

News Release

South Seattle Community College

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South Seattle Community College Promises Free First Year *Scholarship program expansion announced.*

(Seattle, WA) More than 200 appreciative Chief Sealth International High School seniors learned today that a free year of college is in their future. South Seattle Community College President Gary Oertli's surprise announcement that the college's **13th Year Promise Scholarship** has been expanded to Chief Sealth was greeted with whoops and cheers by the assembled Class of 2011.

The groundbreaking scholarship program, which is the first of its kind in Washington state, guarantees every graduating senior the opportunity to attend South tuition-free for one year, regardless of grade point, test scores or other factors. Chief Sealth becomes South's second **13th Year Promise Scholarship** high school, joining Cleveland High School, where the program was launched with the Class of 2008.

"This is a phenomenal opportunity for our graduating seniors," said Chief Sealth Principal John Boyd. "With the cost of tuition increasing at levels above inflation, the opportunity to have their first year of college paid for is a tremendous gift for our students and their families."

The **13th Year Promise Scholarship** was developed to address data that shows the enormous difference just one year of college can make in terms of earnings and a student's likelihood of continuing in higher education. This critical "Tipping Point" has been identified as a high school diploma and one-year of training or a technical credential. The scholarship is also designed to increase the access to higher education for our community's students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, including students of color, low-income and first-generation college students.

Unlike South's program, similar scholarship initiatives at Ventura College (CA), Tulsa Community College (OK), and the Dallas County Community College District (TX) all have income and/or academic criteria that must be met.

MORE

13TH YEAR SCHOLARSHIP

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ADD ONE

According to South President Gary Oertli, the scholarship removes the financial barrier that might prevent many students from pursuing higher education.

“As students are being asked to bear a larger share of the costs associated with college, initiatives like our *13th Year Promise Scholarship* become even more important,” he said. “South is committed to keeping the pathway open to higher education for those who might not otherwise be able to continue after high school. And as a Chief Sealth graduate, I’m especially pleased that we are extending the program to my alma mater.”

Oertli notes that the *13th Year Promise Scholarship* has addressed the governor’s recent call to develop funding strategies that provide students with affordable higher education opportunities, and create innovative funding sources through individual and business donations.

One former *13th Year Promise Scholarship* student, Sochetna Chhay, is well on his way to success. The 2008 Cleveland High School graduate was a member of the inaugural *13th Year* group of 20 students. The Cambodian native became a student leader at South, was awarded a prestigious Martin Scholarship, and is now pursuing a computer science degree at the University of Washington. The *13th Year Promise Scholarship* was key to helping him pursue his academic and career dreams.

“I believe it can motivate other students to attend college and create better futures,” he said.

The program is funded by financial aid and/or scholarship funds raised through the South Seattle Community College Foundation. Keith Schrieber, Foundation president, notes that Foundation members are very aware of the crucial role higher education plays in securing a positive future in today’s environment.

He said, “Lack of money should never be a reason a student can’t get started in pursuing a college education. We’re thrilled that our support makes a difference and we’re grateful to members of the community who have made generous philanthropic gifts to make this possible.”

13th Year Promise Scholarship students receive more than a free year at South. They are also provided with a wide array of student services designed to help them succeed. All incoming scholarship recipients attend a one-week summer College Bridge program, conducted by The Pacific Institute, where they become familiar with campus programs and resources, while learning how to form positive attitudes that will enhance their chances of success.

A designated *13th Year Promise Scholarship* coordinator serves as their dedicated contact and is on hand to help with everything from completing financial aid forms, to just being a good listener. Students must complete a quarterly “Success Contract” that includes commitments to attend check-in meetings, utilize campus resources, develop time management skills, study, and attend classes.

MORE

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ADD TWO

In concluding today's event, Principal Boyd spoke for his senior class, many of whom will, for the first time, envision themselves at college.

"I'm so excited that South Seattle Community College selected our school to expand this program. To have every student given the opportunity for another year of education at a great school like South is just wonderful."

About South Seattle Community College

South Seattle Community College serves a multicultural population of 15,000 students each year from an 87-acre, wooded campus in West Seattle, and satellite campuses in the Georgetown and Beacon Hill communities. The college is distinguished by a four-year Bachelor of Science (BAS) degree program in Hospitality Management, innovative professional technical programs, and outstanding college transfer, distance learning, basic and transitional studies, and lifelong learning programs. South is one of only six institutions in the nation designated as an Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI)-serving institution. South is one of the Seattle Community Colleges.

About the South Seattle Community College Foundation

The Foundation is comprised of business and community leaders who generously contribute their time and resources to enrich lives, build hope and fulfill dreams. The Foundation has assets of more than \$10 million and provides more than \$1 million for student scholarships, tutoring and academic support resources, faculty professional development and program equipment each year.

About Chief Sealth International High School

Chief Sealth International High School fosters global awareness and academic success through a challenging and engaging curriculum in a safe and supportive environment. Chief Sealth is a comprehensive high school that offers a wide array of opportunities for students who value learning in a dynamic, multi-cultural environment. It is an exceptional place that celebrates innovation and individuality. As a center of international educational excellence, Chief Sealth provides students opportunities to study the world in the classroom and beyond, with academic and arts offerings, career preparation and athletic programs focused on educating global citizens.

About Cleveland High School

Cleveland is a city-wide Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) option high school, divided into a Life Sciences & Global Health academy and an Engineering & Computer Science academy. Life Sciences & Global Health is focused on the life sciences, including biology and biochemistry, as well as global health issues. Engineering & Technology emphasizes the physical sciences and technology, including a pre-engineering program that will expose students to leading edge technologies in robotics, aeronautics, rocket design, and alternative energy.

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(L-R) Seattle School Board Director Steve Sundquist, Chief Sealth International High School Principal John Boyd, South Seattle Community College President Gary Oertli.