assistance and coaches, convene teams twice a year, and facilitate opportunities for

the colleges to learn from other Guided Pathways colleges in the nation and experts in the field of institutional change management. All of Washington's community and technical colleges will be encouraged to attend a subset of these events.

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College Spark Washington funds programs across Washington state that help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees. Grantees include community based organizations, K-12 schools and districts, community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, educational nonprofits, and public agencies. Since 2005, College Spark has awarded more than \$50 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is led by a Governor-appointed board and provided leadership, advocacy, and coordination for Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Each year, about 374,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education.