



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT: Raechel Dawson: rdawson@highline.edu

Two Kent Students Join All-WA Academic Team Both Receive \$500 in Scholarships

DES MOINES, Wash. — Two Highline College students have earned statewide recognition and scholarships for their educational achievements this past year.

Sameer Koirala and Caitlyn (Cat) Jonson were honored as members of the 2022 [All-Washington Academic Team](#) for their academic achievement, community service and involvement in college. Koirala, Jonson and other top scholars from the state's 34 community and technical colleges were recognized during a May 12 virtual awards ceremony through South Puget Sound Community College.

Each college can nominate up to four students for the award. To qualify, students must apply for recognition and be members of [Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society](#). [Pi Sigma](#) is the Highline chapter of the international honor society.

By being named to the All-Washington team, Koirala and Jonson have each earned \$500: \$250 given by KeyBank and \$250 by the [Highline College Foundation](#).

“Cat and Sameer are excellent and dedicated students who have contributed significantly to the Highline community,” said Fred Capestany, Highline’s Pi Sigma adviser. “Both are pursuing careers in health care and I have no doubt they will be successful.”

Sameer Koirala

Koirala, a 27 year old living in Kent, holds a 3.85 GPA after recently graduating from Highline College with a nursing associate degree. The first-generation, international college student plans

to earn his bachelor's degree in nursing (RN-BSN) at Bellevue College so that he can become a nurse at a local hospital.

Koirala was inspired to study nursing early on in life when he lived in Nepal. When he was a child, he sustained more than one bone fracture, but was always met with a smile from a nurse during his care.

“For as long as I can remember, I’ve known what I wanted to do with my life,” Koirala said. “Helping others has always been a passion of mine, and nursing, in particular, has interested me. Dedicating my life to improving the lives of others is very appealing to me.”

Eventually, after gaining valuable experience in the field, Koirala hopes to go back to school to get his master's and his doctorate.

But getting to where he is today hasn't always been easy.

Upon returning to the U.S. from visiting his family in Nepal, happy news of Koirala's acceptance into Highline College was shadowed by his father's death. Despite the shock, Koirala “glued” himself together, stuck with his education and excelled. Now he looks forward to advancing his education to help others during their most vulnerable moments.

Caitlyn (Cat) Johnson

Jonson, an 18 year old living in Kent, holds a 4.0 GPA and is studying health care at Highline College. After Highline, she hopes to transfer to a university to earn her doctorate to become a physical therapist.

Two major life events steered Caitlyn Jonson toward a career focused on helping others.

When she was 16 years old, she suffered a major kickboxing injury that required help from a physical therapist to regain her strength and stability.

“Going through physical therapy made me so thankful to the workers with their patience, gentleness, kindness and understanding,” Jonson said. “From that moment forward, I knew that I would be a physical therapist one day as well, so that I could repay the favor and help heal people.”

Jonson's mother also sustained massive chemical burns when she was a teenager. And it was Jonson who took on the caregiver role for three years. Drawing upon both of these experiences, Jonson hopes to pursue a career specializing in children's physical therapy or sports rehabilitation.

The All-Washington Academic Team program is sponsored by the [State Board for Community and Technical Colleges](#), [Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges](#), [Washington State Association of College Trustees](#) and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

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Links within this release:

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- <https://ptk.highline.edu/>
- <https://foundation.highline.edu/>
- <https://www.sbctc.edu/>
- <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/commissions-councils/wactc/default.aspx>

Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves more than 13,000 students. With over 70 percent students of color, Highline is the most diverse higher education institution in the state. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education, basic skills and applied bachelor's degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.