FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 14, 2010

Commencement Celebrates Student Success

Thursday, June 17, 2010
7:30 pm, Jerry Brockey Student Center
South Seattle Community College
6000 16th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98106

Graduation is a time to celebrate stories of success and the paths that students have taken to reach their goals. At South Seattle Community College, the accomplishments of the class of 2010 will be celebrated at the annual commencement ceremony taking place at 7:30 pm on Thursday, June 17, in the Jerry Brockey Student Center.

This year, 721 students have earned degrees and certificates, including 318 in academic transfer, 272 in professional/technical studies, and 26 students in the college’s four-year bachelor of applied science (BAS) Hospitality Management degree program. An additional 105 students earned high school diplomas or GEDs.

Among the graduating class is the first recipient of the college’s new associate of arts in Elementary Education (AEE) degree, which prepares students to enter a four-year university to pursue bachelor’s degrees in elementary education.

Although she comes from a large extended family and has worked extensively with children, Dianne Dizon never seriously considered a teaching career until she found out about the college’s new program.

“If I hadn’t gone here, I don’t know if I would have even thought about teaching,” said the West Seattle resident.

Dianne, who earned a 4.0 GPA in her advanced education classes at South, completed her teaching practicum at Graham Hill Elementary, where she impressed her coordinating teacher with her dedication to student learning. Teaching second and third graders at the culturally diverse school reinforced her desire to become an elementary school teacher, and she looks forward to continuing her pursuit of a teaching degree at a four-year institution.

The mother-daughter team of Irina Minasova and Emma Kazaryan is another of the many inspirational stories found among our students. Irina, who immigrated to Seattle from Armenia in 1993, has been employed at South for 15 years and is the college’s director of Business Operations. Daughter Emma is a Running Start student who will receive her high school diploma from Aviation High School and an associate of arts degree from South on the same day. She has also been awarded a Washington State Honors certificate, which recognizes the top 10 percent of seniors who have led their class in academic achievement, community service, and student leadership.
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ADD ONE

There was never a doubt that Emma would become a South alumna. Her mom began the South tradition as an ESL student. Then, while working full time at the college and raising two children, Irina earned an associate of applied science (AAS) degree in Accounting and an associate of arts (AA) degree on campus. She recently earned a BA in Business Administration from Central Washington University/Des Moines, and will soon begin their MBA program.

“I’ve been going to school since I got here,” she said with a laugh.

Emma has been accepted to the University of Washington, where she enters with 90 college transfer credits earned at South. She chose Running Start because it offered challenges above and beyond high school, as well as the benefits of smaller classes and personalized attention.

“It was kind of overwhelming to think about going to the UW directly and being in lecture classes that have more students than my high school,” she explained.

She now feels completely prepared and academically ready for the transition, and credits her experience at South with helping her adjust to the college environment:

“I learned you have to know how to be a good student – how to take tests, how to get outside help and how to approach your teachers and ask for help. Learning how to use your resources is encouraged here.”

Next in line for an academic career at South is 13-year old sibling Cristina, who plans to follow in the footsteps of her mom and sister. And that’s just fine with Irina who, while proud of Emma’s accomplishments, will miss seeing her daughter on campus every day.

Another highlight of the 2010 commencement is the graduation of 26 students in the college’s bachelor of applied science (BAS) in Hospitality Management program. This is the second graduating class of the program. South was in the first group of pilot programs four years ago when the state legislature granted two-year colleges the authority to offer four-year degrees in specific disciplines.

South’s BAS in Hospitality Management program, the only one of its kind in western Washington, focuses on management, marketing, human resources, and technical positions in all facets of the hospitality industry. Its success is demonstrated by outstanding student retention rates – nearly 100% for the graduating and first-year students – job placement, and industry support.

South’s motto – Start Here, Go Anywhere – is exemplified by our graduates, and the college congratulates them on their achievements.

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