



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **U.S. Dept. of Education Awards Highline College Competitive Grant** Approximately \$2.2 million will Help Low-Income, First-Generation Students

DES MOINES, Wash. — DES MOINES, Wash. — In spite of communication barriers and workplace complexities the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed on colleges across the country, Highline College staff and faculty came together to not only submit a highly competitive, successful federal grant application but to devise ways to serve our students beyond this current pandemic period as well.

The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded Highline the Title III A Strengthening Institutions Program grant in the amount of \$2,249,407 to be used over a 5-year period starting this October.

The institution-wide grant will be utilized to address student equity gaps, completion and retention rates and will aim to increase advising support for students and professional development for staff and faculty.

“What are Highline’s strengths and how will those strengths help us overcome the institution’s weaknesses to strengthen Highline’s priority to close the equity gap?” asked May Lukens, a special projects manager within Highline’s Academic Affairs division. “Everything wraps together and that’s what you want to show [in the grant application].”

Lukens oversaw the grant application process with help from over 50 other Highline staff and faculty.

Highline’s goals with this grant money will be to:

- Increase pass rates in gateway courses, such as math and English
- Develop data capacity and campus data literacy to close the equity gap of student success
- Re-design the student onboarding experience to give students a strong start

- Transform advising to increase student momentum and graduation in their chosen pathway
- Provide comprehensive professional development to staff and faculty that is focused on closing student equity gaps
- Stabilize student tuition revenue through improved student retention through graduation

In completion of these goals, Highline's self-sufficiency and capacity to serve low-income students and close equity gaps will improve.

But getting there will require a multi-pronged approach. A variety of methods, such as embedded in-class gateway course support for students, increasing campus data capacity and literacy and hiring new entry advisors in the redesign of the onboarding process will help Highline accomplish these goals.

Highline will measure these goals through a series of measurable outcomes, which include gateway course pass rates, credits completed compared to credits attempted by Black and Hispanic students to close equity gaps, the number of faculty who adopt culturally responsive practices and retention and graduation rates, among others measures of improvement.

To learn more about the grant, visit the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

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**Links within this release:**

- <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3a/index.html>

*Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves more than 16,500 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.*